Exploring the Metaphorical (De)Construction of Legitimacy: Metaphors of Legitimation in Political Theory and Public Discourses

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Introduction
From the vantage point of the late 1980s and early 1990s, the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union seemed to have cleared the path for a global triumph of liberal democracy (Fukuyama, 1989; Huntington, 1991). With the benefit of hindsight, this expectation may of course be qualified as premature. As an export model, democracy is faced with new authoritarian and fundamentalist challenges (Mandt, 1993). But even in the western world itself, the democratic nation state no longer goes unchallenged. Talk about its performance and legitimacy crisis – already prominent in the 1970s (Crozier et al., 1975; Habermas, 1976; Hennis et al., 1977, 1979; Offe, 1972) – has returned with a vengeance. Whereas this older literature saw the crisis rooted in the internal contradictions and perverse effects of capitalism and liberal democracy, the twin processes of internationalization and deparlamentarization, which presumably undermine the autonomy and capacity of the nation state as a whole together with the decision-making and control functions of its core representative institutions, now tend to be identified as main culprits (Albrow, 1998; Dahl, 1994; Maurer and Wessels, 2001). This pessimistic assessment of representative democracy at the national level is compounded by the equally widespread perception that international regimes and supranational organizations are plagued by their own, and perhaps even more serious, legitimacy deficit (Abromeit, 1998). Yet a more sanguine minority view rejects the dominant crisis hypothesis. A couple of scholars has recently posited that legitimacy beliefs in western nations are merely undergoing a shift from democratic input to output orientation – in short, that we are faced with a transformation rather than the erosion of legitimacy (Scharpf, 1999).

Our paper takes a comparatively agnostic stance with regard to this debate. It is based on the premise that we do not know quite as much about the legitimacy of western nations as suggested by much of the extant literature. For the time being, both the crisis hypothesis and its more optimistic counterpart stand on shaky ground for at least two reasons: Often normative and empirical perspectives on legitimacy are confounded altogether. Moreover, in genuinely empirical contributions to the field, the underlying conceptualization of legitimacy and the privileged methods tend to be characteristically biased. Yet while normative and empirical perspectives may ultimately be brought together, they must definitely not be confounded at the outset. Our own focus is on the empirical dimension of legitimacy. Against the frequent assumption that the normative benchmarks provided by democratic theory also dominate this empirical dimension, we hypothesize that the disconnect between theory and actual legitimacy beliefs in the wider public may be as considerable as national variations in the nature of these beliefs. We contend that insufficient attention has so far been paid to the mechanisms
and dynamics of legitimation, and therefore make the case for a discourse analytical approach which appears to be better suited for the exploration of legitimation processes than the traditional methods of legitimacy research. We further argue that the analysis of legitimacy discourses – public communication on the legitimacy of entire political orders and their core institutions – may be complemented and strengthened by a look at the metaphorical concepts used in this particular segment of political communication and theory.

The paper is divided into two parts. In the theoretical section, we first outline the key elements and rationale of a discourse analytical approach in the field of legitimacy research and then explore the role of metaphors in the discursive (de)construction of legitimacy. In the empirical section, we present tentative findings from our own research project, a comparative study of legitimacy discourses in Great Britain, Switzerland, and the United States.¹ In the conclusion, we speculate on the consequences of our findings in the realms of political action and theory: What can we infer about the existence, scope, and nature of the democratic nation state's legitimacy crisis? What do the findings suggest about the fit between democratic theory and public communication on the legitimacy of political orders?

Mechanisms and Dynamics of Legitimation: A Discourse Analytical Approach

Is the democratic nation state indeed threatened by a pervasive and full-fledged legitimacy crisis? Or are we experiencing a mere transformation of legitimacy beliefs? Answers to these two questions greatly depend on one's understanding of legitimation and secondly, on the methods used to gauge it. Probing these questions requires us to distinguish normative and empirical concepts of legitimacy (Barker, 2001: 7ff; Beetham, 1991: 3ff). As a normative concept, legitimacy refers to a political order's acceptability in the light of evaluative benchmarks gleaned from democratic theory or other strands of political thought. Where democratic theory provides the backdrop for normative assessments of representative democracy and the nation state, the observed erosion of parliamentary functions, state autonomy and capacity tends to be diagnosed – quite unsurprisingly and plausibly – as a legitimacy crisis, and we hasten to say that we neither question the choice of democratic theory as privileged source of evaluative benchmarks nor the largely uncontroversial empirical claim that trends like inter-

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nationalization represent genuine challenges for the democratic control of political decision-making in and by the nation state.

However, it is important to be unbiased by such normative considerations in the empirical investigation of legitimate rule. As an empirical concept, legitimacy refers to the factual acceptance of political orders and their core institutions or rather, to explicit citizen support for these institutions. This support has to be distinguished from other motivations of compliance such as merely habitual obedience, coercion and the fear of sanctions, or individual cost-benefit calculations. Unlike these forms of forced or instrumental compliance, legitimacy is grounded in normative beliefs related to the acceptability of political orders, and thus we may – again quite plausibly – expect that the evaluative benchmarks provided by various strands of democratic theory underpin many of these beliefs in western nations (Barker, 1990: 21ff; Steffek, 2003: 254ff). Yet there is no reason to assume that democratic theory has become the uncontested normative yardstick, or that legitimacy beliefs prevalent in the citizenry will always converge with the normative assessments proposed by academic experts. Instead, the sources of legitimacy beliefs, the criteria used to evaluate political institutions, and the arguments made to justify such assessments are likely to vary among individuals, social groups, and entire nations.

In short, empirical legitimacy has to be understood as a multi-faceted and dynamic phenomenon, as indeed suggested by some of the most prominent contributors to legitimation theory: Max Weber's (1978) seminal threefold typology, for instance, distinguishes traditional, charismatic, and legal-rational sources of legitimacy. And just as there is no reason to assume that tradition, charismatic leadership, or any other non-democratic sources of legitimacy no longer play a role in modern societies (but see, for instance, Dogan, 1985: 117), we should not prematurely take for granted that the wider public views the processes of internationalization and deparlimentarization in the same way as the academic proponents of the crisis hypothesis. Anyone who predicts, with Tom Burns (1999: 182), that "without an effective redefinition of representative democracy's role or function, its profound incapacity and marginalization are not only likely to continue, but to contribute to a loss of faith in and support for democratic institutions," and that it "will become increasingly difficult to maintain the public image of the centrality of parliamentary democracy in the face of growing democratic deficits and substantial gaps between presumed responsibilities and actual capabilities of governing," makes quite far-reaching assumptions about the empirical nature of legitimacy beliefs – notably, that the causal link between internationalization, deparlimentarization, and the hollowing out of the state is recognized by the citizens of western nations, that it is indeed
evaluated as problematic along the lines suggested by Burns and others, that citizens focus on the institutions of representative democracy and primarily draw on democratic criteria of legitimation when they assess the legitimacy of their respective political orders, etc. In short, normative democratic theory, however watered down, is supposed to be the most important source of legitimacy beliefs for at least a majority of citizens.

By contrast, we contend that the extent to which these assumptions hold is an empirical question that has not yet been answered convincingly. People may not fully grasp the link between internationalization, deparlamentarization, and reduced state capacity. They may be much more concerned about other, including purely domestic, issues and trends. And in any case, the crisis hypothesis – understood as an empirical hypothesis – is more warranted if it can be shown that legitimacy beliefs in western nations are indeed primarily based on perceptions of representative institutions rather than, say, governments or courts, and that these institutions are usually assessed against the backdrop of democratic criteria of legitimation. As outlined above, authors like Scharpf suggest that this may no longer be the case, or at least not to the same extent as in the past. If so, both the nation state and emerging international governance arrangements like the EU might be viewed in a more positive light as long as they get things done effectively. Yet the claim that there has been a shift from democratic input to output orientation must of course be substantiated as well. Like the crisis hypothesis, it may implicitly overestimate the role of democratic criteria in the heyday of representative democracy and the nation state. And conversely, Scharpf’s view that output legitimation is a normatively unobjectionable equivalent to input legitimation need not be widely shared.

No matter what the ultimate answer to this empirical question is, it cannot be derived from normative considerations. The neo-Marxist crisis literature of the 1970s and its neo-conservative equivalent have been rightly criticized for making empirical inferences and dire predictions on the basis of essentially normative assessments while the evidence offered to corroborate these inferences and predictions was sketchy at best. Much of the current literature is vulnerable to a similar charge. Nothing of course precludes one to compare legitimacy beliefs with the normative benchmarks provided by various strands of democratic theory. Such a diagnostically approach, however, presupposes independently researched evidence on empirical legitimacy. An empirical research program, then, should have a comparative and historical thrust, enabling us to detect national variations in legitimacy beliefs, their change over time, and relevant causal factors.

2 There is certainly much anecdotal evidence for this: When citizens protest against high unemployment and welfare cuts, as most recently in Germany, they still tend to blame governments and political elites, not corporations and managers. Hence the Brandenburg gate, a stone's throw from the federal chancellery and parliament, remains a more likely gathering spot of protesters than the skyscrapers of Frankfurt.
So far two perspectives and methods – each of them highlighting a particular dimension of legitimacy – have dominated empirical work in the area. In the first perspective, legitimacy beliefs are instances of, or derived from, political attitudes. These attitudes are, in turn, measured by way of survey research. A political order's legitimacy is conceptualized as the aggregate of individual attitudes, as revealed by answers to public opinion questionnaires. Put differently, legitimacy essentially becomes a quantitatively measurable attribute of political orders and institutions (Almond and Verba, 1963; Kaase and Newton, 1995; Norris, 1999; Weatherford, 1992). The use of survey research is linked with ontological, epistemological, and methodological implications whose appropriateness may be questioned at a very general level (Dryzek, 1993; Potter, 2001; Rosenberg, 1989), or in the specific context of legitimacy research (Barker, 2001). While we do not reject the use of survey instruments in this field, we believe that it has considerable shortcomings. Due to its reactive and context-insensitive character, the survey method is unlikely to shed much light on the actual contours and sources of legitimacy beliefs, and on the processes in which they are (re)produced or transformed. Which aspects of political orders would respondents themselves highlight without the stimuli provided by questionnaires? How would they phrase and justify their legitimacy beliefs? To what extent, and under which circumstances, are the revealed attitudes and behavioral dispositions translated into political action?

The second perspective concentrates on the dimension of political behavior, and this focus has a lot of prima facie plausibility. If legitimacy is conceived as the factual acceptance of, or explicit support for, political orders and institutions, then non-compliance with their supposedly binding rules may well be interpreted as the ultimate – and in a way, the only clear – sign for a withdrawal of legitimacy. This suggests the observation of non-conventional behavior and protest events as alternative, and arguably superior, method (Klingemann and Fuchs, 1995; Norris, 1999). Moreover, various forms of conventional behavior and political rituals, including the act of voting, may be used to affirm a system's legitimacy. In both versions of observational legitimacy research, inferences can be based on natural data. However, this perspective has characteristic shortcomings as well. The most spectacular and unequivocal protest events, such as revolutions, are very infrequent and hardly to be expected any time soon in the western world. A method of empirical legitimacy research should of course enable us to make more fine-grained assessments with regard to political orders whose very existence is not (yet) at stake. The interpretation of protest activities and events, or affirmative political rituals, that do occur with a certain regularity is often difficult, though (Sniderman, 1981). For

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3 In line with Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 233), we define rituals as "repeated structured practices."
example, do low electoral participation rates indicate an erosion of legitimacy, mere indifference, or high levels of satisfaction with a system's performance? Which forms of non-conventional behavior are a sign of active civic engagement, and which indicate hostility towards a system and its key institutions? Conversely, which forms of non-compliance are motivated by self-interest and the like rather than by a denial of legitimacy? Moreover, the observation of political behavior alone does not tell us very much about the specific elements of political orders that are (de)legitimized, or about the sources and contours of legitimacy beliefs that drive people towards political action.

In short, we do not go as far as saying that the attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of legitimacy are unimportant, or that survey and observational methods are inappropriate means to capture them. But we argue that almost exclusive reliance on these dimensions and methods in empirical legitimacy research is responsible for characteristic omissions and biases. In addition to the specific shortcomings outlined above, both approaches seem ill-suited to capture the mechanisms and dynamics of legitimation processes. In each case, and not coincidentally, the role of language and communication in the (de)construction of legitimacy is downplayed. Where attitudes are gauged through survey research, there is of course some attention to the wording of questionnaires, and hence to the researcher's language use; there is no genuine communicative interaction between interviewers and respondents in the artificial survey encounter, though, and the language use of respondents is not considered.  

Where political behavior is observed, non-verbal forms of action, or their non-verbal elements, are usually the focus of interest.  

This state of affairs, then, is curiously out of step with the constructivist and linguistic turn in the social sciences, including political science (Keller, 2001, 2004; Nullmeier, 2001). The basic idea in such perspectives is of course that reality is socially constructed, that this construction of reality is essentially a linguistic or communicative phenomenon, and that language, thought and action are therefore inextricably linked. Our conceptual systems and worldviews are reflected by the speech acts through which we participate in public communication, and the very term speech acts refers to the fact the we "do things with language." However, we always do this against the background of discursive formations in which shared knowledge and norms, not the least including a set of rules for acceptable discursive contri-

4 One may therefore consider the view of language on which survey research is based as instrumental (see below).

5 Even the so-called claims analysis in research on protest behavior is primarily used to survey protest events, and hence merely complements observation (Koopmans and Rucht, 2002; Koopmans and Statham, 1999).

6 Like Lakoff and Johnson's (1980), our constructivism is moderate rather than radical in that we do not negate the existence of an objective or extra-discursive world, but insist on its mutual interaction with a socially constructed reality (on the distinction between moderate and radical, see also Hülsse, 2003: 214f).
butions themselves, are more or less firmly institutionalized. The relationship between our individual conceptual systems and discursive practices, on the one hand, and such discursive formations, on the other, is dialectical: While discursive practices are embedded in structures, the (re)production or transformation of discourses is based on these individual contributions (Drulák, 2004: 11; Hülsse, 2003: 211, 215). Finally, there is a close link between social and discursive structures, and hence communicative action and discourses are eminently political (Drulák, 2004: 2; Jarren et al., 1998). Some discursive coalitions and their positions are, for instance, hegemonic while others are marginalized.

**Figure 1 – Dimensions of Empirical Legitimacy**

We suggest that discourses provide the missing link between the attitudinal and behavioral dimensions of legitimacy, and also between political institutions whose legitimacy is at stake and citizens. Put differently, we view the (de)construction of legitimacy as an essentially communicative or discursive process which is best examined by way of a discourse analytical approach. Figure 1 illustrates what we have in mind. Let us consider the link between political attitudes and discourses first. Survey research purports to give direct access to individual belief systems – in our case, the legitimacy beliefs of respondents. Yet even if one accepts that
survey instruments adequately measure individual attitudes – i.e., capture what respondents think about political orders and institutions –, the contexts and forms of social and communicative interaction in which such beliefs are established and stabilized, or undermined and changed, remains in the dark. Hence we may not only make the methodological argument that the nature and sources of political attitudes and legitimacy beliefs is better revealed in the natural data that an analysis of political discourses provides. Instead, a discourse analytical perspective reflects the fact that attitudes and beliefs are constantly expressed and justified in individual speech acts, but also strongly influenced or even shaped by the legitimacy discourses against whose backdrop assessments of political orders and institutions are made. These discourses notably provide citizens with normative benchmarks and arguments, and whenever a system's legitimacy is evaluated, there is a "context of systems of rules which make it possible for certain statements but not others to occur at particular times, places and institutional locations" (Fairclough, 1992: 40).

Unconventional beliefs and validity claims face an uphill battle against dominant positions, and are likely to necessitate the support of explicit and persuasive arguments. Thus taking legitimacy discourses into account also guards us against inappropriately conceptualizing legitimacy as the mere aggregate of individual survey responses. As much as one may appreciate the democratic impetus that makes survey researchers operationalize legitimacy as an unweighted aggregate, it is not plausible to suggest that attitudes that only revealed in surveys, but remain marginal in discourses, have the same weight, status, or impact on overall legitimacy as assessments that are made public, are justified with success, and represent the hegemonic positions of discursive elites. In this sense, questionnaires and their interpretation themselves represent a discursive construction of reality, but not necessarily one that adequately captures the hegemonic structures built into legitimacy discourses, or the unequal distribution of power and influence with which they are arguably linked (Barker, 2001; Hülsse, 2003: 238).

Turning to the behavioral dimension, it is readily apparent that most forms of (non)conventional political action used to affirm or withdraw legitimacy are themselves communicative, or at least combined with speech acts. In general, the discursive construction of a phenomenon – say, legitimacy – also defines related options of action (Hülsse, 2003: 225), and hence legitimacy discourses are more than a linguistic representation of dominant and peripheral beliefs. They not only influence our thought, but also provide a frame for political action. Some forms of behavior will, for instance, be considered as a plausible way to affirm or contest a system's legitimacy while others will not. Some will be interpreted as
(de)legitimizing while others may be more equivocal. Moreover, the line between non-discursive and discursive action is of course blurred. Many protest activities, as well as political rituals with (potential) legitimation functions, mix discursive and non-discursive elements, or are primarily discursive.

These rituals in particular are an underexplored aspect of legitimation (Barker, 2001, drawing on Weber's often neglected insight), and they are closely linked with the center of our diagram, political institutions themselves. A system's institutions and elites may be said to be in a Janus-headed position. On the one hand, they are the reference objects of individual legitimacy beliefs and assessments, and of legitimacy discourses as a whole. On the other hand, rulers are constantly engaged in their own self-legitimation through legitimacy claims. This self-legitimation is an important form of political action. The claims advanced by rulers are, in turn, permanently debated in public communication. They may have more or less impact on the structures of legitimacy discourses. Here we come full circle: attitudes are established in the context of discourses, and the claims advanced by political and discursive elites are likely to be privileged. Even where specific elite claims are rejected, it is unlikely that competing discursive contributions may entirely ignore them. Finally, institutional arrangements and political cultures represent mediating variables that affect the structures of legitimacy discourses, and hence may, for instance, have a role in exacerbating or damping the negative impact of internationalization processes on legitimacy beliefs.

In short, the speech acts in which rulers and subjects evaluate political orders and institutions as (il)legitimate, the way such assessments are justified, and legitimacy discourses as a whole play a crucial role in the creation and maintenance, or in the erosion and transformation, of legitimacy. And yet neither the discursive expression of legitimacy beliefs nor the discursive mobilization of regime support through legitimacy claims and rituals of self-legitimation has so far received much attention in empirical legitimacy research. A discourse analytical approach, by contrast, implies a focus on the essentially discursive (de)construction of legitimacy as a process in which both subjects and rulers engage. Which are the major discursive coalitions and elites, what are their respective positions, and how are they (re)produced or changed? Which positions are dominant, and how is discursive hegemony established or challenged? This is a perspective that is less interested in the measurement of legitimacy, understood as an attribute of political orders, than in the mechanisms and dynamics of legitimation, the sources and contours of underlying beliefs and claims, the arguments used to support validity claims, etc. We suggest that it should complement traditional perspectives and methods, and has the potential to correct for their implicit omissions and biases.
Metaphorical Concepts in Legitimacy Discourses: An Extension of the Discourse Analytical Approach

We now examine the role of metaphors in the discursive (de)construction of legitimacy. To what extent, and why, does a discourse analytical perspective on legitimation processes require their consideration? There is no doubt, and it is well-documented, that metaphorical and other figurative language is pervasive in political communication – i.e., both in action-oriented political speech acts and in the language of political thought (Hülsse, 2003: 211). We will draw on some of this literature below in establishing our own very preliminary typology of political metaphors in legitimacy discourses.7 It would in fact be utterly surprising if discourses concerned with the evaluation of political orders and their core institutions did not contain any, or most, of the metaphors identified in the extant literature. The confirmation of their presence in legitimacy-related public communication does not promise much analytical value-added, though, and Reinhard Wesel's (1995: 201f) criticism of work that has produced mere catalogues of metaphors is certainly apposite here. Justifying the claim that the analysis of metaphors, figurative language, and rhetorical strategies (Charteris-Black, 2005) should be an integral part of the discourse analytical approach requires a few words on our understanding of metaphors. The ultimate task is to show that metaphors (may) indeed play a genuine role in the (de)construction of legitimacy.

We start with a generic definition of metaphors as instances of figurative language that link concepts from two areas – a source and a target domain – in order to express "one thing in terms of another" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Every understanding of metaphors, and of their role in thought and action, is of course rooted in a particular view of language (Wesel, 1995: 202ff). Two opposing camps have to be distinguished, and it will hardly come as a surprise at this point that we squarely position ourselves in the constructivist tradition that dominates today, thus rejecting the instrumental view of language. In this view, to which the classical substitution and comparison theories of metaphor (as labelled by Black, 1962) belong, no strong link between language, conceptual systems, and an entirely objective reality is assumed to exist, but the use of "literal" expressions is thought to enable the "exact" representation of that reality. Positing a radical opposition between "literal" and figurative language, the view's proponents consider metaphors to be superfluous under most circumstances, and hence perceive them as a marginal phenomenon. Lack of an appropriate word (catachresis) or stylis-

7 This literature has, for instance, identified and categorized metaphors in the classical texts of western political thought, the range of metaphors that refer to specific objects of legitimation, or metaphors that emerge in specific policy fields. Others have traced particular metaphorical concepts and fields in some text corpus.
tic motivations may give rise to metaphors, but do not have any semantic relevance in either case. In the former case, metaphorical expressions are quickly lexicalized, thus becoming "literal." The use of metaphors as rhetorical flourish, on the other hand, merely relates to the form, not to the content of propositions. Hence the evocative function of metaphors (Rigotti, 1994: 19) is acknowledged: metaphors enable a speaker to stimulate particular associations, memories, and emotions in a hearer's mind, the pleasant surprise created by stylistic variations and innovations may advance the purpose of "captatio benevolentiae," etc. Yet intended meanings can always be conveyed just as well, and in fact more precisely, through "literal" expressions. At worst, the use of metaphors may obscure meanings and impede our linguistic access to reality. Moreover, these limited evocative and persuasive functions are thought to be prone to abuse for manipulative purposes (for an early critique of the idea that metaphors lie, see Weinrich, 1974).

The instrumental view has long been the basis for a criticism of metaphors and other figurative language in political communication that might, at first glance, seem to be germane to our own preoccupations. A metaphor analysis of (de)legitimation processes along those lines would presumably focus on the (ab)use of metaphorical expressions in the self-legitimation of political elites. Yet this trivial language criticism is obviously not what we have in mind. We need not dwell on the limitations of the instrumental view at great length here (see, for instance, Kurz, 1982: 11ff). Suffice it to say that we do not see how metaphors could at the same time be an epiphenomenon and have the alleged manipulative potential. If metaphorical expressions were indeed easily recognized and could always just as easily be translated into "literal" ones, then it would seem more effective to couch validity claims and supporting arguments in "literal" expressions under most circumstances. The risk to obscure a message would be greater than the chance to strengthen it by way of the evocative function, for a "rational" hearer should value the authenticity of "literal" expressions. The use of metaphors would arguably be associated with weak claims, immediately alerting a sophisticated hearer to the speaker's manipulative intent. If, on the other hand, metaphors can indeed have genuine evocative, persuasive, or manipulative functions – and we believe they can –, then "literal" translations are no longer equivalent to metaphorical expressions (Wesel, 1995: 211). Finally, it is inappropriate to assume that metaphors are always employed intentionally, whether with a manipulative intent or not. The extent to which this is so is itself an empirical question (Wesel, 2004: 70).

In the constructivist perspective, the instrumental view with its distinction between "literal" and metaphorical expressions and its normative overtones of (im)proper language use
is of course rejected, and metaphorical propositions may be as "true" as "literal" ones. If one subscribes to the view that reality is socially constructed, that the construction of reality is essentially a linguistic phenomenon, and hence that we perceive and negotiate the world by way of discursive practices, then language, thought and action become inextricably linked. By the same token, metaphors cease to be an exclusively linguistic or marginal phenomenon: "The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 5). The speaker's active juxtaposition of two concepts in a metaphorical expression and the hearer's equally active understanding create a new meaning that transcends the meanings of the isolated source and target domains (Black, 1962; Wesel, 1995: 206). In other words, the social or discursive construction of reality is essentially metaphorical, and metaphors are pervasive because they are epistemological instruments with key cognitive functions (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 3, 144; Hülsse, 2003: 213). We speak in metaphorical terms because our thought processes, conceptual systems, and worldviews are metaphorical in nature, and in shaping our thought, metaphors also guide action. One may even, as do Lakoff and Johnson, qualify entire forms of behavior like arguing as metaphorically structured (see also Blumenberg, 2001).8

If anything, the relationship between language, thought and action may be expected to be more intimate in the political sphere than elsewhere (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 159; Miller, 1979; Wesel, 1995: 210).9 Most political communication is action-oriented, and political action is based on what we believe to be true – there is a link between attitudes and behavioral dispositions, as suggested above. Yet if our conceptual systems are indeed metaphorically structured, then metaphors can, for instance, be used in political debates and conflicts to "sanction actions, justify inferences, and help us set goals" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 142), thus becoming a "license for policy change and political and economic action" (156), or they may help to contest the validity claims and arguments of one's opponent. Buying into metaphors that are linked with competing political ideologies and action programs thus often goes hand in hand with the acceptance of their substance. In a similar vein, the discursive (de)construction of legitimacy, including forms of (non)conventional political behavior that serve to affirm or withdraw legitimacy, is likely to be interwoven with metaphorical concepts, or metaphorically structured. If metaphors are more than rhetorical instruments,

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8 Again, our position is moderate, or verificationist, in that we consider a look "behind" metaphors – their discursive explication and criticism – to be possible and meaningful, at least in principle (Wesel 1995: 212f).
9 However, there are few, if any, specifically political metaphors, although certain metaphorical concepts and fields have played a particularly important role in the history of ideas and political thought. Yet while a considerable overlap between the metaphors of political communication and other discursive arenas is to be expected, precisely which metaphors are privileged in the former, and what their entailments are, may suggest a lot about the contours of national political cultures (Wesel 1995: 209ff).
their use may enhance or undermine the acceptance of legitimacy-related validity claims and their supporting arguments, and hence underpin the (de)construction of legitimacy. A metaphor analysis is worth undertaking and promises valuable insights into legitimation processes if the "strong" hypotheses implied in the constructivist perspective on metaphors can be substantiated.

In order to understand the potential role of metaphors in (de)legitimation processes, we have to consider their functions and types in more detail. The functions of metaphors may, at the most basic level, be divided into cognitive and persuasive ones, both of which play a role in political communication and theory (Wesel 1995: 207f). The use of metaphors as epistemological and heuristic instruments is Lakoff and Johnson's starting point. The idea here is that metaphors play a similar role for the everyday comprehension and mastering of the world as more elaborate models in the sciences: in a more implicit and condensed fashion, they simplify and reduce complexity, thus helping us to handle information, and to understand or explain things in the world (Black, 1962: 219-43). By structuring information, they create order and give meaning to otherwise incomprehensible phenomena. Not the least, metaphors may be used to get a hold on the often complex working of political institutions and social relationships, or to articulate and clarify the many abstract concepts and difficult issues that abound in the political sphere (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 177; Miller, 1979). An unobservable concept like legitimacy immediately comes to mind here. This use of metaphors as heuristic devices always entails an element of innovation, a shift from help in the understanding of the world to the generation of knowledge and the outright construction of social reality, and hence one may also speak of constitutive functions.

This set of functions is closely related with Lakoff and Johnson's insistence on the experiential basis of metaphorical concepts. The choice of a metaphor's source and target domain is rarely, if ever, arbitrary. Instead, metaphorical expressions tend to frame the unknown in terms of the familiar, the abstract in terms of the concrete, and less in terms of more clearly delineated concepts (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 58ff). While there is no clear distinction between directly emergent concepts and metaphors, few concepts are understood directly. The grounding of emergent metaphorical concepts may be provided by our individual bodily experience, or by our interaction with the physical and social environment. And while there is no clear distinction between the physical and social environment – physical and social experiences may be equally basic –, it is nevertheless typical to conceptualize non-physical experiences in terms of physical ones. Lakoff and Johnson's distinction of orientational, ontological, and structural metaphors is closely related to this idea of experiential grounding. Although
these types have been criticized as non-distinct (Klein, 2002: 229), they remain a useful point of departure in the construction of a typology of political and legitimacy-related metaphors. In the following, we combine Lakoff and Johnson's basic categories with metaphorical fields that have been identified by the literature on political metaphors and are prominent in our own text corpus. We shortly outline their potential relevance for political communication in general and legitimacy discourses in particular. Our ultimate interest lies with the implicit legitimation theory or evaluative connotations supported by each set of metaphors.

Lakoff and Johnson's first type, orientational and spatial metaphors, are directly and firmly grounded in the physical experience of human beings (their erect position and motor functions), and hence particularly basic and non-arbitrary. These fundamental metaphorical concepts are pervasive and largely unrecognized in everyday language, in the supposedly abstract language of the sciences, and in political communication. A couple of important subgroups may be distinguished, and all of them can be used for merely descriptive purposes or linked with evaluative connotations: up-down, top-bottom, and high-low; vertical-horizontal; front-back and forward-backward, in(side)-out, center-periphery, and near-far; left-right. As illustrated by Lakoff and Johnson, up is generally associated with more and better, but in political communication, this directionality may very much depend on one's normative outlook. The standard directionality is in line with positions that favor hierarchical political orders and strong leadership. By contrast, the term "die da oben" ("the top dogs") for the government or the political class, has a clearly negative connotation in German and may thus be linked with complaints about a system's barriers to democratic participation, or about its lack of accountability and responsiveness. In a similar vein, a concept like "grassroots democracy" implies a positive connotation of low. Comparable examples can be found for the second subgroup (vertical-horizontal) as well.

The third subgroup (front-back and forward-backward) may, for instance, be used to qualify political objectives and ideologies as progressive v. reactionary (the very term progress belongs to this group), or to evaluate political actors as active v. passive. While forward and movement usually receive a positive connotation, this may, once again, depend on normative positions, and of course forward can have substantively different meanings for different actors. Finally, it is only a small step from this group to more elaborate journey (path, road, speed) metaphors (Musolff, 2001: 179ff). The fourth subgroup (in[side]-out, center-periphery, and near-far) represents yet another way of conceptualizing spatial relationships that is frequently used in political communication. The center is of course associated with more power, but in normative assessments, terms like "inner circle" or "inside the beltway"
may, once again, be negatively connoted – and terms like "outsider" positively – where hierarchical relationships, or a lack of accountability and responsiveness, are criticized. How metaphorical expressions are poled greatly depends on one's view of one's own relative status, and the self-other or us-them dichotomy with its strong evaluative overtones is therefore closely linked with this group. The fifth subgroup, left-right metaphors, is obviously pervasive in political communication, too, but usually refers to competing political actors and ideological orientations rather than government institutions. However, it must be kept in mind that the origin of the left-right dichotomy is not entirely arbitrary, as it may be linked with the physical experience of right-handedness whose translation into evaluative meanings is exemplified by words like "sinister."

Lakoff and Johnson's second major type, ontological metaphors, remains close to both physical experience and spatial metaphors. We experience ourselves as entities with distinct boundaries, made up of substances, and widely use container and substance metaphors to express abstract concepts and ideas. Hence ontological metaphors translate abstract notions into ones that can be grasped, measured, exchanged and stored, etc. States, political communities, and social groups are frequently depicted as containers in political communication (Chilton, 1996: 50f). Several subgroups may, again, be distinguished. The first, organic metaphors, draws its source domains from the animate and the second, from the inanimate world. While natural forces and processes are often comprehended by way of ontological metaphors, political institutions and social relationships are, in turn, frequently linked with such forces in metaphors.

Personification is the most basic and widely used subcase of organic metaphors. By way of personification, a broad range of human qualities can be imputed to objects that are not human, and these are, in turn, understood and evaluated in terms of human activities, motivations, or personality traits. Thus expressions like "body politic" and "Vater Staat" depict the state or government as a human body with its organs and members, each with their assigned functions, or as a person. The essentially conservative implication of these metaphors, which can easily be extended from a single person to a family, is of course that states and political communities are "natural" entities with equally "natural" identities, that hierarchical political or social orders are justified, etc. (Chilton and Lakoff, 1995: 39ff).

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10 One particular variation of ontological metaphors, Michael Reddy's (1993) conduit metaphors in language about language, is of interest in the context of our criticism of survey instruments in legitimacy research: "The speaker puts ideas (objects) into words (containers) and sends them (along a conduit) to a hearer who takes the idea/objects out of the word/containers" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 10). The questionable implication, which public opinion research more or less shares, is that words and sentences have meanings in themselves, independent of context or speaker. Yet as the context does matter, and sentences may mean different things to different people, political attitudes revealed by questionnaires must be taken with a grain of salt.
While human beings (or beings of somewhat unclear status like "Leviathan") are the source domain of personification, other metaphors drawing on the animate world are also frequent in political communication, including a wide range of animal and, more rarely, plant metaphors ("branches of government"), as well as agrarian metaphors that link animals, plants, and human beings. All of these organic metaphors can be developed by drawing on key concepts of biology, evolutionary theory, and medicine. Both individuals and species go through a life cycle that encompasses the stages of birth and growth, maturity, decay and death, with phases of health and illness along the way. The very term crisis, as in legitimacy crisis, is a medical one. Metaphors belonging to these groups are rich in potential evaluative connotations – often with a conservative bias –, too. For instance, references to a political leader as "shepherd" with her "flock," to societies as "beehives," or to the "roots" of a political order, may sanction hierarchical relationships and tradition as a valid basis of legitimation, the precedence of reasons of state over individual needs and preferences (Rigotti 1994: 21), etc. Personification, family and organic metaphors alike imply clear boundaries between in(side) and out, as well as the integration, solidarity, and common purpose of body parts, family members, etc. Hence conflict-based and egalitarian views of politics are at odds with this field of metaphors: all must collaborate in order to ensure survival, and without questioning their assigned roles and functions; the whole is more important than the sum of its parts. Finally, the neo-realist imagery of states as "natural" political units is compatible with the field while the imagery of hollowed out and porous states in the "post-national constellation" with its manifold transnational relations is not. In which metaphorical terms the nation state is viewed may therefore, not the least, influence how the effects of globalization on its capacity, democratic quality, and legitimacy are perceived.

In a similar fashion, the substances and materials of the inanimate world may serve as source domains of metaphors. A system's legitimacy may, for instance, erode and like other key political concepts (power, trust, etc.), it may be viewed as a resource or commodity. Metaphors drawing on the inanimate world and natural forces became more prominent with scientific and technological process, and hence many terms gleaned from Newtonian physics have entered the political language since its discovery by the theorists of classical liberalism ("balance" or "concentration of power," "equilibrium," "social forces," etc.). Finally, metaphors of day and night, light and darkness, transparency and opaqueness, as well as wakening and dreaming, are both closely linked with basic elements of physical experience and frequent in political communication, where the positive and negative connotations of light and darkness are widely used. The criterion of transparency is closely associated with notions of de-
mocratic quality and legitimacy, to the point where it is translated into the architecture of par-
liamentary buildings.

Lakoff and Johnson's third major type, structural metaphors, is grounded in systematic
correlations within our experience, and hence provides means to elaborate the basic meta-
phorical concepts associated with the two other categories (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 61).
Building upon spatial and ontological metaphors, structural metaphors are one step removed
from our immediate experience, but the dividing line is not clearcut. Hence the frequent ar-
chitectural or building metaphors in everyday and political language may of course be viewed
as a subcase of container metaphors. They represent states or other political arrangements as a
house, with a foundation and structural parts like walls, a roof, and pillars. Like organic meta-
phors, architectural ones, for instance, suggest clear boundaries between in(side) and out, and
an equally clear distinction between members ("tenants"), "guests," and "intruders." In a
similar vein, machine, clockwork and other mechanical metaphors are linked with the physi-
cal ones described above. They notably suggest that there is something "automatic" about the
"functioning" of a well-constructed political order, that a "broken" part of the machine can
and must be "fixed," etc. This view on governance may, then, highlight output criteria like
efficiency and effectiveness.

A final and important subgroup of structural metaphors in political communication
may be called "interaction" metaphors (see also Drulák, 2004, with a similar list). Their com-
mon feature is that they conceive of political behavior in terms of some other form of social
interaction, ranging from family life to war as the most violent form of interaction between
human beings. We already encountered family metaphors in the context of personification.
They may, however, be extended and given a different twist in the direction of household
metaphors which are, in turn, linked with building metaphors. The whole imagery of "clean"
and "dirty," and of traditional fiber crafts (see expressions like "social fabric") comes to mind
here, as do "returning home" metaphors (Hülssse, 2003: 232).

Not much has to be said about the very classical nautical metaphors, with the state as a
ship and its ruler or government as captain or pilot who steers it through tides and waves, pre-
vents capsizing, reaches a safe haven, etc. This field is not unlike organic metaphors in that it
stresses the boundaries between "insiders" (the ship and crew) and a more or less hostile and
dangerous surrounding world.11 The metaphorical field suggests that like a ship and crew
exposed to natural forces, political communities need internal unity and solidarity to weather

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11 As is well-documented, the field is therefore pervasive in migration discourses (Jung et al., 1997).
external dangers. The hierarchical distribution of responsibilities is not to be questioned, and strong leadership is needed.12

The next subgroup conceives of politics as a form of entertainment or show business, as a cultural or musical performance, or as theater. Unlike the following group, it does not highlight competition, but rather a threeway relationship of spectators and political actors (in the political "arena," "playing their role" on the political "stage," etc.). The evaluative connotations of this metaphorical field can go either way – the show aspect of politics may be appreciated or deplored. Where, on the other hand, politics is represented as a game or a sports competition with two (teams of) players, winners and losers, its competitive aspects are highlighted. Again, the use of such metaphorical concepts may underpin positive or negative assessments. Competition is obviously a core entailment of market and business metaphors of politics as well. The game and business metaphors are privileged and positively connotated where the equation of politics and the market is the core of a theoretical or a political action program, as in rational and public choice, game theory, and neoclassical economics. If output criteria like efficiency and effectiveness have indeed become more important in legitimacy discourses, one might therefore expect these metaphors to flourish along with, for instance, machine metaphors.

On the other hand, it is only a small step from business metaphors to politics as a "dirty" business or an outright criminal activity, another classical metaphor going back as far as Saint Augustine's characterization of rulers as "gangs of thugs." Modern theorists like Charles Tilly have taken up this metaphor in conceptualizing the state as "organized crime" that engages in "racketeering." While Tilly's purpose is descriptive and explanatory, a normative criticism of, for instance, the welfare state may draw on metaphorical expressions like these. One step further, politics may be conceptualized as war, and related metaphorical expressions are of course ubiquitous in political communication. The accent on the competitive nature and polarization of politics into friends and foes is here driven to the extreme. How this metaphorical field is used will, once again, depend on one's evaluation of the conflict-prone nature of politics. Finally, religious or theological metaphors, which may be linked with any of the other subgroups, leave aspects of social interaction behind and enter the sphere of interaction with God. Such metaphors may of course be used to confer the dignity or awe-inspiring quality of religious faith and divine wisdom on political institutions and actors, and hence to create "Glaube an den transzendentalen Charakter des Staatswesens, das außerhalb und oberhalb der Individuen lebt" (Rigotti 1994: 20).

12 Osborne and Gaebler's "rowing" and "steering" metaphor has extended nautical metaphors in a new direction.
Two other key arguments made by Lakoff and Johnson are germane to our own preoccupation with the discursive and metaphorical (de)construction of legitimacy. The first concerns the internal and external systematicity of metaphorical concepts and their entailments. Few metaphors are used in an isolated fashion. Linking individual metaphorical concepts with compatible entailments together in multi-dimensional metaphorical fields, or experiential gestalts, is a way "of organizing experiences into structured wholes" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 44, 81). This structuring of recurrent human experiences, which merges the ordering and meaning provided by individual metaphorical expressions into a coherent worldview, may be partial or complete. One such gestalt – Lakoff and Johnson's (1980: 88f, 98) example of arguing as a metaphorical concept – may be used to illustrate the point. Its relevance for us stems from the fact that we conceptualize legitimation statements as evaluative propositions usually coupled with an argument. A (rational) argument, then, is at least expected to have a specific content (supporting evidence, etc.), to progress from widely shared and taken-for-granted premises in a structured fashion, with appropriate logical connections, to be clearly expressed, etc. These expectations, in turn, are entrenched in discourses. On the other hand, deliberative conceptualizations of democracy (and related criteria of legitimization) reject the "argument is war" metaphor altogether. In any case, a shift from one particular "structured whole" with its entailments to another one may have important consequences for political belief systems and behavioral dispositions.

Lakoff and Johnson's insistence on the fact that experiential gestalts captured in metaphors are culturally entrenched is more important still in the context of our discourse analytical approach to legitimacy. The precise way in which physical or social experiences are translated into metaphors by individuals in part depends on this cultural entrenchment. Hence the systematicity and entailments of particular metaphorical concepts and fields may differ between social groups (mainstream and subcultures), or between entire language and political communities.13 With this idea, the focus shifts from the individual and cognitive to the aggregate and discursive levels (Hülsse, 2003: 220). The structuring of dominant metaphorical concepts and fields in particular groups and cultures is anchored, and becomes manifest, in discourses. These metaphorical concepts and fields may be embedded in broader national myths, narratives, or rituals that integrate and characterize political communities and cultures.14

13 For instance, although spatial metaphors tend to cut across cultures, the orientational patterns may vary. Some cultures value up less than we do but rather centrality or balance, or non-spatial metaphors like active-passive (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 24). In a similar vein, Cooper and Ross (1975) observe that "our culture's view of what a prototypical member of our culture is like determines an orientation of concepts within our conceptual system" (quoted in Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 32).
14 According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 185f), "[m]yths provide ways of comprehending experience; they give order to our lives. (…). All cultures have myths, and people cannot function without myth any more than
The idea of a cultural entrenchment of metaphors – and of discourses as the media that transport them – is, in turn, tied to the traditional distinction between dead, or lexicalized, and live metaphors, or between conventional and innovative (creative, imaginative) ones in Lakoff and Johnson's terminology.\(^\text{15}\) The underlying imagery here is the life cycle, and hence a temporal dynamics. Every metaphor starts as an innovative one, explaining the unknown by way of the familiar, or combining familiar concepts in a new way, thus expressing "eine noch nicht gesellschaftlich legitimierte Erfahrung oder Erkenntnis" (Köller, 1975: 259) or even creating a new reality. As conventional metaphors have used and unused parts, three different forms of imaginative metaphors may be distinguished: (a) extending the used part of a conventional metaphor; (b) drawing on its unused part; (c) inventing an entirely novel metaphor. While categories (a) and (b) represent "normal" metaphorical development, genuinely innovative metaphors are rare, and most are idiosyncratic and unsystematic, remaining peripheral or disappearing as quickly as they emerge.

Some, however, eventually achieve the status of conventional metaphors, or "metaphors we live by" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 145). These systematic, habitualized metaphors, the stabilizing "constants" (Hülsse, 2003: 222), "basic" (Donati, 1992: 153) or "vital" (Chilton and Lakoff, 1995: 37) elements of discourses, are used in everyday language and "structure the ordinary conceptual system of our culture" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 139). Serving as "discursive nodes" (Diez, 2001: 15-9), they also help to (re)integrate discursive arenas and contributions. And while individuals may of course continue to differ in their preferences and values, conventional metaphors embody the shared background knowledge and norms, commonplaces (Black, 1962), or common sense of language communities (Drulák, 2004: 8f), thus producing a widely unquestioned and supposedly unequivocal reality (Hülsse, 2003: 223; Milliken, 1999). Conventional metaphors invite us to perceive things in a particular fashion, to draw specific conclusions, and to agree with or embark on a specific path of action (Drulák, 2004: 4). The highlighting, downplaying and hiding effects linked with the cognitive functions of metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 10) appear writ large at the discursive level. Yet much of this remains unrecognized and in any case, speakers are, to a large extent, forced to draw on the stock of metaphors provided by discourses (Hülsse, 2003: 220).

\(^{15}\) Drulák (2004) further differentiates between sedimented and conventional metaphors in his threefold typology.
Even a conscious and critical speaker may be unable to escape dominant metaphors, and hence become a victim of "metaphorical inversion" (Wesel, 2004: 72).

This brings us back to the political relevance of metaphors and the discourses in which they are embedded, and to the role of conventional metaphors in the discursive construction of legitimacy. As suggested above, the pragmatic functions of metaphors count even more in the political sphere than elsewhere – metaphors work if they satisfy or help to justify an action-oriented purpose. Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 236) vividly express this political dimension of metaphors when they write that

"no political ideology addresses the main issue head-on. (...) Political and economic ideologies are framed in metaphorical terms. Like all other metaphors, political and economic metaphors can hide aspects of reality. But in the area of politics and economics, metaphors matter more, because they constrain our lives. A metaphor in a political or economic system, by what it hides, can lead to human degradation."

To influence political attitudes, enable and shape behavior, or frame issues, metaphors usually have to be evident, perhaps redundant, linking mutually supportive metaphorical concepts and fields with the experiences and interests of the audience (Wesel 1995: 210). Yet which metaphors prevail in public discourses is of course a political question itself:

"Most of our metaphors have evolved in our culture over a long period, but many are imposed on us by people in power – political leaders, (...), the media, etc. In a culture where the myth of objectivism is very much alive and truth is always absolute truth, the people who get to impose their metaphors on the culture get to define what we consider to be true – absolutely and objectively true." (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 159f)

The commonplaces linked with conventional metaphors are most likely to have a depoliticizing and affirmative impact, thus serving dominant or hegemonic positions (Hülsse, 2003: 223; Wesel 1995: 212). In some cases, metaphors may do this by creating or sustaining ambiguity rather than the impression of "natural" positions and an unequivocal reality. The occasional vagueness of metaphors enables speakers to make "outrageous" claims that might otherwise have to be left unsaid, and to make them acceptable (Hülsse, 2003: 224; Rigotti, 1994: 13). We may thus expect that the self-legitimation claims and rituals of political elites, and the discursive construction of legitimacy writ large, often draw on, and are fostered by, conventional metaphors that shed a positive light on political orders and institutions, thus

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16 However, conventional metaphors may not only, and not necessarily, be linked with substantively conservative positions (Wesel, 1995: 211).
pushing both legitimacy beliefs and legitimacy-related political behavior in an affirmative direction.

While it is usually difficult to transform or replace conventional metaphors, just as it is difficult to change discursive structures, the stability of discourses and entrenched metaphors is not absolute, though, and "[m]uch of cultural change arises from the introduction of new metaphorical concepts and the loss of old ones" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Innovative metaphors that react to a change in the environment, support learning processes, or offer a new perspective on reality, provide a coherence of their own that may make them successful competitors of conventional metaphors (Black, 1993: 25; Drulák, 2004). As suggested above, the introduction of new metaphors may be evolutionary, or it may be abrupt and entail overt challenges to the received wisdom of conventional metaphors and the rules entrenched in discourses.

Again, the political relevance of this, also in the context of (de)legitimation processes, is obvious. Metaphors can have both de- and repoliticizing effects. The eruption of political debates and conflicts, and the rise to prominence of previously marginal political and discursive positions, may be indicated by the emergence and ultimate success of creative metaphors. In the context of (de)legitimation processes, idiosyncratic and peripheral metaphors that do not challenge traditional legitimation resources and styles can thus safely be ignored. Yet if innovative metaphors become more frequent in the expression of legitimacy claims and beliefs, catch on in important segments of legitimacy discourses, or even replace conventional metaphors, they may be interpreted as evidence for change in the underlying structures of legitimacy discourses. This change may come in the form of a delegitimation of political orders and their core institutions, or in the form of their relegitimation on the basis of new evaluative criteria and supporting arguments.

The potential role of metaphors in political communication and legitimacy discourses indeed raises questions related to the purposive use of discursive and metaphorical strategies in the political sphere. Who has the power to (re)produce successful conventional metaphors, or to challenge and replace them? How can this be achieved? Yet while metaphors do have persuasive functions and may be used for manipulative purposes, a focus on the manipulative intent of individual speakers overestimates both the frequency of innovative metaphors

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17 The persuasiveness of metaphors may be linked with any of their cognitive and evocative functions, but not every conventional or innovative metaphor is used intentionally and "consequential." The dividing line between persuasion and manipulation runs where there is a manipulative intent, it is concealed, and the metaphorical construction of reality is not perceived by the audience (Wesel, 1995: 209).
and the chances of strategic language use by individuals,\(^{18}\) and hence arguably misses out on the much more important aspect – namely, the nature and entailments of commonplaces expressed in, and transported by, metaphors and other elements of political or legitimacy discourses (Wesel, 1995: 210).

The sources of these metaphors and related commonplaces are of particular interest in the study of discursive and metaphorical (de)construction processes. Where have the conventional metaphors that support the legitimacy of the democratic nation state, as well as the innovative metaphors challenging and perhaps supplanting them, originated? Are they rooted in our common western and Judeo-Christian heritage, in the texts of ancient philosophers and classical liberalism, or other sources? To what extent do ideas and metaphors advanced by political theorists trickle down to public discourses, and what happens to them in the process? Many authors, including Rigotti (1994), assume much homogeneity in the use of metaphors, which would imply that they play a similar role in the (de)construction of legitimacy across western nations. Yet there may of course be national variation in the sources and the dominant ways to express and substantiate legitimacy beliefs and claims, just as there are national traditions of political thought, national political cultures, and national differences in political language, rituals, and symbols writ large. Hence famous texts written by the literary "heroes" of political and language communities (Shakespeare, Goethe), or key documents like the Declaration of Independence, the Federalist Papers and the Gettysburg Address in the U.S. case, may serve as national sources both of evaluative criteria and of favored metaphors. Conversely, there may be specific taboos with respect to both, such as expressions that smack of the language of national socialism in the German case.

Finally, what is the role of democratic and legitimation theory in all of this? The use of metaphors is not only pervasive in the action-oriented political communication that elites and citizens are engaged in. Instead, metaphors – or models as extended metaphors – are almost as widespread in the sciences, including the discipline of political theory. Even the suggestion that the cognitive and heuristic functions of metaphors outweigh persuasive ones in the academic sphere may not always be entirely accurate. In any case, examples of essentially metaphorical concepts – (balance of) power, equilibrium, game, lock-in, path dependency, to name but a few – abound in political science and theory. The reason for the use of metaphors is the same as in political communication writ large – political reality is inherently complex; its description and explanation is facilitated by metaphors that improve our grasp on abstract concepts, and in many cases, the constitutive role of such metaphors is pronounced.

\(^{18}\) Thus, for instance, it seems a bit far-fetched to suggest with Rigotti (1994: 39) that president Carter lost his re-election bid because he did not offer enough catchy and rich metaphors.
The metaphorical conceptualization of legitimacy in political theory can be studied at two levels. At the first level, one may search for metaphorical expressions contained in propositions that advance and justify specific normative benchmarks of legitimacy. The proposition that popular sovereignty, or whatever, should be the most important criterion in assessing a political order's legitimacy may thus be supported by figurative language. Identifying the metaphors in which such criteria are wrapped in the theoretical literature and verifying, in the next step, to what extent they trickle down to wider legitimacy discourses corresponds to Drulák's (2004: 7) deductive top-down approach. In many cases, legitimacy claims and beliefs may be grounded in an implicit legitimation theory linked to its more elaborate counterpart in the academic literature through common or similar metaphors. However, as suggested above, there may also be a considerable disconnect both in the substance and the metaphorical structuring of formal legitimation theory and publicly communicated legitimacy claims and beliefs.

At a more basic level still, one might ask if legitimacy itself is a metaphorical concept, and what its entailments and structures are. We are as yet unable to present more than first impressions related to this line of research. The phenomenon of legitimacy – vague as it is – would indeed appear to be a likely candidate for such a metaphorical conceptualization. As suggested above, it has been a major preoccupation of normative legitimacy research to provide an adequate basis for legitimacy assessments while empirical research has concentrated on making legitimacy measurable. The terminology and metaphorical concepts of these two strands very much reflect these preoccupations. In the normative literature, we find traces of the religious grounding of legitimacy in much pre-democratic theorizing in the very notion of legitimacy beliefs (Weber's "Legitimitätsglaube"). The idea that legitimacy is, and must be, based on sources (Carl Schmitt's (1993) "Legitimitätsquellen") – and that related validity claims must, by extension, have a "proper" grounding and argumentative form – is also expressed in nature and architectural metaphors (foundations of legitimacy, "Legitimationsschranken," etc.) that have become standard legal terms. In the empirical strand, ontological metaphors are crucial. It is the conceptualization as a substance that makes legitimacy measurable, a quantifiable resource that can be cultivated or produced, offered or withdrawn, exhausted or saved ("Legitimationsreserven"). There is only a small step from these ontological to physical ("Legitimationskraft, -potential") and economic metaphors, and hence to the concept of a legitimacy deficit, legitimation as a zero-sum game, etc. It is hard to step outside these metaphorical conceptualizations of legitimacy, which notably underpin the public opinion approach, but it helps to be aware of them in empirical legitimacy research.
National Legitimacy Discourses and Metaphorical Concepts: Findings from Great Britain, Switzerland, and the United States

Operationalizing the discourse analytical approach: It has been rightly observed that much of the constructivist and discourse analytical literature tends to combine elaborate theorizing with scant attention to methodological questions and indeed, to the actual empirical testing of hypotheses derived from this theoretical perspective (Hülsse, 2003: 215f; Milliken, 1999: 226). A few words on our own methodological choices and on the operationalization of our key concepts are therefore in order. In our project, the discourse analytical approach is applied to Great Britain, Switzerland, and the United States – a sample of cases that maximizes variation in terms of institutional arrangements and political cultures, and hence is most likely to produce evidence for the hypothesized impact of institutional arrangements and political cultures on the structures and trajectories of national legitimacy discourses. Moreover, we are dealing with two language communities,19 and while Great Britain and the United States are "two peoples divided by a common language," many Germans and Swiss might even contest the "common language" part of the quip. Thus we may examine to what extent legitimacy-relevant bodies of knowledge and norms transcend national and linguistic boundaries, perhaps drawing on the shared cultural and religious heritage of the three countries, but must also keep in mind that words may have different meanings for different speakers and hearers even within the German and English language communities.

As in other discourse analytical projects, two key methodological questions had to be decided: First, discourses themselves – often defined in a very abstract, encompassing, and hence impractical fashion – had to be operationalized. The corpus of relevant texts or speech acts is usually defined in terms of a particular issue around which discourses evolve – the legitimacy of political orders and institutions in our case – and often restricted to a specific discursive arena. Our study concentrates on the print media. The text corpus was drawn from two high-quality newspapers per country in 2004.20 This focus on a particular segment of media communication obviously means that only specific parts of national legitimacy discourses are captured in our corpus. There is no doubt that legitimacy discourses in the media differ from those in other arenas, and hence we remain extremely careful with regard to generalizations beyond this sphere. However, it is plausible to suggest that the media of open societies serve as a kind of interface between various relevant discursive arenas, and that high-quality news-

19 The Romance language communities of Switzerland have so far been ignored, but we intend to eventually complement our text corpus with a sample of articles in French.
20 Guardian and Times (Great Britain), Neue Zürcher Zeitung and Tagesanzeiger (Switzerland), New York Times and Washington Post (United States).
papers assume elite functions in the context of legitimacy discourses. Thus legitimacy claims and beliefs expressed in these papers are likely to be prominent in other discursive arenas, too, and any important legitimacy debates should be reflected in our corpus (Meyer, 2001; Sarcinelli, 1998, 2002).

To be relevant for us, an article had to contain at least one legitimation statement – i.e., a proposition evaluating the political orders of Great Britain, Switzerland, and the United States as a whole, or key government institutions and principles – as (il)legitimate, (un)justified, or (in)acceptable. Hence a whole range of speech acts – factual statements, the formulation of political demands, etc. – are excluded from the corpus (Searle, 1969). As our primary unit of analysis, a legitimation statement is characterized by three parameters – its object, its evaluative content, and the argument that supports the proposition. The term object of legitimation refers to the element of the political order that is (de)legitimized. Only a limited range of objects – namely, regimes and political communities in David Easton's (1965) terminology – was considered. Each legitimation statement may either affirm or contest an object's legitimacy, and this parameter was coded dichotomously. Finally, a legitimation statement may either be generic – i.e., its object is assessed without further justification – or advance a specific pattern of legitimation. This term depicts the substantive criterion used to assess the object. In order to avoid a normative bias, we considered all 25 patterns of legitimation so far encountered in the material itself, grouping them into four subcategories – namely, democratic and non-democratic, input and output criteria.

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21 Texts were retrieved from an electronic database in a two-step procedure, using automated, dictionary-based search routines for preselection and an interpretive approach along the described lines for the final selection of articles.

22 A legitimation statement may thus refer to (1) regimes (political orders) as a whole, (2) political communities (nations and their citizenry), (3) dimensions and principles characterizing the modern state, (4) types of democracy, (5) specific institutions and branches of government, and (6) core groups of political actors. We ignored statements about the legitimacy of subnational tiers of government, individual authorities, and the politics of the day.

23 As hypothesized, some of the criteria supporting legitimacy claims and beliefs are in line with various strands of normative democratic theory while others are not, and supposedly obsolete patterns of legitimation, such as tradition and religious authority, or charismatic leadership, are alive and well. Our distinction between democratic and non-democratic criteria is grounded in an undemanding definition of democracy as "a system of governance in which rulers are held accountable for their actions in the public realm by the citizens, acting indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives" (Schmitter and Karl, 1996: 50). Thus democratic patterns of legitimation refer to criteria that are essential for the implementation of such a political order while non-democratic ones use criteria that are non-essential – though not necessarily antithetical – to democracy. We call patterns of legitimation input-oriented if they refer to the quality of decision-making processes and output-oriented if they focus on the quality or consequences of a system's output. Here we depart from Scharpf's (1999) definition. In his conceptualization, the relevant standard for assessing input legitimacy is the degree to which collectively binding decisions are made in a way that is responsive to the manifest preferences of the governed ("government by the people") while output legitimacy depends on a system's problem-solving capacity ("government for the people"). However, this definition confounds the input-output distinction with considerations based on the democratic quality of decision-making processes. Although output legitimacy can be secured both by democratic and non-democratic forms of governance, Scharpf seems to assume that input legitimation is necessarily democratic in character.
A legitimation statement thus has the stylized structure [object X] [is (il)legitimate] [because of pattern Y].\textsuperscript{24} Of course the actual propositions included in our corpus rarely conform to this structure in a grammatical sense. The identification of relevant statements and the coding of variables therefore entailed a kind of translation, as exemplified in Table 1. Finally, it should be mentioned that we did not restrict our search to particular types of articles or sections of the six newspapers – the selected articles may be news reports, commentaries, features, etc. –, and that the identified statements are propositions advanced by the authors themselves or, such as our Example 3, (in)direct quotations (the author cites Herman Melville). This procedure yielded a corpus of 1.720 newspaper articles and 2.712 statements, which were retrieved and coded as described. The discourse analytical approach is usually combined with qualitative-hermeneutic methods. In our own research, we have so far privileged quantitative-statistical methods and examined the frequency distributions and configurations of our variables. However, our approach differs from traditional content analysis in that entire articles remain available for more detailed examination, including a metaphor analysis.

\textit{Operationalizing a metaphor analysis of legitimacy discourses:} Such a metaphor analysis of our corpus raises its own methodological questions. As criticized by Hülsse (2003: 227), the problems of methodological control in much discourse analytical work are often compounded in the analysis of metaphors, and we readily admit that we have just begun to tackle them. As a couple of problems remain unsolved, we content ourselves, in this paper, with an exploratory look at metaphorical concepts and fields identified in a sample from the the larger corpus. The sample consists of articles containing at least three legitimation statements, and hence

\textsuperscript{24} We also coded the issue or policy context in which a statement is made – i.e., its frame – and the presence or absence of discursive references to internationalization and deparlimentarization.
tends to comprise texts that offer a sustained discussion of legitimacy-related issues. 213 articles (about twelve percent of the entire corpus) containing 825 statements (30 percent of the total number) were thus selected. About 40 percent of these statements, respectively, were retrieved from the Swiss and American newspapers while the British statements account for less than 20 percent. Almost 30 percent of the statements are from the Neue Zürcher Zeitung alone, over 20 percent each from the New York Times and the Washington Post while the other papers represent between eight and ten percent of the statements.

Our ultimate objective is to extend this analysis to the entire corpus, and to establish the hypothesized links between legitimation styles and metaphors in a more thorough fashion (Charteris-Black, 2004). We aim to provide information on the frequency distributions of legitimacy-related metaphors first, taking up Lakoff and Johnson's distinction between individual metaphorical expressions and broader metaphorical concepts or fields (see also Drulák, 2004), and to engage in a qualitative examination of dominant metaphors and their implications in a second step. In line with Drulák (2004) and Hülsse (2003: 230f), this approach to metaphor analysis is supposed to combine a deductive top-down with an inductive bottom-up perspective – the former building on our as yet rudimentary analysis of legitimacy-related metaphorical concepts in political theory, the latter grouping metaphors encountered in the empirical material itself. And it will entail an often neglected back-and-forth between the micro level of individual metaphors and their co-text, on the one hand, and the discursive macro level, on the other (Weinrich, 1976: 320; Wesel, 1995: 206).

In a comparative perspective, this will enable us to identify configurations of metaphors in individual articles, but also to discover similarities and differences in the use of figurative language between national discourses, between left and right-leaning papers, and between the discursive arenas of media communication and political theory. Is the use of metaphors indeed frequent in the context of legitimacy discourses? Which metaphorical fields do they predominantly belong to, and what are their underlying entailments and structures? Are metaphors indeed central to supporting the evaluations and arguments contained in legitimation statements, and exactly how do metaphorical concepts support validity claims? Most importantly, we aim to probe "elective affinities" of specific metaphorical concepts and fields with particular objects and patterns of legitimation. Which types and fields of metaphors are privileged in (de)legitimizing statements related to particular objects and patterns? How might institutional arrangements and political cultures, socialization processes, and "fashions" influence the choice of metaphors? Note that the labels of some patterns already indicate that they are, at least in part, metaphorical in nature. This is certainly true in a rather obvious way for
transparency, but also for the concepts of popular sovereignty, accountability and responsiveness, or stability. As for other criteria of legitimation, plausible "affinities" – e.c., between effectiveness and economic metaphors, or between the pattern of political (non)moderation and military metaphors – come to mind just as easily. Another task will be to identify conventional and innovative metaphors, and to ask if it is true that the former play an important role in the (re)production of a system's legitimacy. By contrast, do departures from "elective affinities" and innovative metaphors truly signal and foster delegitimation processes? While a one-year corpus will hardly allow us to firmly corroborate hypotheses related to change, the historical dimension may be touched upon to some extent – if we find a lot of innovative metaphors, this may indicate change in the underlying conceptualizations of political reality, legitimacy beliefs and claims.

As various methodological problems remain unsolved, though, we restrict ourselves to a mere exploration of the material in the following. To begin with, a more exact demarcation of metaphors from other types of figurative language will be needed as we progress. Moreover, we are still busy establishing what the conventional and innovative political metaphors in each national discourse are. As suggested by Hülsse (2003: 220), the boundaries between the two may be difficult to identify, and may also vary between language and political communities. The same is true for our list of broad metaphorical fields and their subgroups. While a cursory browsing of our material provides some first insights and shows that the broad categories and subgroups of metaphors suggested above are indeed pervasive in all three countries, harder criteria for the distinction between types of metaphors in our corpus have to be developed even though it may be impossible to define entirely distinct categories. Moreover, we will have to formulate rules that enable us to weed out metaphors that are merely made in the context of legitimation statements, but do not underpin them. It should notably be possible to distinguish between three groups of metaphors:

(a) metaphors used in the same article, paragraph, or even sentence as the legitimation statement that nevertheless do not refer to an object or pattern of legitimation, and are not linked with the attribution of (il)legitimacy. In short, these metaphors are irrelevant for the legitimacy-related validity claim and argument made in the proposition. We call these instances of figurative language peripheral. A metonymy with exclusively referential functions, like "the White House," may serve as an example.25 On

25 A metonymy uses one entity to refer to another that is related to it (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 35) – e.c., a part for the whole (synecdoche), producer for product, object used for user, controller for controlled, institution for people responsible, place for institution, place for event (38f). While experiences with physical objects provide
the other hand, even peripheral metaphors may contain some relevant information for us if they indicate a general shift in the most privileged metaphorical fields from, say, organic to economic metaphors;

(b) metaphors that belong to the core of a legitimation statement, and hence do support the advanced validity claim in one way or another. These metaphors may be linked with each of our core variables. Hence a positive or negative evaluation of a particular object of legitimation may already be implied by the word used to refer to it, as in "the Washington gang," etc. Or else, the pattern of legitimation and attribution of (il)legitimacy may be wrapped in figurative language. The two may also be merged, as it were, in the same metaphorical expression. The phrase "the welfare state is like a nanny" then translates into "the welfare state is illegitimate because it reduces personal freedom," and the task is to show how a claim is made persuasive and its underlying discursive position (re)produced, or a competing position challenged, by such core metaphors;

(c) finally, we may also want to look for metaphorical conceptualizations of legitimacy itself both in important contributions to legitimation theory, as sketched above, and in our corpus of newspaper articles.

A first look at the empirical material: In this section, we provide some information on the distribution of our core variables in the three countries and explore the metaphorical concepts and fields in which many legitimation statements are embedded. The purpose of this cursory analysis is to illustrate the hypothesized link between institutional arrangements and political cultures, on the one hand, and national legitimacy discourses – the nature of dominant legitimacy claims and beliefs, privileged resources and styles of legitimation, the role of specific metaphorical expressions, etc. –, on the other. As Figure 2 illustrates, the micro-level of discursive (de)legitimation processes in 2004 was strongly driven by short-term influences that resulted in characteristic national legitimation attention cycles. A look at the peaks enables us to identify the political rituals and events, issues and debates that were responsible for the bulk of legitimacy-related communication in each case. Strong inferences on national varia-

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26 Drulák's (2004: 30) distinction between dominant and other metaphors is arguably similar to the one we have in mind here, as is Wesel's (1995: 217) of main v. secondary and exceptional metaphors.

27 As the purpose of this is merely to give a flavor of the statements and metaphors, the Swiss examples have been translated, and references have been omitted, but can of course be made available upon request.

28 Here we are of course inspired by the notion of issues attention cycles (Downs, 1972).
tions and long-term trajectories of change obviously have to await the extension of our text corpus beyond the snap-shot of a single year. We should ultimately be able to disentangle the effects of stable institutional features and secular trends like internationalization from short-term influences on legitimacy discourses. However, even our preliminary data suggest that the hypothesis of a pervasive and full-fledged legitimacy crisis must be qualified.

Figure 2 – Articles per Week by Country

Figure 3 reveals that the distribution of (de)legitimizing statements differs considerably. The general pattern – with Great Britain at one end and the United States at the other – holds both in the larger corpus (approximately 55 percent negative assessments) and in the sample (52 percent). Tables 3 and 4 present the five most frequent objects and patterns of legitimation in the three countries, together with the distribution of (de)legitimizing statements referring to, or employing, each of these objects and patterns. Overall, the figures for the larger corpus are, once again, mirrored by the ones for the sample. With regard to both objects and patterns, the match is particularly good for the United States, but it is quite satisfactory for Great Britain and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Switzerland as well. A couple of similarities and characteristic differences are shown by these data. The political orders and communities as a whole figure prominently in each case, as do democracy and constitutionalism in Great Britain and the United States, and the welfare state in Britain and Switzerland. In none of the three countries, there is a general trend of delegitimation that affects the entirety of their political institutions and elites; some objects attract more criticism than others in each case. In terms of patterns, the use of popular sovereignty, the protection of human rights, and effectiveness are
frequent everywhere while the criterion of accountability is important in Britain and Switzerland. Other criteria are privileged in more nation-specific ways. Some of the patterns have clear (de)legitimizing tendencies. Finally, Tables 5 and 6 illustrate to what extent (de)legitimizing statements draw on criteria associated with each of our four groups of patterns and two dimensions of legitimation. Here, too, the match between the large corpus and the sample is quite close, especially for the United States. The groups of democratic input and non-democratic output patterns are most frequent in all three countries.

Figure 3 – Distribution of (De)legitimizing Statements by Country

How, and to what extent, are these legitimation statements combined with metaphors? It will not come as a surprise that all the types and subgroups of metaphorical concepts and fields described above are indeed frequent in our material, especially if our proposed distinction of core and peripheral metaphors is not strictly applied. Hence, for instance, spatial metaphors, personification, organic and medical, architectural, machine and "interaction" metaphors are pervasively used. Yet as suggested above, the ultimate goal has to be to identify cases of "elective affinities" between types of legitimation statements and conventional metaphors, as well as cases where these "affinities" seem to loosen up and innovative metaphors emerge in support of propositions and arguments, perhaps indicating shifts in the underlying discursive positions and structures.
Table 3 – Five Most Frequent Objects and Patterns of Legitimation by Country (large corpus, rounded to the nearest percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>% of statements</th>
<th>% of</th>
<th>Pattern</th>
<th>% of</th>
<th>% of</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>mation</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>accountability</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>constitution</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>effectiveness</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>stability</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>political order</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>human rights</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>52</td>
<td>morality</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>constitution</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>legality</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>electoral system</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>international standing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Turning to Switzerland first, the state of the country's political order and community were the subject of heated debates in 2004. Even the majority of statements related to these general categories was delegitimizing. Important events notably included major referenda on old-age security and fiscal federalism; debates on European integration were intense. Unsurprisingly, the focus of legitimacy debates was on the closely linked key elements of the country's political order – namely, the welfare state, direct and consensus democracy, federalism, and the party system. Direct democracy remains positively connotated in a clear majority of statements. The distribution is more even, tilting toward delegitimizing assessments, for federalism and consensus democracy, highly lopsided – three quarters of all statements being negative – for the welfare state and the party system. Another look at the tables is suggestive of the contours of Swiss legitimacy discourses, and of the arguments privileged by their (de)legitimizing sides. Statements drawing on the patterns of popular sovereignty, protection of human rights, and stability tend to be legitimizing. Overall, where democratic criteria are
used to assess the political order or one of its institutions, statements are most likely to be legitimizing. By contrast, non-democratic (input or output) criteria like effectiveness, which outweigh democratic ones, are privileged in delegitimizing statements.

Table 4 – Five Most Frequent Objects and Patterns of Legitimation by Country (sample, rounded to the nearest percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>% of statements</th>
<th>% of delegitimation</th>
<th>% of legitimization</th>
<th>Pattern</th>
<th>% of statements</th>
<th>% of delegitimation</th>
<th>% of legitimization</th>
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<td>popular sovereignty</td>
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<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>effectiveness</td>
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<td>effectiveness</td>
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<td>effectiveness</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7</td>
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</table>

Further examination of our articles confirms that the system's presumptive lack of effectiveness and reform capacity, accountability and transparency is highlighted by most of its detractors. The alleged crisis of the Swiss political order, and especially of federalism, direct and consensus democracy, is often expressed in metaphorical terms. We find organic and medical metaphors, such as when the political order is disqualified as a "holy cow" and "paralyzed," or
it is suggested that it has "caught a cold" which may even turn into "the flu." In a similar vein, we learn that direct democracy is "not a panacea," that it has considerable "side effects" and flaws, or that the people expressing its will in referenda decides in a "short-sighted" fashion; consensus democracy is plagued by an "Achilles heel," federalism has to be "revitalized," and "quack doctors" dominate the party system.

Table 5 – (De)legitimizing Statements Grouped by Types of Legitimation Patterns (large corpus, rounded to the nearest percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>CH</th>
<th>USA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>% of</td>
<td>% of</td>
<td>% of</td>
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However, other types and subgroups of metaphors are more frequent in these output-oriented crisis assessments, and they seem to have invaded Switzerland from across the border with Germany – namely, spatial, path and mobility metaphors, and their extensions to travel by car, engines, etc. Switzerland and its welfare state are "caught in an impasse." Necessary reforms are "blocked" by various "obstacles" and are not implemented because the country with its "frozen political landscape" is "stuck in a gridlock," "standing still," or else "going in circles." The country's "stop and go" politics is characterized as "slow" and "inert." The "mill of consensus democracy grinds slowly," it finds itself in a "cul-de-sac." The "braking powers" of the country's key institutions – direct democracy as "growth-impeding brake pad," consensus democracy as "full of resin," etc. – are responsible for this state of affairs: The welfare state
cannot be "steered" any more, the Swiss welfare society has "lost its orientation," and "delays in decision-making processes are precarious because the others will overtake us." The criticism is of course frequently linked with economic metaphors as well. The "unhealthy," "paralyzing" and "sprawling" welfare state, which holds the citizenry "under tutelage," is itself the result of the political community's "inflationary demands." The country's peculiar democratic institutions are a "trap." More originally, the democratic nation state today is described as a "soccer player in a telephone booth," unable to show his talent. As for the parties and political elites, trust in them is "eroding," and they, in turn, "gnaw at democracy's substance." They "permeat" the entire political order with their "one-dimensional" thinking and "do not speak the people's language." In their increasingly competitive behavior, they are like "business associations." They contribute to blocked decision-making processes, as they have "retreated to their ideological trenches" and more and more engage in an "ideological arms race."

Table 6 – (De)legitimizing Statements Grouped by Types of Legitimation Patterns (sample, rounded to the nearest percent)

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How do the proponents of the country's system phrase their arguments? On the one hand, defensive propositions that illustrate the success of output-oriented assessments by drawing on
the same metaphorical concepts and fields are frequent. Examples include the Federal President's national holiday speech that underlines that "Switzerland is no mere gross national product," thus rejecting the concept of a "Switzerland Inc." that "is only supposed to create value-added." Switzerland – like the United States often described as an "idea" – is a "good invention, not grounded in revolution and conquest, not in emotion and the mere pursuit of profits." In a similar vein, the alleged "lack of speed" in reform processes and politics writ large is countered with remarks like "Switzerland is the political order of patience" or "when the spirit of time blows in the the wrong direction, the defense of the status quo can become a competitive advantage," which highlight the country's stability. And while the decision-making process may not be fast, it prevents – like the Swiss tour guide's slow pace – "missteps," ensuring "balanced" decisions. Various features – notably direct and consensus democracy – are referred to as "pillars" or "foundation" of the Swiss political order, or else – referring to tradition – as "grown" and "deeply rooted." Federalism has "grown from below to the top." Instead of being an obstacle, it is "alive" and "lowers the threshold for the implementation of reforms." There is a "symbiosis" between the federal government and the cantons. More offensive propositions, on the other hand, tend to draw on different, often democratic and input-oriented, criteria. The Swiss political order and culture is "taylored to the body" of a country without a shared language and denomination, "dispersing power finely." The "scapegoats" of federalism, consensus and direct democracy are thus "keys" to, or "anchors" of, national integration. They represent Switzerland's "soul."

In Great Britain – the country with the highest share of delegitimizing statements –, debates on the state of the political order and community were very intense in 2004 as well, and every one of the most frequent objects of legitimation – with the exception of the political community in general and the welfare state – provoked a majority of negative assessments. The British participation in the "war on terror," the occupation regime in Iraq, the suicide of weapons expert David Kelly and its political fallout, ongoing debates on constitutional reform, etc., provided the context for legitimation statements. Given these particular short-term influences and obvious differences in institutional arrangements between the two countries, another set of objects than in Switzerland dominated legitimacy discourses – namely, democracy and constitutionalism, the executive and legislative branches of government, and the political class. In the Westminster system, which lacks formal checks and balances, informal conventions of good conduct are the main safeguards against an "elective dictatorship." Hence it comes as no surprise that the distribution of (de)legitimating statements was particularly lopsided with regard to the executive and legislative branches, as well as the political class,
which is of course very much a reflection of the Blair government's public relations crisis in the past year. A look at the most frequent patterns of legitimation, many of which can be related to the issues that triggered this crisis, is in line with this interpretation. We see that statements based on criteria like popular sovereignty, accountability, and credibility were particularly frequent and all tended to be used in delegitimating statements, massively so in the case of the latter. Only legality, the protection of human rights, and participation bucked this trend. The effectiveness criterion, on the other hand, remains important, but played a lesser role in the past year's legitimacy discourses and could not greatly contribute to the system's relegitimation. The detractors of Britain's political order, then, focused on (non)democratic input criteria, as well as non-democratic output considerations while the (democratic) output category was more likely to yield a positive assessment.

A variety of metaphorical concepts and fields were used to make critical points, beginning with conventional, or sedimented, spatial, ontological and building metaphors pointing to the "erosion" of society, an "historically low ebb" in people's "faith in the capacity of government to do anything," "corroding" or "plummeting levels of trust" in the political order and its core institutions, the "collapse of the parliamentary arm of the British constitution," a "three-way collapse of trust between public, politicians and media" that "poisons the well of public trust in politics," etc. The "governing Establishment is increasingly distant from the rest of Britain. Westminster political discussion is often as irrelevant to most voters as chat at the Vanderbilt Club about the squash ladder. Those on the inside are obsessed about who's up and who's down, those on the outside just see a privileged elite insulated from reality." The "implosion of legitimacy" has, according to quite a few statements, not the least affected the democratic institutions of Britain's system of government, which are "in decline" and "not working." As in Switzerland, organic and medical metaphors like "health of democracy," "symptoms of the crisis," etc., are pervasive.

More elaborate or innovative metaphors, for instance, mix such conventional ones and provide various analogies: with its "hypertrophied administrative and legal system" (reminding Ken Livingstone of "East Germany with periodic elections") and a parliament that suffers from "legislative hyperactivity," Britain is "gravely handicapped by [a] medieval system of government which gives us a president without any checks and balances, and keeps the serfs firmly in their place." The monarchy is "the most blatant example of social engineering," fostering hierarchical relationships in politics and society. The prime minister, like a "dictator," is seated on a "sofa of total power." The democratic institutions are "junk" and leave "the people disenfranchised: they can vote out the monkey but not the organ-grinder;" "[a]ll are
locked out of the political mainstream without a voice or even an ear that isn't tone deaf in the House of Commons, where often a shiver runs along the green benches looking for a spine to run up." And "[a]ccountability abhors a vacuum. The Commons no longer behave in any sense as scrutineers of government or as a check on legislation. They merely date-stamp the latest British ectoplasm." As a result, "[i]n Britain, where long swings of the electoral pendulum and an electoral system that exaggerates their impact have produced a stagnant majoritarianism, it is time to question our faith that stable government is good government." Since "the pendulum doesn't swing back," "voters are wrenching it out of the clock case and using it to whack the Establishment."

Frequently, metaphors also draw on entertainment, game, and even musical analogies to decry the state of British politics. Thus readers are reminded that "[p]olitics is no game show," has been displaced "from the centre-stage of society," and "has lost its soul, is out of sync with the popular vibe; disharmony is the inevitable result," the political class has "simply lost the plot," "entombing public life" and "turning politics into an unwatchably dull spectator sport." As "[p]olitics has moved on to singular ground: that of the market," "[b]ig money calls the tune," and "the political class are as welcome on the public stage as Engelbert's elevator muzak at a Sam & Dave revival convention." Military metaphors are prominent, too: politics and the state are "besieged." Politicians engage in partisan "scoring of cheap hits" and "emotional gladiatorial combat," and "[i]n the battle between evil governments and the forces of transparency and free expression, the latter are, apparently losing."

Few genuinely positive assessments of Britain's political order are captured in our text corpus, flatly stating against its detractors that the country "now has one of the cleanest and least corrupt systems of government in the world" with the welfare state as "keystone," that British society is "harmonious," or that its "roots are on the most solid foundations of all – a passion for liberty anchored in a sense of duty and an intrinsic commitment to tolerance and fair play." Prime Minister Blair contributes one of the more innovative relegitimizing metaphors by suggesting that "[t]here is a glass ceiling on opportunity in this country." Monarchy is, albeit ironically, characterized as "the route to mysticism, the backbone of history, […] the only basis for justice." Interestingly, though, relegitimizers of politics, democracy, and parliamentary decision-making quite often give a positive connotation to their "messy" character: "[…] 'grubby' is exactly what ordinary politics are: not filthy, squalid, stinking or corrupt – but grey with the day-to-day wear and tear of compromise and getting by while struggling to get something done in a wicked world." In a similar vein, democracy is characterized as "a slow, laborious matter. Anything else, and it's being rigged for us." And with regard to par-
liamentary institutions, the value of a "constructive chaos" is underlined: "(...) law-making in a democracy will always be messy. (...). In the end, sawdust and greasepaint have their place. This is the unignorable role of politics. With all its faults, it is what guarantees that the most carefully refined law-making process nevertheless remains rooted in the fibre of real life, argument and conflict." Moreover, democracy is denied to be "frozen and unchanging."

This rehabilitation of democracy may, in turn, lead to an indictment of "[p]olitical apathy: the British disease" and "the rotting state of British political engagement," and hence a delegitimization of the not-so-"enlightened" political community itself, which may even be linked with a relegitimization of democracy and politicians in religious terms: "Politics is a curious business. Democracy is sacred and we go to war to bring its beneficence to benighted peoples. We celebrate as every decade it spreads further across the globe where now a majority of humans live under its benign glow. How odd then that democracy's high priests and priestesses, the politicians, are treated with almost universal contempt. Democracy is holy, politics is lowly." Or consider the following very elaborate metaphorical rehabilitation of the electoral process:

"An election, [...] is an event. [...] a key stage in the construction of a legislature or council, a guide to popular opinion. [...] It happens as a football match, a solar eclipse or a performance of La Boheme happens. You can place bets on it, go abroad to avoid it, or stay up all night to watch it unfold. [...] It has a beginning, a middle and an end. It is a fixture. This matters. It matters because people need frames. We know of course that politics, like life, is continuous, that reality is not a story with a clear plot or denouement, and that little is ever finally resolved; but to make sense of our world we have a psychological need to give shape to all this fluidity: we hanker for mileposts, landmarks, finishing lines. That is why we have weddings, funerals, graduations, changings of the guard; and that is why in politics we give governments terms, punctuating them clearly at the end with an election. It's the political equivalent of the Big Match. [...] an election [is] both a performance and a kind of ceremony. Like an ancient Greek drama, it observes the unities: of time, place and action. [...] Like theatre, democratic politics needs a narrative. An election is a final act and a climax in this narrative. We will be wrong to let it fall away. [...] It is straightforward; people understand it; and millions do take part. Let those who opt out enjoy that luxury: they will opt back in soon enough when it matters. In our anxiety to pursue the truants, we are in danger of losing the stage, losing the curtain and losing the plot."

Politicians may in part be to blame, as "you can depress customer demand by making something too cheap," and their "need for votes smacks of a salesman's craven sucking-up, when voters often deserve a good wigging." But still, they "are the people who do democracy, day in, day out. And day in, day out, they are kicked in the teeth for it." In the context of the
"war on terrorism," the political community is also criticized for "cling[ing] to the State. They prefer law to liberty, order to Eden."

Finally, it is striking that while American legitimacy discourses in 2004 evolved, at least in part, around the same events and issues as in Great Britain – namely the "war on terrorism," the Iraq occupation, the Abu Ghraib torture scandal, and the clash between freedom and security in homeland protection – the distribution of (de)legitimizing statements is much more favorable. Only here do we find a slight majority of positive assessments. The predominance of legitimizing statements, which is generally more pronounced in the sample than in the larger corpus, extends from the political order and community in general to democracy. Of the five most frequent objects of legitimation, only the electoral system, as well as constitutionalism and the rule of law in the sample, provoke a majority of critical assessments. Two factors seem to play a role here: first, the electoral campaign produced a flurry of up-beat statements on the United States by the presidential candidates that are captured in our text corpus; secondly, the Supreme Court rebuked the Bush administration and reinstated due process rights for "enemy combatants," a ruling that was often linked with affirmative evaluations of the court, the entire judicial branch, and the constitution. The issue of same-sex marriage, on the other hand, sometimes led to critical assessments of the judiciary. A glance at the patterns of legitimation reveals that the American political order remains strongly and positively associated with the protection of human rights and legality. The picture is more mixed where effectiveness, popular sovereignty, and morality are used as patterns of legitimation – the latter two arguably reflecting dissatisfaction with the electoral system and other features of the democratic process, and differences between "red" and "blue" America in the evaluation of the country's moral fibre. Where the country's international standing is the benchmark of legitimation statements, they are most likely to be delegitimizing. Overall, (non)democratic input criteria, as well as non-democratic output considerations, tend to be privileged by critics of the American political order or some of its features, whereas in the aggregate, democratic and output patterns tilt towards the legitimating side.

Many statements draw on personification and religious metaphors, or else depict the political order of the United States as a light source, a force, and the embodiment of an idea, to legitimize it in a "generic" fashion and to bring it together with values like freedom or justice: America, then, appears as a country with a "good heart," a "unique [moral] mission in the world," and a "special calling" to "lead the cause of freedom," "spread[ing] the gospel" of the "everlasting dream of America." It is the "greatest force for good on Earth," "a shining city on a hill," a "beacon of freedom, democracy and human rights that the world looks up to" and
which is "always lit," "a shining being or entity or thing," and "God's plan for providence." The United States is a "promise," and – in a slight twist on such traditional self-congratulatory rhetoric – "it is not a lie; it is a disappointment. But it can be a disappointment only because it is also a hope." Besides the light metaphors, expressions that highlight the dynamic character of its political order are also frequent: America is a "the driver of world history" and a "vehicle of liberty," "a symbol of liberty, democracy and justice; [...] an embodiment of the values of the Enlightenment; [...] the New World's engine," "a permanent revolution." The "source of the American river [...] is the pure, clean dream of Freedom, and Justice and Mercy." The United States, a "colossus," exerts "the ordering force of empire," but the American republic, as a "great, peaceful Switzerland," also has a "remarkable self-limiting character." This rhetoric also extends to the American political community, its "character," and the "purity of [its] motives," as in George W. Bush's assertion of having been "witness to the character of the people of America, who've shown calm in times of danger, compassion for one another, and toughness for the long haul. All of us have been partners in a great enterprise." In a similar vein, his opponent praises Americans as the "can-do people" who "have always reached for the impossible, looked to the next horizon and asked: What if?" This is a nation that "rests on a foundation of responsibility and character, "mov[ing] forward" steadfastly. The "sanguinary Americans from Mars" will "defeat whatever threatens [them], because [they] are always moving, always shouting: it is our commercial insatiability that will win in the end, not our martial discipline or our purity."

The democratic institutions, constitutionalism, and the rule of law are considered as "robust" in such positive assessments. The "seeds of democracy," "the one political system that says to every individual: you matter and your vote matters," "will flower and flourish." In an interesting variation on the theme of dynamism, democracy is represented as "more a verb than a noun." Judges, for instance, are no "alien beings," but one of "three equal branches of government," "engines of social change" that "give life to phrases like equal protection and due process." In a similar vein, and directed against critics of "judicial activism" in the debates on same-sex marriage, "[c]ivil liberties are not a set of pesky side constraints, pettifogging legalisms tying democracy's hands behind its back," and "the rule of law is not a mask or an illusion. It is our true nature." The Supreme Court, with its "tantalizing obscurity," has "sustain[ed] a mythical aura of authority long after the other branches of government have been overexposed" (a rare inversion of the usual light metaphors!).

A similar set of metaphorical concepts and fields, including personification, organic and medical metaphors, is also privileged by some of the staunchest detractors of the United
States, many of whom decry the "erosion" of its "moral legitimacy" and "leadership in the world" in the wake of its new, "arrogant" imperial ambitions. It is an "oppressor" and "manevolent force" that suffers from "superpower syndrome," a "habitual drunk," a "predator, living way beyond its means, racking up video-game victories over defenseless nations and undermining human rights." As a consequence, there is now a "shadow on the U.S. beacon," and America's "hands are unclean in a way [not] known] since My Lai." However, "the bubble of American supremacy" is imminent and an "unbound" or "unfocused" United States, "the true empire and axis of evil […], is already near collapse." The United States – in many respects the "center of the universe" – is in "need for a Copernican revolution. […], it isn't the fixed center of the world. There are other nations, traveling in their own orbits." A "fraudulent champion of human rights," the country may even be on its way to "full-scale gangsterization" or "niggerization" (Cornel West). The country must "recover" from this "handicap," "restoring [its] reputation as a country that listens, is sensitive, brings people to [its] side, is the seeker of peace, not war, and […] uses our high moral ground and high-level values to augment us in the war on terror, not to diminish us." On the other hand, though, there are voices that consider the United States not imperial enough. According to them, the country is "in denial," suffers from "attention deficit disorder," and "lacks staying power." Self-centeredness and unilateralism are, in principle, positively connotated here: "We Americans are sometimes like the ancient Greek astronomer Ptolemy. That is, we see the United States as the fixed center of the universe, with other nations and events revolving around us. I think it's one of our endearing qualities, this ebullient national self-centeredness – except when it leads to errors in geopolitical navigation."

Domestically, too, the United States, an "inept, maladjusted and dysfunctional country," is "in bad shape." Various aspects of the political order are "broken," the "mechanics of [its] democracy" are in need to be "fixed" or "rebuilt." A "diagnosing [of] democracy's ills" yields the result that there is a "dark secret" lurking behind a "façade of freedom and democracy:" "American society is now rife with forces that encourage people to think about their own success, to cultivate their own gardens, to segment themselves off into their own cultural cliques;" "[m]aterialistic democracy beckons every man to make himself a king [while] republican citizenship incites every man to be a knight." The "destabilized democratic spaces" of a "closed foreclosed nation" are no more than a "fraud" or "control mechanism." A "mask of law" hides a the "erosion of America's most basic civil liberties" and a "black heart of coercion." The judicial branch, "increasingly addicted to a rhetoric of judicial supremacy," has staged a "judicial coup d'État," engaging in "judicial imperialism." The electoral system is the
institution that reflects the deplorable state of American democracy and constitutionalism most strongly, according to many recorded statements: "Totalitarian nations hold elections, but what sets democracies apart is offering real choices in elections. In recent years, contests for the House of Representatives and state legislatures have looked more and more like the Iraqi election in 2002." Elections are "becoming a charade" rather than "fair game," also due to the role played by the Supreme Court: "Before 2000, most American voters generally viewed the political process in much the same way that avid fans view baseball," but the "faith that the umpire is an honest broker" has withered away and "[t]he voting process, once presumed to be a reliable, if fallible, arbiter of the public will, is increasingly seen, even by many more sophisticated voters, as a tainted instrument of partisan conspiracy." As a result of these flaws, at least some people's "dreams will never fit in [the political elite's] ballot boxes."

We also find game and military metaphors used to decry the polarization of the "American political landscape," which is "evenly divided and stagnant," with a "hypercombative" and "poisonous political climate," where "partisan low blows" abound. Thus "the political arena […] is a dirty, distant spectator sport whose players don't seem interested in [younger people's] ideas or their issues," "the bickering has deepened into trench warfare," and "democracy […] has become] a take-no-prisoners culture war" where "the bile flows on." Some metaphorical expressions reflect key themes of the Democratic and Republican campaigns and central preoccupations of their respective electoral bases. Thus on the one side, "[t]he American River lives inside our souls," but its "struggle to remain pure is clouded by fear and deceit," and "America [is] on the brink of a moral crisis." Inequality remained a key element of this crisis in the Democratic rhetoric: "The assumptions we all once made of steady progress in this country have proven false. Our nation [is] moving toward an inequality not seen since before the Great Depression," and hence "[t]he journey isn't complete. The march isn't over. The promise isn't perfected." On the other side of the political spectrum, we find the concern that "nation has […] been steadily cutting itself off from its own religious roots" and the "fear that each one of these symbolic threads of religion will be snipped out of the fabric of American life."

Once again, though, there are voices that turn around such criticism metaphorically in arguing that "American democracy still functions remarkably well:'"
mocracy that has grown ever deeper. [...] Democracy may look its ugliest when it is most alive. [...] power within government has become steadily dispersed. The old political hierarchies have crumbled. [...] money in politics has become the medium of common exchange, the engine of persuasion, the measure of desire. [...] Because the democratic process has opened so wide, money enables anyone to play. And the burgeoning democracy is responsible for kast of what civic purists despise most about Washington. The more people there are shouting at once, the louder they must yell to make themselves heard. Technology has further turned up the volume, [...] This may yield a thoroughly argued solution – or an impasse that reflects the public's will. The internet has added an utterly unsupervised – and democratizing – route into the public discourse. [...] How could democracy be purer? The cacophony and chaos are annoying, to be sure, and have coarsened the political discourse in Washington and elsewhere. As the circle of democratic participation steadily expands, from dozens to thousands to millions, the depth of knowledge that goes into decision-making is bound to grow shallower."

And once again, part of the blame for the state of the American political order and its core institutions is directed at the political community itself, which is stuck in a "tunnel of [...] self-reference" and "worship[s] all the wrong gods – money, celebrity, and television, most notably. We listen to the loudest voices. We pay obeisance to false standards imposed on us by those with an axe to grind. We are too lazy intellectually to go beyond the glib language of politics." Americans have a "perverse satisfaction with their wretched state," "live in a fishbowl," and are "senescent Ottomans."

**Conclusion**

This paper had the modest purpose to describe and justify our discourse analytical approach to the field of empirical legitimacy research, to explore ways to complement and strengthen the analysis of discursive (de)legitimation processes by way of a focus on the use of metaphorical concepts, and to illustrate this with data and material drawn from our own text corpus. Thus the accent was not yet on the presentation and corroboration of substantive findings, and we certainly did not hope that our exploratory contribution would enable us to settle the debate between the proponents of the crisis hypothesis and their more sanguine opponents. However, we see a few of our hypotheses as tentatively confirmed by our first forays into the empirical material:

(1) The variety and complexity of legitimacy claims and beliefs is much greater than often assumed in the normative and "diagnostic" literature, or even in survey research. The normative benchmarks privileged by democratic theory do play a role in legitimacy discourses, but they coexist with a range of patterns of legitimation that few, if any,
political theorists would accept as essential criteria of democratic legitimacy. Theorists and the participants in national legitimacy discourses may therefore, at least to some extent, live in different worlds. This finding may be viewed as comforting because it suggests that the nation state can draw on a broader range of legitimation resources than is often assumed, but it may also be seen as disturbing if one considers the relative importance of criteria like charismatic leadership or religious authority in at least some discursive coalitions.

(2) More specifically, and while we can only make cautious inferences on the extent and direction of long-term change in the structures of the examined legitimacy discourses, our data are at least not inconsistent with the hypothesis that output-oriented patterns of legitimation tend to become more important. They are definitely more prominent in media communication than in democratic theory.

(3) However, there are considerable differences between national legitimacy discourses, which may, once again with the requisite caution, be linked with differences in institutional arrangements and political cultures. The micro-dynamics of (de)legitimation showed great variation in 2004, and it is more than likely that domestic factors also have a mediating impact on the discursive treatment of trends like internationalization. Thus national trends are unlikely to be uniform or convergent.

(4) Finally, these findings also seem to be reflected in, or fostered by, the metaphorical and figurative dimension of political language in the three countries. Much of the metaphors identified are conventional, or even sedimented, and draw on classical source domains. Even the metaphors linked to output legitimation are, in most cases, hardly unconventional. However, the way (neo)conservatism has captured journey, "forward" mobility and "activity" metaphors may well serve as one prominent example for the metaphorical underpinning of a shift in legitimacy claims and beliefs (in contrast with traditional conservatism as a defender of the status quo, see Hirschman (1991)).
Literature


