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### Metaphorical Concepts in the Construction of International Legitimacy

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Based on an exploratory study of media discourses in four Western democracies, this contribution probes the use of metaphorical concepts in discourses on the legitimacy of internationalized political authority. Academic crisis diagnoses and evidence of public discontent currently seem to prevail both with regard to *national* political orders – whose democratic quality and legitimacy seem to be challenged by economic globalization and the shift of political authority to international organizations or regimes – and with regard to these *international* governance arrangements themselves. While the latter's growing power and responsibilities are widely held responsible for the alleged performance and legitimacy crisis of the democratic nation state (Hurrelmann et al. 2007), the normative foundations of their own legitimacy seem precarious, too, especially where these arrangements have a *supranational* character. To be sure, there are also more sanguine assessments, according to which legitimacy is increasingly based on (output-based) foundations that are supposedly more in line with the new political reality of the 'post-national constellation' (Habermas 2001), but from a normative point of view, these optimistic diagnoses imply a transformation or reinvention of legitimacy that might itself be characterized as a crisis phenomenon, namely, a rather alarming erosion of democratic *legitimation standards*.

In short, the legitimacy of political orders and its normative foundations seem more contested than ever today. But which mechanisms, discursive practices, strategies, and resources play a role in (de-) legitimation processes to begin with? In this paper, we first briefly develop the rationale for a constructivist perspective on such questions, conceptualizing legitimacy as an essentially *communicative* phenomenon amenable to text analytical research. We argue that citizen support for political orders and its foundations are (re-) produced – as well as contested and transformed – in public spheres and *legitimation discourses*, that the media are a key *arena*, and that metaphorical concepts are key *resources* in the discursive (de-) construction of legitimacy. In a second, equally brief step we review a number of crisis scenarios and debates that figure prominently in the literature on legitimacy in the age of globalization.

Drawing on textual data from an ongoing research project, the remainder of the paper then offers a preliminary analysis of metaphorical concepts used in American, British, German, and Swiss media discourses on the legitimacy of a *supranational* regime, the European Union, and the *intergovernmental* arrangements of the G7/8 summit regime. A corpus of articles and statements drawn from two high-quality newspapers per country over a period of ten years (1998-2007) is the basis of this study. The source domains and entailments of metaphorical statements will be identified and assessed: Which metaphorical concepts underpin the (de-) legitimation of the examined political orders – and what do they

reveal about the legitimacy (deficits) and normative foundations of international governance arrangements in the age of globalization?<sup>1</sup>

## **FROM THE COMMUNICATIVE DIMENSION OF LEGITIMACY TO THE ANALYSIS OF METAPHORS IN LEGITIMATION DISCOURSES**

Indicators of empirical legitimacy may be gleaned from the analysis of at least three dimensions. The two most prominent approaches measure the levels and foundations of legitimacy by way of public opinion research, thus focusing on legitimacy beliefs and political attitudes, or they observe forms of (non-) conventional political behavior, interpreting certain forms of participation, protest, and (non-) compliance as expressions of regime support or its withdrawal. A third dimension, political communication, has so far been neglected (but see, for instance, Raufer 2005). Here we refrain from a detailed discussion of the comparative advantages and disadvantages of these three methodological approaches (see Schneider et al. 2007, 127-33) and merely summarize our rationale for the empirical analysis of *legitimation discourses* and *legitimation statements*.

The two approaches that have dominated the field so far largely ignore the obvious normative and empirical role of communication and public spheres for the functioning of democratic regimes in general and for the (re-) production, contestation, or transformation of legitimacy and its normative foundations in particular. Yet political legitimacy and its foundations are without any doubt socially – that is, discursively – constructed (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Keller et al. 2006; Luckmann 2001; Nullmeier 2001). The successful (re-) production of legitimacy is thus always the (temporary) outcome of public *debates* on the acceptability of political orders and institutions, on the plausibility of specific legitimacy claims and assessments, on the appropriateness of the used justifications and evaluative benchmarks, and so on. Both political elites – the representatives of the very political institutions whose legitimacy is at stake – and ‘simple’ citizens or their interest-group representatives may participate in this kind of communication. The term legitimacy, then, refers to an ‘unstable equilibrium,’ as it were, between the legitimacy claims of rulers and the legitimacy assessments of the ruled. The reproduction of legitimacy and its normative foundations is an ongoing discursive process that involves the (self-)legitimizing evaluations of rulers and regime supporters (legitimizers) on the one hand, and critical assessments made

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<sup>1</sup> The text stems from an ongoing research project directed by Frank Nullmeier (University of Bremen) and Roland Lhotta (Helmut Schmidt University, Hamburg). The research team currently includes Dominika Biegoń, Jennifer Gronau, Martin Nonhoff, and Henning Schmidtke. See Hurrelmann et al. 2009; Schneider 2008b for more elaborate presentations of our approach and empirical findings.

by the challengers (delegitimizers) of a political system, its elites or one of its core institutions on the other. Both of these discursive coalitions may, in turn, use specific discursive practices and strategies – or draw on specific resources – to justify their claims and the underlying legitimation standards (Mulligan 2007). Their skill in the use of these strategies and resources ultimately determines whether legitimizers or delegitimizers prevail, and whether legitimacy is successfully reproduced or not.

In short, greater attention to the structures and mechanisms of legitimation discourses seems necessary for a better understanding of broader (de-) legitimation processes and their outcomes. The study of these discourses reveals what may be said by whom in public debates on legitimacy – that is, which rules there are for the formulation of *acceptable* legitimacy evaluations, which positions are more or less frequent, which and whose evaluations have a chance of being heard and taken seriously, and so on. The legitimacy assessments that come to dominate undoubtedly play a key role in the reproduction of political legitimacy. A study of legitimation discourses, then, will not least be concerned with their hegemonic elements. Yet a state of ‘total’ legitimacy (a genuine *consensus* on the acceptability of a regime) is neither empirically likely nor does it seem normatively desirable – after all, democratic public spheres have the function to enable criticism of the rulers. Occasional bursts of ‘critical citizenship’ thus appear to be ‘normal’ and desirable both in an empirical and in a normative perspective (Norris 1999; Sniderman 1981). Therefore, we also expect legitimation discourses to have a cyclical nature: They typically flare up in the wake of major political events and *conflicts* – legitimation discourses proper may well be related to ongoing debates about policies or authorities and their decisions, but debates about the legitimacy of entire regimes and its normative foundations entail a generalization beyond such everyday debates. One may further expect such discourses to be particularly crucial in two situations: where an established regime – such as the democratic nation state – is faced with new challenges and pressures, and where the role or nature of newly emerging regimes – and hence the (potential) foundations of their legitimacy – are still unclear; we will take up this topic in the next section for international organizations and regimes.

Moreover, there is no doubt that legitimation discourses may unfold in different arenas of public spheres – in private conversations, in the parliamentary arena, or in the debates of political-science and legal scholars, to name but a few. However, we argue that the mass media – and more precisely, the quality press – are the crucial arena, given their key role for the constitution and development of public spheres in modern democratic societies. The media are gate-keepers between the political system and the citizenry at large – and they represent the most important discursive battleground in these societies. Thus they do not merely disseminate information but rather create a space for – as well as contributing their

own – positive or negative evaluations of specific policies, political authorities, or entire political orders (Habermas 2008; Wessler et al. 2008).

Finally, it appears plausible to make the analysis of figurative and metaphorical language an integral part of the outlined approach to the study of legitimation discourses. In line with the constructivist perspective that has come to dominate the field (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Carver and Pikalo 2008), we do not view metaphors as mere rhetorical devices, as the instrumental view would have it, but attribute a key role in the construction of social and political reality to them. To begin with, metaphors have a cognitive function. They transport certain types of knowledge and may be used to condense or simplify a complex reality, to hide some aspects of it and highlight others, or to give a particular meaning to them. While ‘[p]olitical metaphors thus reflect the trajectory of our knowledge from the observable to the unobservable, or from the less obscure to us to what is more obscure’ (Miller 1979, 164), the specific value judgments frequently entailed in metaphors (Charteris-Black 2004, 25) – and hence their potential role in *diagnostic* framing and consensus mobilization (Snow and Benford 1988) – is even more germane in the context of legitimacy research. Couching legitimacy assessments in figurative and metaphorical language might strengthen the underlying interpretive frames and worldviews, causal attributions, and normative orientations, thus creating or precluding opportunities of (discursive) action for the participants in legitimation discourses.

The evaluations and arguments of legitimizers and delegitimizers are therefore likely to have ‘elective affinities’ with specific metaphorical concepts and fields – and these might, in turn, serve as key resources in the communicative (de-) construction of legitimacy. As long as a system’s legitimacy is stable, the frames and (conventional) metaphors privileged by the legitimizing discourse coalition are likely to resonate more strongly with its political culture – and to be more prominent in public communication – than the metaphors of delegitimizers. However, the challengers of a system’s legitimacy and its normative foundations may successfully reinterpret such ‘authoritative’ metaphors and their entailments, or use innovative metaphors of their own to contest and ultimately replace the dominant master frames of legitimation discourses. In short, we hypothesize that figurative and metaphorical language and metaphors – as an integral micro-level element of legitimation discourses – make an important contribution to the discursive construction of legitimacy.

## LEGITIMACY IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION – DEBATES AND CRISIS SCENARIOS

The cyclical nature of political scientists' interest in legitimacy is conspicuous (Abromeit and Stoiber 2007, 35; Beetham 1991, 3), and the peaks of this Kondratiev cycle of legitimacy research tend to be marked by *crisis diagnoses*. The latest wave of such diagnoses is different from earlier ones to the extent that it is no longer exclusively concerned with the level of *national* political orders but also increasingly focuses on the legitimacy of *international* organizations and regimes such as the European Union and the G7/8 (Gilley 2006, 499). The crisis scenarios of the normative and empirical literature remain, however, controversial. Even a quick glance at recent contributions thus shows to what a considerable extent legitimacy remains 'essentially contested' both as a normative concept and as an empirical phenomenon (Gallie 1956, 183-7; Collier et al. 2006; Hurrelmann, Schneider and Steffek 2007, 229-37).

The two-by-two matrix in Table 1 illustrates that different perspectives on the legitimacy of (inter-) national political orders in the age of globalization may be classified on the basis of two variables – first, the diagnosed *extent* of legitimacy (does a regime enjoy a lot of support or not, is it – mostly – legitimate or illegitimate?), and secondly, the criteria privileged in legitimacy assessments (do they – mostly – use aspects of democratic quality or other, non-democratic criteria as benchmarks?).

**Table 1** Crisis scenarios

	<b>Democratic Benchmarks</b>	<b>Non-democratic benchmarks</b>
<b>Delegitimation</b>	Scenario I: <i>Erosion</i> of democratic Legitimacy	Scenario II: <i>Collapse</i> of democratic Legitimacy
<b>Legitimation</b>	Scenario IV: <i>Stable</i> democratic Legitimacy	Scenario III: <i>Transformation</i> of democratic legitimacy

Our crisis scenario I – the *erosion* of democratic quality – is particularly widespread in the literature on the democratic nation state (Scharpf 2000; Dalton 2004; Pharr and Putnam 2000; Torcal and Montero 2006). It implies that democratic quality is now essentially without plausible *normative* alternatives when the legitimacy of political orders in the West is evaluated, and that criteria of democratic quality should therefore prevail at the empirical

level, in the legitimacy claims and assessments of political elites and citizens, too. Yet if the autonomy and democratic quality of the nation state and its representative institutions are truly undermined by internationalization processes, then ‘dissatisfied democrats’ (Hofferbert and Klingemann 2001) should be expected to react with a withdrawal of their regime support. However, besides stable democratic legitimacy as our reference category, two other scenarios may be imagined as well.

Our crisis scenario III refers to a *transformation* of democratic legitimacy – the legitimacy of the nation state is not negatively affected but support is no longer grounded in criteria of democratic quality; not legitimacy itself but its traditional normative basis is challenged. Finally, the empirical reality may also correspond to our crisis scenario II – a *collapse* of democratic legitimacy. Even normatively ‘undemanding,’ non-democratic criteria would here be unable to secure the legitimacy of the nation state and its institutions.<sup>2</sup>

This typology of crisis scenarios is equally useful for a classification of diagnoses related to international organizations and regimes. While there is, however, widespread consensus about the claim that national political orders indeed have to secure a modicum of legitimacy to secure compliance and function properly, IR theory has discovered the issue of legitimacy rather hesitantly and belatedly (Hurd 1999; Steffek 2003, 2007; Buchanan and Keohane 2006; Mulligan 2006; Clark 2007). In the state-centered, intergovernmental perspective that had dominated the field in the post-war decades, international legitimacy was essentially a non-issue, or it was merely used as a concept that played a limited role in the analysis of compliance with the regulations of international organizations. To the extent that international organizations were viewed as mere handmaidens of national governments or as forums of consensual decision making in a system of executive multilateralism, and as long as the (democratic) chain of legitimation between national political communities, their representative institutions (parliaments) and governments was considered to be intact, the IR literature could afford to concentrate on governments as authors and addressees of international regulations and to use the concept of legitimacy only for explanations of the ‘puzzle’ of *state* compliance in an essentially anarchical international system.

Against the backdrop of the ‘post-national constellation,’ this intergovernmental perspective appears obsolete, though. Hence there is not only renewed interest in the legitimacy of national political systems but also a burgeoning literature on the democratic quality and legitimacy foundations of international organizations and regimes (Held 1995;

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<sup>2</sup> The term ‘non-democratic’ should be read as ‘not genuinely democratic’ (a criterion that may be met by authoritarian regimes as well, such as effectiveness) We identified 26 different legitimation standards in our material and classified them as ‘democratic input,’ ‘democratic output,’ ‘non-democratic input,’ and ‘non-democratic output’ criteria; see Hurrelmann et al. 2009 for details.

Bohman 1999; Coicaud and Heiskanen 2001; Take 2009). Moreover, the notion that international legitimacy may be (re-) produced by states and governments *alone* appears less and less convincing. The IR literature has therefore begun to discover NGOs as speakers of a global civil society or (trans-) national political communities, and even the citizens subjected to international regulations themselves; not states but rather citizens and political communities are thus considered as addressees of international regulations and obligations (van Rooy 2004; Brunnengräber et al. 2005; Collingwood 2006). Hence Steffek (2007) conceptualizes legitimacy as a threefold relationship between international organizations and regimes, their member states and (trans-) national ‘constituencies.’ In a similar vein, Zürn and his co-authors (2007) hypothesize roughly the following development: first, growing citizen attention in Western democracies to the effects of globalization and to the consequences of internationalization processes on the distribution of political authority; secondly, given the expanded responsibilities of international regimes, their growing politicization; thirdly, growing concern about the legitimacy of these regimes and its normative foundations. In short, they hypothesize that international political orders are no longer ‘a-legitimate’ (Steffek 2007, 190) but rather – just like the democratic nation state – have to establish and secure their own legitimacy.

Yet if the same criteria as for *national* political orders are used (or considered appropriate) for legitimacy assessments of *international* organizations and regimes (that is, primarily criteria of democratic quality), then crisis diagnoses along the lines of our scenario I seem, again, in order. The perception of a legitimacy *deficit* should be the more pronounced, (a) the more responsibilities an international regime has assumed and the more it has turned from a mere intergovernmental forum to a supranational regime (as indicated, for instance, by a shift from consensus to majority decisions or by judicialization), (b) the more discontent with the democratic quality of its procedures and institutions there is, and finally, (c) the less realistic it appears to meet the presumably necessary conditions for a thorough democratization of a regime (existence of a transnational *demos* and public sphere, etc.). This is in fact the thrust of the broad literature on the legitimacy deficit of the European Union (for many, see Føllesdal 2006, 2007), but similar diagnoses may be found for other international governance arrangements as well (Hajnal 2007).

However, our scenario III – the transformation or *reinvention* of democratic legitimacy – is much more prominent with a view to the international level than with regard to national political orders. These diagnoses (for the EU, see, for instance, Majone 1998; Scharpf 1999, 2009; Moravcsik 2002, 2005; for the G7/8, Dobson 2007; Kirton 1999) are based on the notion that citizens do not (and should not) usually draw on (genuinely) democratic criteria in their legitimacy assessments of international political orders – instead, they are thought

to privilege non-democratic criteria that are supposedly more appropriate benchmarks for the evaluation of such regimes and their performance than ‘classical’ standards of democratic quality. Most importantly, there is the prominent hypothesis that forms of *output* legitimation – drawing on standards such as efficiency and effectiveness – gain in importance and may in fact successfully underpin the legitimacy of the EU and other international regimes. Normatively speaking, it seems plausible to qualify this as a crisis scenario – an erosion of democratic *legitimation standards* and, by implication, a hollowing out of the concept of democracy – as well. Moreover, the empirical reality may even correspond to our particularly alarming scenario II (the collapse of democratic legitimacy).

In summary, the academic debates over these scenarios and the very different legitimacy assessments they entail remain unsettled – and we may safely expect similar debates on the legitimacy of international governance arrangements in the public spheres of the transnational political communities subjected to their rule. Against the backdrop of the ‘novel dynamics in the age of global communication’ (Steffek 2007, 176), the construction of international legitimacy – just like the reproduction of support for national political orders – should involve legitimation discourses, and metaphors may again be hypothesized to constitute key resources for journalists, civil-society actors, and political elites in these discourses (Hülse 2003b).

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

Our qualitative analysis of metaphors in legitimation discourses is based on a larger, primarily quantitative research project. Here we begin by sketching a framework for the analysis of legitimation discourses and the research design of our own empirical study; the remainder of the section explains how metaphors were identified in our material.

What are legitimation discourses? Which discursive practices and propositions constitute their backbone, and how may these be operationalized? Our research considers propositions of an evaluative kind – *legitimation statements* – as basic units of this type of political communication. Such propositions – which ascribe legitimacy to a political system or institution, or question it – may be identified and described with the help of a stylized legitimation ‘grammar’ (Franzosi 2004; Table 2). Three key variables define a legitimation statement: the legitimation object (regime or institution) that is assessed, whether the assessment is positive (legitimizing) or negative (delegitimizing), and the evaluation standard (legitimation pattern) on which it is based.

**Table 2** Legitimation ‘grammar’ with examples

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Example 1: The Liberal Democrat leader [Paddy Ashdown] told a rally in Eastbourne that the system was now so [...] inefficient and secretive that it no longer served the citizen. He said: ‘Next Tuesday you could elect [...] 650 saints; but it wouldn’t make any difference if our system no longer works’ (*Times*, 3 April 1992).

The political system of	is illegitimate...	because it is...	(1) inefficient/ineffective;
Britain...			(2) not transparent.

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Example 2: The agency in Brussels [EU Commission] is hardly a training ground for the mafia; yet considerable amounts of fraud, sloppiness, and corruption have occurred lately (FAZ, 16 December 1998).

The EU Commission...	is illegitimate...	because it is...	(1) inefficient/ineffective;
			(2) not respecting legal standards.

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Example 3: They [the G7/8] are pure conspicuous consumption, make-work for the ‘rich white trash’ of international diplomacy. They yield vacuous communiqués and mountains of unread paper. Their only substantive conclusion is ‘to meet again’ (*Times*, 20 July 2001).

The G7/8...	is illegitimate...	because it is...	(1) inefficient/ineffective;
			(2) not representative (of the world population).

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Our study of legitimation discourses in Germany, Switzerland, Britain, and the United States draws on a large corpus of newspaper articles each of which contains at least one such statement and thus may be viewed as contributing to broader legitimation discourses. One part of this corpus documents public communication on the legitimacy of the four national political orders in 2004 (3924 statements); the remainder of the corpus focuses on relatively narrow time windows around the European Council meetings and G7/8 summits between 1998 and 2007 (Table 3).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> We currently lack time-series data with a view to debates surrounding comparable ‘focusing’ events at the *national* level but have begun to collect this kind of data. We will thus eventually be in a position to better compare national-level trends with the development of EU and G7/8-related discourses than we can do right now. The EU Council meetings (of which there are up to four per year) were selected in a completely formalized way; we chose the summits that, according to a search in our electronic media database Factiva, attracted the greatest media attention in each year (without, however, necessarily triggering intensive *legitimation discourses*).

**Table 3** Summit locations and time windows

EU		G7/8	
Time window	Location	Time window	Location
05/12-16/12, 1998	Vienna	09/05-20/05, 1998	Birmingham
20/03-31/03, 1999	Berlin	12/06-23/06, 1999	Cologne
02/12-13/12, 2000	Nice	15/07-26/07, 2000	Okinawa
08/12-19/12, 2001	Laeken	14/07-25/07, 2001	Genoa
15/06-26/06, 2002	Sevilla	22/06-03/07, 2002	Kananaskis
06/12-17/12, 2003	Brussels	28/05-07/06, 2003	Évian
20/03-31/03, 2004	Brussels	05/06-16/06, 2004	Sea Island
11/06-22/06, 2005	Brussels	02/07-13/07, 2005	Gleneagles
14/10-25/10, 2006	Lahti*	08/07-19/07, 2006	St. Petersburg
16/06-27/06, 2007	Brussels	02/06-13/06, 2007	Heiligendamm
N	2,989	N	1,208

\* Extraordinary summit with Russia.

For each country, we examined two opinion-leading papers of the (center-) left and right: *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ) and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ, Germany), *Tagesanzeiger* (TA) and *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (NZZ, Switzerland), *Guardian* (GRD) and *Times* (TMS, Britain), *New York Times* (NYT) and *Washington Post* (WP, United States).

Our European-US country sample, in turn, is primarily motivated by the hypothesis that differences in terms of national institutional arrangements and political cultures (Lijphart 1999), as well as different national media systems (Hallin and Mancini 2004), should have an impact on the legitimation styles that prevail in each of the four national public spheres; there might also, of course, be characteristic differences between the continental European and Anglo-Saxon ‘families of nations,’ or between discourses in German and English. In a similar vein, factors such as the (non-) membership of the four countries in the EU and the G7/8, as well as the general multilateralism friendliness or skepticism of national political elites and citizens, should impact legitimation discourses, and there is considerable variation in our sample with regard to those factors. The sample includes two EU members and two non-members, as well as three members and one non-member of the G7/8. Switzerland and the United States may – to varying degrees and for different reasons – be considered to be multilateralism-skeptical countries while Britain (at least as far as the G7/8 and other

intergovernmental arrangements are concerned) and especially Germany appear comparatively multilateralism-friendly.

Finally, our sample of international regimes with a European (EU) or Western (G7/8) geographic scope has also been chosen on purpose. While the largely informal G7/8 regime is a ‘classical’ intergovernmental arrangement, and hence the question of legitimacy should be largely irrelevant in its context if we follow much of the IR literature, the increasingly supranational character of the EU and its growing responsibilities are obvious (see the growing number of majority decisions and of binding regulations or Court rulings emanating from the EU and its institutions). One should, therefore, expect more public and media attention to the legitimacy of the EU and its normative foundations than to the G7/8.

Our empirical material for the analysis of metaphors in legitimization discourses is extracted from the corpora described above. At this point, only the first legitimization statement identified in each newspaper article was considered. We essentially followed the procedure suggested by the Praggeljaz Group (2007; see also Schmitt 2003) to identify metaphors. However, metaphors were only considered relevant when they underpinned the *legitimacy assessment* put forward in a given article and paragraph. In other words, the legitimization object, legitimization pattern, or evaluative vocabulary of legitimization statements had to be the target domains of the retained metaphors.

In the identification and classification of the source domains, we started with a list of metaphorical concepts and fields proposed by extant literature (for instance, Beer and De Landtsheer 2004; Charteris-Black 2005; Miller 1979; Steen 2002; Wesel 2004) and our own prior work (Schneider 2008a); this coding scheme was supplemented by additional concepts in an inductive fashion. Table 4 gives an example.

**Table 4** Example for metaphor identification from legitimization statement

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Example: Intended to be a one-time confab, the meeting has become an annual hand-holding event (*Washington Post*, July 16, 2006).

The G7/8	is illegitimate...	because it is...	only symbolic politics.
Metaphor			
LO: ---	:	LP/evaluation:	social relationship, festivity

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## **EMPIRICAL RESULTS – WHICH LEGITIMACY CRISIS OF THE EU AND THE G7/8?**

We now turn to (some) quantitative findings of our research and to a tentative study of metaphor use in American, British, German, and Swiss media discourses on the legitimacy of the EU and the G7/8. A quick glance at these quantitative data provides us with a context for the subsequent qualitative analysis. They illustrate the extent to which these two international regimes have become objects of legitimation discourses – and hence that they are no longer a-legitimate. They also reveal the levels and normative foundations of discursive support for the EU and the G7/8. Our qualitative analysis of frequently used metaphors will then shed further light on these foundations – and on the discursive strategies used by the proponents of different legitimacy assessments and crisis scenarios.

### **Quantitative Data: The Collapse of EU and G7/8 Legitimacy in the Media**

Which of our crisis scenarios prevail in media discourses on the legitimacy of the EU and the G7/8? Table 5 and Figure 1 answer this question and therefore, by implication, also shed light on the levels and foundations of discursive support for these two international regimes in the quality press of Germany, Switzerland, Britain, and the United States. We briefly discuss these findings in the context of similar findings on the national political orders and institutions of these four countries.

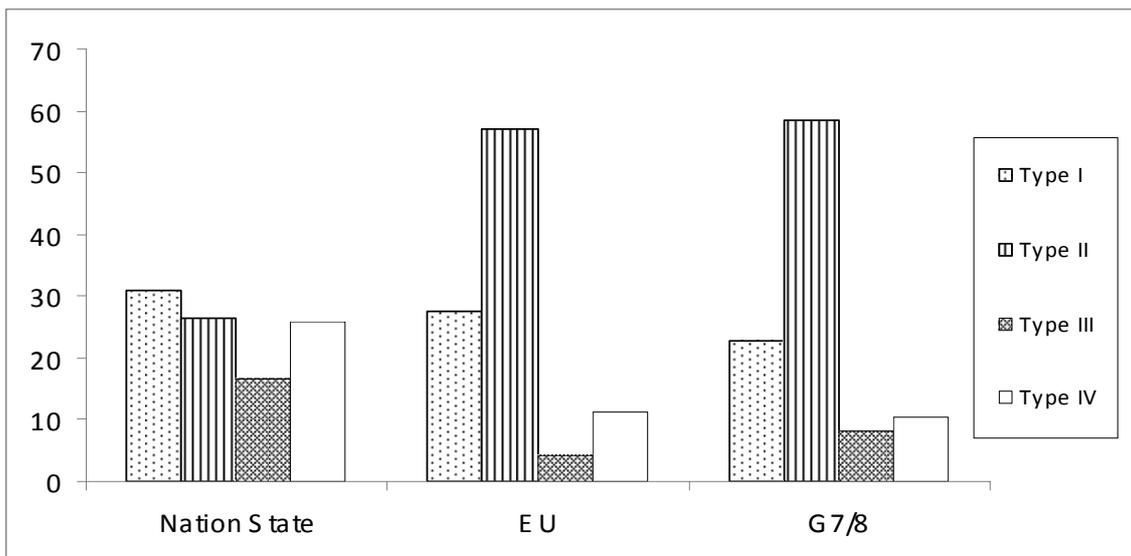
We see that the vast majority of statements evaluating the legitimacy of the EU and the G7/8 fall into the type II category, followed by type I. Both international regimes are thus usually evaluated *negatively* in all four national discourses, and the percentages of critical assessments are in the 80 to 90 per cent range. At the same time, the predominance of type II assessments means that the bulk of these statements do not even use standards of democratic quality. In fact, scenario III – the great hope of authors such as Majone and Moravcsik – is *least* frequent. While the picture is much more balanced – and hence less bleak – at the national level, where none of the four different scenarios clearly dominates and *positive* evaluations as well as *democratic* legitimation criteria are much more frequent, it is apparent that these authors' empirical and normative claims (according to which *non-democratic* output criteria tend to be – and should be – used to evaluate and affirm the legitimacy of international regimes) find little support in our analysis of the examined media and so presumably do not play the expected role in the public spheres of the four examined countries. Moreover, a disaggregation by year (1998-2007) reveals that there is no discernible *trend* in the direction of more positive evaluations or the 'transformation of legitimacy' scenario, which is – quite literally – 'not going anywhere.' For the time being, the 'collapse of le-

gitimacy' scenario best describes the hegemonic type of evaluations in the examined media discourses.

**Table 5** Shares of legitimization statements associated with (non-) crisis scenarios I to IV

		CH	DE	GB	US
<b>I</b>	<b>Nat.</b>	24.0	32.2	44.7	26.3
	<b>EU</b>	28.5	26.0	30.4	22.6
	<b>G7/8</b>	18.2	25.8	19.6	33.3
<b>II</b>	<b>Nat.</b>	34.2	26.6	22.7	23.8
	<b>EU</b>	51.6	56.7	57.9	65.3
	<b>G7/8</b>	60.2	56.7	61.9	48.0
<b>III</b>	<b>Nat.</b>	19.0	17.5	10.9	17.6
	<b>EU</b>	5.2	4.7	2.8	5.3
	<b>G7/8</b>	11.4	7.3	8.2	5.3
<b>IV</b>	<b>Nat.</b>	22.8	23.7	22.0	23.4
	<b>EU</b>	14.7	12.7	8.9	6.8
	<b>G7/8</b>	10.2	10.1	10.3	13.3

**Figure 1** Shares of crisis scenarios (overall)



## **Qualitative Findings: (De-) legitimating Metaphors in the Media**

In the remainder of the paper, we ask whether the use of metaphors is prominent in legitimation discourses. The section begins with an overview of the metaphorical concepts and fields encountered in the material. It then examines whether each of our crisis scenarios – and especially the ‘collapse of legitimacy’ scenario – is linked with characteristic sets of metaphors, which ‘narratives’ these metaphors entail, and whether the use of metaphors differs between EU and G7/8-related discourses. However, we do not, at this point, aim at a very detailed analysis of national differences or changes over time in the use and relative prominence of various metaphorical concepts. Such a more detailed analysis – which will, for instance, have to consider the idiosyncracies of national political and discursive cultures, issue attention cycles, and the specific contexts of individual EU or G7/8 summits – has to wait for another day. In this paper, we rather aim to explore the similarities and differences of metaphor use in evaluations of the two international regimes – and while we are ultimately going to explore frequency distributions as well as ‘elective affinities’ (correlations) between metaphorical fields and types of legitimation statements, our objective here is rather to identify particularly salient metaphorical fields that are drawn on most often in the context of our four types of diagnoses and the related master frames of the legitimacy literature.

Table 6 indicates which metaphorical concepts and fields we identified – more or less frequently – in our corpora. As the table also shows, we watched out for the ‘usual suspects’ suggested by the literature on (political) metaphors, added a few categories encountered in the material, and tentatively linked some of the identified concepts with Lakoff and Johnson’s very broad categories of personification, orientational/spatial, and container metaphors. These are supplemented by the categories of ‘(in-) animate world’ and ‘social (economic) relationships and activities.’ There are, to be sure, few surprises at this admittedly very high level of aggregation and generalization. We see that a number of metaphorical fields are used in both G7/8 and EU-related discourses, and in at least three national discourses. This includes types and groups of metaphor – such as personification, orientational/spatial, and container metaphors – that are simply very frequent in everyday language. But it also includes metaphors that are traditionally popular in political communication (for instance, ‘family/household,’ see Rigotti 1994) and/or suggest specific underlying worldviews and legitimation standards – a topic that we are going to pursue below (‘club,’ ‘economic relationships and activities’). On the other hand, there seem to be differences in metaphor use as well – the very traditional ‘journey,’ ‘vehicle,’ and ‘ship’ metaphors, for instance, appear more salient in EU-related discourses, metaphors related to ‘ar-

istocracy/monarchy’ with a view to the G7/8. This preliminary finding will also be taken up below.

**Table 6** Overview, metaphorical concepts and fields in G7/8 and EU-related legitimisation discourses

	G7/8				EU			
	US	GB	CH	DE	US	GB	CH	DE
<b>Personification</b>	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<b>Oriental/spatial</b>		+	+	+	+	+	+	+
-> <b>motion/ journey/traffic</b>			+		+	+	+	+
-> <b>vehicle/engine</b>				+	+	+	+	+
-> <b>ship</b>					+	+	+	+
<b>Container</b>		+	+	+		+	+	+
-> <b>architecture/buildings</b>		+		+		+	+	+
<b>Inanimate world</b>								
-> <b>nature/weather</b>					+		+	+
<b>Animate world</b>								
-> <b>creatures</b>							+	+
-> <b>diseases/medicine</b>		+		+		+	+	+
<b>Social relationships and activities</b>								
-> <b>aristocracy/monarchy</b>	+		+	+				
-> <b>club</b>	+	+	+	+		+	+	+
-> <b>crime/conspiracy</b>		+		+		+	+	+
-> <b>family/household</b>	+	+		+		+	+	+
-> <b>festivity/show/theatre</b>	+	+	+	+		+	+	+
-> <b>music</b>			+					+
-> <b>religion</b>			+	+		+	+	
-> <b>sciences/technology</b>		+	+				+	+
-> <b>sports/games/adventure</b>		+		+		+	+	+
-> <b>war/fight</b>	+	+	+	+		+	+	+
<b>Economic relationships and activities</b>	+		+	+		+	+	+

Tables 7 and 8 link metaphors that are prominent in our textual material with the four (non-) crisis scenarios, for the G7/8 and the EU respectively. As we have seen, most of our legitimisation statements are *critical* and therefore in the upper row of each table; the bulk of these, in turn, falls into the ‘collapse of democratic legitimacy’ cell, which means that these negative assessments, moreover, tend to shun democratic evaluation criteria.

Against the backdrop of much of the cited literature, the extent to which problems of (democratic) legitimacy are highlighted at all in media discourses on the G7/8 appears surprising. Given its character as a loose intergovernmental arrangement, the legitimacy of the summit regime should not even be an issue – and democratic quality would seem to be a rather inappropriate benchmark. Yet some of the most prominent metaphors used in evalua-

tions of the G7/8 and its summits are in fact linked with democratic (input) criteria. The G7/8 cannot avoid to be evaluated in those terms – and such criteria are notably prominent in the contributions of anti-G7/8 protesters (Hubbard and Miller 2005). All examined newspapers, for instance, heavily rely on ‘club’ metaphors – or more precisely, exclusive ‘society clubs’ as a source domain – in evaluations of the G7/8: ‘illustrious world economic club’ (FAZ, 18 May 1998), ‘rich men’s club’ (GRD, 23 July 2001), ‘masters [of the world remaining] among themselves’ (SZ, 2 June 2003), and so on. The underlying legitimization standards all belong to the democratic input category, and the G7/8’s perceived deficits are clearly highlighted by its depiction as an elitist (or even aristocratic) circle of Western – and typically white and male – leaders: The G7/8 thus does not respect popular sovereignty, is non-representative and does not give sufficient participation chances (as it allegedly excludes non-Western countries, global civil society and its spokespersons, NGOs, as well as the people at large from its deliberations); the regime’s character is closed, arcane and non-transparent, its membership non-representative, and so on.

Metaphors linked with the summit regime’s origin as a ‘fireside chat’ (GRD, 23 July 2001) in Rambouillet also highlight the ‘private’ and closed-shop nature of the summit meetings with their small number of participants. The meetings are thus framed as ‘week-end tables of regulars’ (FAZ, 19 May 1998), the ‘world’s most exclusive summer camp’ (NYT, 27 June 2002) or a ‘political flat-sharing community’ (FAZ, 20 July 2001). While such ‘social and family relationship’ or ‘household’ metaphors seem rather innocuous, the entailed criticism is exacerbated where speakers turn to the imagery of aristocracy and monarchy – ‘G8 Kings on tour. Never mind the poor’ (TA, 4 June 2007) – or even to ‘crime/conspiracy’ metaphors: Summits such as ‘fortress Genoa’ (NZZ, 2 June 2007), then, become ‘conspiratorial meeting[s] of the mighty and the rich of this world’ (FAZ, 6 June 2003), and ‘[a]sking the G8 leaders to decide what to do about the developing world’s debt is like asking the inmates of Wormwood Scrubs to decide what to do about crime’ (GRD, 24 July 2001).

Other source domains are also drawn on but appear less salient. For instance, the depiction of the G7/8 as ‘a self-important vacuum, divorced from [the] people’ (GRD, 11 June 2007), the observation that ‘[t]he people have roared but the G8 has whispered’ (*Times*, 9 July 2005), or the complaint about the G7/8’s ‘messianic cult of empire’ (GRD, 31 May 2003) also call up notions of democracy and democratic quality, broadly conceived.

**Table 7** Metaphorical fields and crisis scenarios, G7/8

	<b>Democratic benchmarks</b>	<b>Non-democratic benchmarks</b>
<b>Delegitimation</b>	Scenario I: <i>Erosion</i> of democratic Legitimacy  <i>Social relationships:</i> club; aristocracy/monarchy vacation activity friends and family/household crime/conspiracy	Scenario II: <i>Collapse</i> of democratic Legitimacy  <i>Social relationships:</i> vacation activity festivity/show/theatre  diseases/medicine motion/journey/traffic
<b>Legitimation</b>	Scenario IV: <i>Stable</i> democratic legitimacy  ???	Scenario III: <i>Transformation</i> of democratic legitimacy  motion/journey/traffic

The depiction of the meetings as some kind of ‘vacation activity’ in one of the citations above also entails a legitimation standard whose input or output character is somewhat ambiguous, but which we classified as non-democratic: the alleged ‘symbolic politics’ or ‘show’ character of the G7/8 and its annual events. When the *Guardian* (9 June, 2004), for instance, comments that ‘[m]any people will see the G8 summit as nothing more than a Club Med break for global leaders, where nothing is decided or properly debated,’ or when the meeting are qualified as mere ‘photo-ops,’ input aspects of ‘symbolic politics’ – such as a lack of genuine deliberation and political leadership – as well as output aspects – no major decisions are made and no effective outputs are produced – come to the fore. There are, of course, all kinds of variations on the ‘show’ theme – the meetings are then described as ‘extravaganzas of the Shah of Persia or Emperor Bokassa’ (TMS, 8 July 2005), as ‘expensive media fests that don’t deliver very much’ (GRD, 15 June 2004), as a ‘carnival of debate’ (GRD, 12 June 2007) or ‘vanity fair’ (SZ, 2 June 2007), as ‘pseudo-economic global travelling circus[es]’ or ‘giant theatre production[s] of power and money’ (SZ, 24 July 2001), as ‘relaxed part[ies] of the mighty’ (FAZ, 9 June 2009), and so on.

Evaluations in terms of non-democratic output standards – such as effectiveness – may, of course, be clad in a range of other metaphors as well, but again none of these appears to stand out clearly. Hence, for instance, we find references to ‘eight paralyzed giants’ (FAZ,

18 May 1998) and a ‘club of sclerotic people who haven’t given impulses to the global economy for years’ (FAZ, 2 July 2003). The G7/8 is a sick person, and ‘the health-spa patient is exhausted, he feels that he no longer has the energy to solve the problems of the world’ (SZ, 2 June 2007). G8 leaders, then, ‘are hiding behind each other and are stuck in a swamp of inertia’ (GRD, 6 July 2005). Or the regime is evaluated against the standard of global distributive justice, and with ‘sports’ metaphors: ‘Africa asked for a fair chance, [...]. But the leaders of the world’s richest nations refused to play ball’ (TMS, 1 July 2002). Therefore, ‘while ending poverty is a race against time, all that the G8 managed was to jog around in circles’ (GRD, 19 July 2006).

Thus the thrust of most statements and the entailments of the identified metaphors tend to be negative – even in the light of non-democratic output criteria; mixtures of metaphors are, of course, frequent – and sometimes innovative ones even take us beyond planet earth:

These meetings, in this case [Sea Island 2004] held on a small, heavily-guarded island, resemble those inter-galactic confederation congresses in big budget sci-fi films, featuring weird monsters, triumphs of special effects. You imagine him floating in on a sort of fluorescent flying saucer, wearing a cape made out of moulded blue bakelite, and with webbed fingers, or perhaps two heads. The task? To bring peace to the warring galaxies and to crush the empire of the dreaded Klingons. Or Daleks. (GRD, 15 June 2004)

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the very low number of positive evaluations of the G7/8, it is much harder to point to any characteristic metaphors with *affirmative* entailments. This dearth of salient metaphorical framings no doubt is also indicative of the regime’s legitimacy problems. We find no relevant metaphors that could underpin assessments of type I – and to be sure, it seems hard to even imagine how the G7/8 could be ‘sold’ - metaphorically or otherwise – on the basis of democratic criteria, that is, as a functioning democratic regime. But what about scenario III? The few statements that evaluate the G7/8 positively mostly do so on the basis of non-democratic input or output criteria and thus correspond to the ‘transformation of legitimacy’ scenario. On the input side, the global leadership role of the G7/8 and its members, or the regime’s function as a kind of forum for the informal, reasoned and non-conflictive deliberation of global issues and problems, are the most frequent legitimation standards. Occasionally, we find such assessments linked with, for instance, the ‘motion/journey/traffic’ field of metaphors: ‘If the most powerful politicians on earth do not steer globalization in the right direction, then who else could do it?’ (FAZ, 13 June 2007). Or, by way of personification, ‘[t]he G-8 mode is good fellowship and good manners’ (NYT, 5 June 2007). None of these, however, appear particularly salient.

Turning to the EU, there is, of course, already a burgeoning literature on the use of metaphors in European-integration discourses (Wodak and Weiss 2002; Hülsse 2003a; Musolff 2004; Drulák 2008; Walter and Hemig 2008). While we find many of the same metaphors identified in this literature as in our own material, it is worth repeating that a complete overlap cannot necessarily be expected, given the very specific nature and operationalization of the discourses and statements considered in our research.

In contrast with the G7/8, much of the IR and European-integration literature indeed expects the EU – as a supranational arrangement – to be more and more *politicized*, and hence to become a more and more important object of *legitimation discourses*. Moreover, much of this literature also expects a legitimacy deficit or problem of the European regime due to its alleged lack of democratic quality. The optimists, on the other hand, tend to put all their eggs in the basket of the ‘transformation of legitimacy’ scenario. The argument is, in a nutshell, that the EU does not need much democratic quality to be legitimated as long as it sticks to what it is ‘supposed’ to do (market integration...) and produces effective outputs. However, as our data indicates, neither the great reliance on non-democratic criteria nor the strongly negative thrust is much less pronounced in EU-related than in G7/8-related discourses. In other words, the pessimists seem to be right as far as the (de-) legitimation of the EU in media discourses goes.

Much criticism is, as expected by the ‘legitimacy deficit’ literature, of type I – and the closed, arcane, and non-transparent character of Brussels is again among the most prominent issues, which translates into similar metaphors as for the G7/8, although the ‘club’ metaphor is less prominent: ‘The landlords of the multicultural residence, the heads of state and government’ usually only compromise at summits ‘in the legendary nights of the long knives’ (SZ, 19 June 2007). Europe is ‘more of a fortress than a “family of nations”’ (NZZ, 10 December 2001). The expansion of Commission responsibilities is likened with ‘metastases’ (FAZ, 13 December 2000).

Most criticism, however, falls once again into the type II category (negative assessment, non-democratic benchmark). Extant literature has highlighted the role of ‘motion/journey/traffic’ and ‘vehicle/engine’ metaphors in academic and public discourses on the EU. Such metaphors would seem to invite or entail assessments of the EU’s performance and outputs. Our material corroborates these findings inasmuch as these metaphors are indeed prominent. However, the use of such metaphors in a *critical* sense is much more frequent than their use in an affirmative sense. Hence we learn, for instance, that the European Commission is unable to play its role as an ‘engine of the European integration process’ (FAZ, 7 December 2000), that there is an urgent need for ‘reforms that could lubricate the sluggish engine’ (SZ, 15 December 2003) of the ‘European bus’ (FAZ, 27 March

1999), which lacks a ‘swing axle’ (FAZ, 2 December 2000). Or it is suggested that Europe and its representatives are in fact immobile and have ‘one foot on the accelerator and the other on the brake’ (FAZ, 25 March 2004), as well as ‘fail[ing] to see the bumps on the road’ (TMS, 18 June 2005). In short, the ‘EU is having something worse than a crisis: it seems to have broken down completely, incapable of moving forward and too hesitant to come up with a new dynamic’ (GRD, 15 December 2003).

**Table 8** Metaphorical fields and crisis scenarios, EU

	<b>Democratic benchmarks</b>	<b>Non-democratic benchmarks</b>
<b>Delegitimation</b>	Scenario I: <i>Erosion of democratic Legitimacy</i>  <i>Social relationships:</i> family/household war/fight religion  diseases/medicine	Scenario II: <i>Collapse of democratic Legitimacy</i>  <i>Orientalional/spatial:</i> motion/journey/traffic vehicle/engine ship  festivity/show/theatre
<b>Legitimation</b>	Scenario IV: <i>Stable democratic Legitimacy</i>  ???	Scenario III: <i>Transformation of democratic legitimacy</i>  sports/games/adventure economic relationships

Here we also find the frame of merely ‘symbolic politics’ and ‘show/theatre,’ as well as ‘music:’ ‘Catharsis in Europe in Europe? More like tragedy’ (GRD, 22 June 2005) – and so there is a ‘hangover in the wake of the [Brussels summit] drama with a new villain, new heroes and many clueless players’ (SZ, 20 June 2005). As a consequence, ‘Europe may resound to a multilingual chorus of politicians singing I Always Look on the Bright Side of Life this morning, but there should be no disguising the seriousness of the situation that faces the European Union after the collapse of [an earlier] Brussels summit’ (GRD, 15 December 2003).

A second classical metaphor in the ‘journey/vehicle’ field is, of course, represented by ‘ship’ (and ‘pilot’ or ‘steering’) metaphors, whose use suggests itself in the context of legitimacy assessments in the light of the benchmark of leadership qualities (of European elites). Again, however, these are mostly used in a *critical* fashion in EU-related legitimation discourses: ‘Europe is watered down, silting up, running aground’ (FAZ, 16 December 2003), and it has ‘no wind in the sails’ (TA, 24 June 2002):

Voters, who understand this game perfectly, have put their own gloss on the claims in European Union capitals that the shipwreck of the European Commission was a European ‘success’, a date with destiny triumphantly met by the European Parliament and, in Tony Blair’s words, ‘an opportunity to be seized’. Dry eyed, they ask why, when their governments knew that these stables were waist-deep in muck, they – and Strasbourg’s coddled MEPs – had not picked up their shovels long ago. (TMS, 22 March 1999)

Various other metaphorical fields are again used to criticize the ineffectiveness of the EU and its institutions. Evaluations, for instance, draw on the field of ‘diseases/medicine’: ‘With a view to the Nice summit, the imagery of the mountain giving birth to a mouse imposes itself. Upon further inspection, however, that mouse is even seriously rachitic, [...]’ (FAZ, 13 December 2000). The member states ‘swallow the bitter reform drug only in homeopathic doses’ (NZZ, 23 March 2004). And the ‘“pause for reflection” called for by European leaders last week in Brussels is an admission of paralysis’ (NYT, 19 June 2005).

Besides the alleged ineffectiveness of the EU and its institutions, its lack of distributive justice – and its failure to produce a common European identity – are also frequently criticized and, for instance, entailed in ‘economic’ and ‘architecture/building’ metaphors. The EU, then, is described as an ‘administrative general contractor’ that ‘has remained curiously sterile intellectually, culturally and morally,’ and has not brought about ‘new public spirit beyond the economic sphere’ (NZZ, 5 December 1998). As a consequence, and besides the fact that ‘the structure of the EU is unstable’ (TA, 15 June 2005), the ‘visionary House of Europe’ is made up of ‘national condos instead of a joyous flat-sharing community of states’ (FAZ, 13 December 2000).

Again, as with the G7/8, metaphors of an affirmative kind are even scarcer than positive legitimation statements. And although Brussels itself and a part of the academic literature try hard to strengthen the democratic credentials of the EU, the dearth of metaphors that would underpin these assessments is particularly telling. Otherwise, positive evaluations are quite often mere denials of negative ones – the EU is ‘not a paralyzed bunch, but occasionally able to come up with something useful’ (SZ, 19 June 2007) – or they put forward input

and output criteria that are not genuinely democratic – the EU is a ‘joint adventure’ and ‘no zero-sum game’ (FAZ, 18 June 2005), a ‘historical project [and] a great bazaar. When time is ripe, compromise may always be found’ (NZZ, 10 December 1998).

## CONCLUSION

This contribution probed the nature of legitimacy assessments in (trans-) national political communities subject to the rule of international governance arrangements and examined the use of metaphors in G7/8 and EU-related legitimation discourses. It asked whether these two regimes are today perceived as needing – and deserving – the kind of (diffuse) support that goes by the name of legitimacy. How much support do they enjoy and what are its normative foundations? Which discursive and metaphorical practices are involved in the construction of their legitimacy?

It has, then, become apparent that the G7/8 and the EU have been reached, as it were, by the ‘master question’ (Crick 1959, 150) of political thought, namely, the justification and acceptability of political authority. We suggested that the construction of legitimacy is an essentially discursive phenomenon, and the volume of political communication on the legitimacy of the two regimes and its normative foundations has indeed become considerable, both in the academic sphere and in the media. And while survey data on their legitimacy are virtually non-existent (G7/8) or highly inconclusive (EU, Eurobarometer), our preliminary analysis of media discourses suggests a remarkably bleak picture. That picture corresponds to our ‘collapse of legitimacy’ scenario – the two international regimes not only seem to fall short in terms of democratic criteria, but even in terms of non-democratic ones. The democratic nation state – challenged as it may be in the age of globalization and in the current economic crisis – is *more* likely to be legitimated on the basis of its performance, outputs, distributive justice, or effectiveness – and on the basis of democratic criteria as well – than the G7/8 or the EU. There is, in short, little evidence that the prominent ‘transformation of legitimacy’ scenario of the academic literature is ‘bought’ by the media and the wider public of Western democracies when it comes to international regimes.

It would seem far-fetched to suggest on the basis of this tentative first foray into our material that the scope and nature of metaphor use in G7/8 and EU-related discourses is a major factor in the explanation of these findings. However, it *is* remarkable how much of the G7/8-related (type I and II) criticism may be condensed in just one or two metaphors – especially the ‘club’ metaphor – and how little traction metaphors with affirmative entailments have. Many conventional metaphorical concepts and fields are notably used to assess

the EU, but neither ‘vehicle/engine’ nor ‘family/household’ metaphors apparently have much traction as legitimation resources in media discourses.

Finally, besides a more systematic examination of our textual material, several extensions of our research will be of interest: First, we intend to include the United Nations as a third case of international (global) governance. Secondly, we intend to compare media discourses with legitimation discourses in other arenas – the academic sphere, summit communiqués of the G7/8 and EU, other political texts and speeches, etc. – in order to compare metaphor use and gauge the extent to which legitimacy assessments and their metaphorical expressions ‘travel’ between arenas or not (which does not really seem to be the case for the defenders of international legitimacy in the academic sphere and their arguments).

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