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Legitimation by metaphor: Figurative uses of language in academic discourse in favour and against EU policies

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Ever since its creation, the European Union has developed a specific discourse in order to make itself acceptable to its members and to the international community at large (Hülsse 2006). However, over the last decades the EU has been under attack for its alleged "democratic deficit", with an intense controversy at various levels about whether its structure and organization respond to the demands of democratic states (Moravscik 2008). In this debate, the "weapons" appeal not only to reason, but also to affective factors, leading to a whole array of imagery by both sides aimed at winning an academic contest which seems ever more present nowadays. Critics use images like "democratic *deficit*", or argue that the "European regulations are often *out of proportion* to the benefits". For their part, EU supporters also attribute physical properties to abstract concepts, as in "*measure* the state of EU democracy" or "*shape* voting decisions and fundamental political *alignments*", or compare the EU to a person suffering extreme restraints, wearing "the procedural *straightjacket* of extreme transparency".

In our study, we shall draw from an *ad hoc* sample of papers by political scientists in order to analyse the metaphorical scenarios used in the academic discourse on the legitimacy of the European Union and its policies. It is our belief that this analysis will illustrate both the language used by academics in scholarly debates and, in general, on the use of metaphor in academic discourse.

Key words: metaphors, language of political science, legitimation discourse, EU legitimacy

1. EU and metaphor: the state of the art

1.1 Metaphor in international relations

The last thirty years have witnessed an abundance of cognitive analyses of the role of metaphor in international relations and politics. Almost since the appearance of the cognitive theory of metaphor, the potential for application to political discourse was observed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 236) when they claimed that "political and economic ideologies are framed in metaphorical terms". Before the decade had ended the approach had already been applied to foreign policy: Chilton and Lakoff (1989), for instance, noted how states are seen as individuals with personalities, and most importantly, that "metaphorical preconceptions lie behind policy" (Chilton and Lakoff

1989: 9), or, in other words, the way countries are conceptualized is at the root of their relationships with each other.

Thus, scholars have exposed cases in which metaphors have been, as ever, used to justify wars: the state-as-person scenario made it possible to portray Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait as "rape" within a symbolic system depicting war as "violent crime", including a victim (Kuwait), a criminal (Iraq), and most importantly, a "hero", the United States, coming to the rescue (Lakoff 1991). Of course, this is in no way new: Shimko (1994) described the long history of metaphor usage in conflict situations, and most importantly, how metaphors have been employed to shape foreign policy decisions. As has frequently been the case, metaphors are used for legitimation to establish a right/wrong divide. This should come as no surprise: while substantive arguments are certainly present in all debates, our perception is also conditioned by the connotations of political messages, both those directly received from politicians and those filtered through the media.

As one of the most important results of international cooperation in the twentieth century, the European Union (henceforth the EU) shares many of the usual discourses in international relations, metaphor being one of the key devices. If anything, the role of figurative imagery is much more important, as will be seen below in the case of the EU and its institutional language; the role of metaphor is the perfect example of the fact that "ideas that tend to be perceived as common sense in international politics are in fact sedimented metaphors" (Drulák 2006: 502).

This chapter will offer a brief analysis of the metaphorical discourses used by those who believe that the EU is a legitimate, democratic body, as contrasted to the images employed by those who consider it an institution lacking legitimacy, which should cease to pursue integration, or whose policies exceed the scope of its powers. For such purpose, a brief review will be made of the controversy on EU legitimacy and the role of metaphor in EU discourse, in order to identify the most relevant source domains. Then, six references (articles and books) will selected by political scientists and economists on EU legitimacy, in order to specifically analyse the metaphors describing EU policies and their consequences. Our approach, more than on the metaphors themselves, will focus on the context of usage and, more specifically, on the role each metaphor plays in the legitimization or delegitimization of the EU as a source domain.

1.2 Metaphor and the EU

In order to fully understand the power of, but also the need for metaphor, and the EU as a concept, attention should be paid to the overall role of metaphor in the conceptualization of nations and (supra)national entities. In this respect, one of the main contributions of the study of metaphor to political discourse is the awareness that the 'nation', as a concept, is largely a metaphorical construct, an abstract notion that needs powerful images in order to exist in the public consciousness of citizens. A 'nation' is not something we can touch, see or hear, and even if we may physically perceive some of its manifestations, such as border controls, flags, passports, police forces or armies, they require mental structuring so that they can be interpreted as signs of 'nationhood' and not as separate events. It might be even said that metaphorical constructions are largely responsible for the perception of a nation as such (Drulák 2006; Musolff 2016: 93), be it a container, a family ('motherland'), a journey, a mission, or usually a set of source domains combined and accumulating over the years in the collective subconscious.

If the role of metaphor is important in the case of 'traditional' nations, with centuries of presence as supported by political institutions and state boundaries (not to

mention kings or armies, sometimes used to dispel doubts about their existence and protect them when needed), this is much more the case of the EU, with hardly a few decades of existence (less, considering its present form after all accessions). And if lack of joint history and shared triumphs and defeats were not enough, the only "tangible" sign of a state, its territory, also appears to be missing. The EU is an entity that does not use the term "territory" in its main instruments, neither in its founding documents nor in its primary law (Chopin 2014). To make matters more complicated, the EU has a "geometrically variable area", since some policies affect the whole of the EU, such as the internal market (27 states after Brexit), while other policies do not apply to all member states, like the Economic and Monetary Union (19 members). The physical presence becomes even more blurred when some clearly EU-driven policies affect not only member states, but also associate ones, like the Schengen area, which includes 4 non-EU associate members (Hülsse 2006, Chopin 2018).

Therefore, given the fact that the EU has been there for quite a short time, and that the EU has different sizes and components in different situations, it is not surprising that the EU is said to have an "identity deficit" (Horolets 2003). Worse still, the European Union has also historically faced powerful external and internal forces that oppose its very existence, as we shall see in the following Section. Probably as a result of this, when compared to traditional nations, the EU has to constantly justify itself in terms of effectiveness, and in turn, lack of effectiveness is linked to lack of legitimacy (although wrongly, as pointed out by Lipset 1960: 67). The EU thus suffers when compared with traditional states, which need not justify their very existence in terms of what benefits may be attained by being a part of them (except for breakaway separatist movements which are the exception, rather than the rule, in Western countries). Therefore, the equation "X does not produce any effective results as far as I am concerned, therefore, X is illegitimate", which is used to delegitimize the EU (what Scharpf [2011: 56] calls "output-oriented legitimacy"), would not apply to traditional countries like Germany, France or Portugal.

In order to justify its creation and ensure its survival, the EU has developed a specific discourse in order to make itself acceptable to its members and to the international community (Hülsse 2006). Therefore, as part of the EU 'branding' strategy, metaphor is constantly at work in all EU discourses. The importance of figurative language in the ideological conception of the EU is reflected on the abundance of studies in the field, either of a general nature, such as Heintz (2000), Musolff (2008) or Horolets (2003), the highly illustrative "Metaphors Europe lives by" (Drulák 2004), or focusing on specific fields, such as enlargements (Hülsse 2006), judicial cooperation (Campos 2017), constitutional debate (Kimmel 2009), the position of political parties towards the EU (Kovář 2019) and, of course, Brexit (Musolff 2017, Charteris-Black 2019). And it is not only the linguists that have emphasized the role of metaphor in EU construction, but also the political theorists. Even if their approach is not a rhetorical one, there is widespread consensus that views on the EU and many of its developments are of a figurative nature. For instance, Giandomenico Majone entitles a chapter "The Monetary Union as metaphor" (Majone 2014b: 20-57), and bases his criticism on the monetary union explicitly making reference to Lakoff and Johnson's structural metaphors. One interesting point, however, is that, as will be seen below, the objections made regarding the EU by Majone, as we shall see below, and many critics also resort to metaphors, some of them pertaining to EU discourse just as much as the ones they oppose.

One of the constant elements that may be observed in all these studies is that many of the metaphors, as we will see below, have become lexicalized and entered conventional discourse: terms like *cooperation, pillars, harmonization* or *approximation* have become

part of the language used unconsciously at all EU levels. While this lexicalization may turn them into "dead" metaphors (as noted, for instance, by Musolff 1996), this does not deprive them of the power to frame the way reality is apprehended, to such an extent that they transcend the sides of political debate. As will be seen in our brief study, even those who oppose the EU policies embrace the metaphors pro-EU discourse has used to legitimize itself. For instance, the metaphor "the EU is a container" is at the bottom of in expressions like "opting in" or "opting out", which are no longer perceived as metaphorical, and are even present in anti-European discourse, for example, when it was said that Britain could be "engulfed" by the EU (Kimmel 2009). In some other cases, the choice of metaphors may be indicative of the role attributed to the EU. Diez (1999: 602) notes how the terminology can condition the whole way the EU is perceived and the purposes it should serve, for instance, when the preferred term in Britain was "Common *Market*", while in Germany it was seen as a "community" (*Gemeinschaft*). And metaphors are as effective both for what they do and for what they prevent: some scholars go even as far as to state that these metaphors "prevent us from considering anything which does not fit into these categories" (Drulák 2006: 502).

Over the past twenty years, scholars have identified a number of recurrent source domains used in EU discourse. A review of the literature shows that some of the most important conceptual scenarios are the EU IS A CONTAINER (e.g. Drulák 2004, Drulák 2006, Kimmel 2009, Charteris-Black 2019), the EU IS A JOURNEY/MOTION (Musolff 2001, Drulák 2004, Drulák 2006, Kimmel 2009, Charteris-Black 2019), the EU IS A BUILDING/HOUSE (Chilton and Ilyin 1993, Schäffner 1993, Kimmel 2009, Chaban and Kelly 2017), the EU IS A LIVING BEING (Musolff 2004, Hülsse 2006), the EU IS A FAMILY (Musolff 2006, Hülsse 2006, Chaban and Kelly 2017, Charteris-Black 2019) or the EU IS EQUILIBRIUM (Drulák 2004, Drulák 2006). In the Sections below, we shall see how some of these source domains are specifically applied when discussing EU policies and their legitimacy.

2. The debate on legitimacy and democracy in the EU

Over the last ten years, the Brexit debate has brought to the fore the issue of discontent with the European Union as an institution. Nevertheless, this controversy is by no means new: it has existed probably since the creation of the European Community, as the history of the EC, and now the EU, is that of a progressive coming together of countries, a process which is intrinsically opposed to the centrifugal forces that have led to the emergence of states. In Europe, if we eliminate annexations, and with the exception of Germany and Italy, it is new states that have been created over the past two centuries. In that respect, the development of the EU is a process which entails some loss of sovereignty without the use of force, comparatively unique, and not without its opponents. It is no coincidence that, although the EU was born in 1957, it was not until the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 that it decided to use the word "Union", which led to a certain amount of discontent among those actors only interested in a common market towards the free movement of goods.

The loss of sovereignty, coupled with the specific political structure of the EC (and later the EU), soon gave rise to criticism. Whereas in modern democratic countries rulers are elected by universal suffrage, and there seems to be a direct-cause effect connection between election results and changes in government, in the EU such direct relationship is seldom perceived, and there are organs, such as the Commission (the Executive branch), appointed by a procedure which greatly differs from that applied in traditional states. All this has attracted criticism by those who perceive the EU as an

imposing force over that of countries and its citizens, a feeling that was exacerbated by the crisis of the Eurozone after 2010: by 2012, some reports mentioned that out of the member states, Germany was the only member of the EU where citizens believed that European integration had been beneficial for their country (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2012).

However, although populist politicians and the media have widely attacked the EU with various degrees of success (at times complete, if we consider Brexit), the debate is also a formal, academic one, meriting the attention of the most prestigious political scientists. As recognized by Andrew Moravcsik (2002: 604), one of the staunchest supporters of the EU, "never before in history have such rich and varied intellectual resources been brought to bear on an international political process", while Andreas Follesdal and Simon Hix (2006: 557), while disagreeing with their opponents, recognize their abilities when they admit that "the proverbial 'bar' has been 'raised' to a new level of analytical rigour in the debate".

The two main positions in this debate are: on the one hand, those who argue that the EU does not suffer from lack of legitimacy or a democratic deficit, especially when compared with traditional states. Such is the position taken by Moravcsik (2002, 2008), and initially, by Majone (1996), although with nuances, since the latter Majone emphasizes that the EU should refrain from further integration lest it may lose legitimacy. On the other hand, EU legitimacy and its democratic nature are contested by the same Majone, who corrected his own position by pointing out the shortcomings of EU governance and its democratic "default" (Majone 2014b), and also by other scholars like Scharpf (2011), who points out the lack of legitimacy and the dire consequences of the EU's economic policies. More belligerently, Follesdal and Hix (2006) describe the EU's rule as a sort of "enlightened form of benevolent authoritarianism", and specifically refute Moravcsik and (early) Majone's argumentations. From both sides, the arguments, of course, are based on facts, but also opinions are shaped through metaphorical devices: for instance, one would not expect EU supporters to equate negotiations to "horse-trading", or define the relation between monetary union and legitimacy as "a trade-off" as Follesdal and Hix (2006) or Majone (2014) do, respectively.

3. Our study: Corpus and hypothesis

In order to conduct our study, we have focused on the debate on political legitimacy and selected the most outstanding authors in such controversy. Such selection has been based on a wide review of the academic literature, and eventually led to the choice of the following papers:

- in favour of/supporting EU policies and legitimacy: Moravcsik (2002), Moravcsik (2008), Héritier (1999);
- against EU policies and legitimacy: Scharpf (2011), Majone (2014a), Follesdal and Hix (2006).

Once the metaphors were selected using the MIPS methodology (Pragglejaz Group 2007), they were classified into major target domain areas. For such purpose, we concentrated on the main metaphorical identifications described by the literature (see above). This being a qualitative study, we preferred to place emphasis on the metaphors themselves and their rhetorical value and not on the sheer numbers.

4. Analysis

In this section, we shall analyse the main conceptual metaphors in the discourse about the legitimacy of the EU, listing specific metaphorical expressions from the corpus studied, from both sides of the scholarly debate. The metaphors analysed will be:

- Metaphors of living beings
- Object metaphors (physical properties, instruments, containers)
- Structural metaphors:
    - Journey and position metaphors
    - Aggression and punishment metaphors
    - Fight and battle metaphors

Reference to the respective sources will be made by mention of the authors at the end of each example.

4.1 Metaphors of living beings

4.1.1 Living beings and body metaphors

When human beings try to make sense of the world, anthropomorphism is a very useful tool, since it enables us to see everything as we see ourselves, both in terms of shape and in terms of behaviour. As Wodak et al. (2009: 43) remark, this leads to the "anthropomorphised nation" with which one can easily identify. This identification is potentially more necessary when the human connection is lacking (Epley et al. 2007: 864), which is probably why one of the most effective identifications used in European discourse, as we saw above in international relations in general, is the STATES ARE PERSONS identification.

The body metaphors, within the "greater order" of the Great Chain of Being, apply, on the one hand, to the EU itself, whose well-being is also that of a living entity:

> (1) Neither of these reasons, however, need necessarily disqualify the EU from being treated as a democratically legitimate *body*. (Moravcsik 2002)
> (2) Rather, the processes of positive policy-shaping, such as in the supportive networks, take place in functionally specific areas with no regard for the overall *well-being* of the polity at large. (Héritier 1999)

With the EU perceived as a living being (admittedly through dead metaphors, but nevertheless remain alive at a subconscious level), support and criticism coincide with assessment of the EU and its policies in terms of human strength. This is why supporters of EU policies emphasize the strength of its democratic guarantees and its policies:

> (3) The EU has imposed state-of-the-art formal rules guaranteeing public information and input; studies show these protections are *stronger* than those of the USA or Switzerland. (Moravcsik 2008)
> (4) Today, according to polls, "silent majorities" of Europeans favour *stronger* EU policies in areas such as defense, anti-terrorism, environmental, regional, immigration, crime, agricultural, consumer protection and anti-inflation policies. (Moravcsik 2002)

For their part, critics see the inadequacy of policies and democratic guarantees in terms of physical "weakness":

(5) In spite of these developments, the framework of political accountability has remained quite *weak*. (Majone 2014a)
(6) Second, and related to the first element, most analysts of the democratic deficit argue that the European Parliament is too *weak*. (Follesdal and Hix 2006)
(7) The indirect control of governments over outcomes has been *weakened* by the move to qualified majority voting. (Follesdal and Hix 2006)

Once the human being scenario is created, it is not only the EU that is alive, but also the member states, especially when highlighting that the behaviour of the EU as a body causes harm to other 'bodies':

(8) the international financial crisis of 2008 triggered chain reactions which, in the eurozone, had the effect of transforming the *vulnerability* of deficit countries into a systemic crisis that is thought to challenge the viability of the Monetary Union itself. (Scharpf 2011)

In some cases, the notion of vulnerability equates political action to physical harm, or worse still, to unnecessary "surgery":

(9) In the process of coping with its own crisis, therefore, Germany also contributed to the economic *vulnerability* of other eurozone economies. (Scharpf 2011)
(10) To avoid such 'twice-arbitrary *surgery*' it is necessary to proceed by 'binding together those interests which are common, where they are common, and to the extent to which they are common'. (Majone 2014a)

Not surprisingly, images of decay and death are at the ready when describing the failure of EU policies (on disease metaphors and EU criticism, see Charteris-Black 2019: 188). Also, a healthier image, that of immunity, may be reversed in order to describe lack of democratic control of traditional states (let us remember that sometimes EU supporters defend its legitimacy by pointing out that traditional states are less democratic):

(11) By then businesses and economists were pronouncing the Lisbon economic reform process *comatose*, if not quite *dead*, while the three largest economies of the euro zone – France, Germany, and Italy – made little attempt to fulfil their Lisbon promises. (Majone 2014a)
(12) In fact, the political culture of total optimism that used to inspire all official statements concerning the achievements of EU-style integration has been the first *casualty* of the euro crisis. (Majone 2014a)
(13) Far from being a technocratic superstate filled with arbitrary officials *immune* from procedural limitations and democratic constraints, the EU is narrowly constrained by its narrow substantive mandate. (Moravcsik 2008)

In some cases, the limits imposed on the EU are described as a "straightjacket", although this image successfully avoids a potential source domain "THE EU IS A MENTALLY UNBALANCED PERSON"; instead, the image focuses on the connotations of "straightjacket" as "(unfair, excessively strict) limitations placed upon someone)":

(14) The EU acts under the procedural *straightjacket* of extreme transparency, exceptional checks and balances, and tight national oversight. (Moravcsik 2008)

4.2 Object Metaphors (physical properties, instruments, containers)

4.2.1 Physical properties: when the abstract becomes concrete

In order to make policies and legitimacy more visible entities, the ideal situation is making them tangible. Even critics inadvertently recognize such tangible nature:

> (15) [I]f there are new incentives for national party leaders to compete in these contests on European-level issues… over time EU-wide coalitions and alignments between national and European actors would begin to *solidify*. (Follesdal and Hix 2006)

This "solidification" of policies makes it also possible to apply the "soft/hard" dichotomy to EU action, causing in turn further physical properties ("flexibility"):

> (16) But the reach of "*hard*" European law is still limited, and the Commission's use of "*soft*" methods in the "Lisbon Process" have not been very successful in promoting "*flexibility*" (Scharpf 2011))

Once policies have acquired physical properties, they may have dimensions, in such a way that they may be measured. Thus, the figurative meaning of "measuring" is exploited in order to express adequacy and correctness ("GOOD THINGS HAVE THE RIGHT SIZE"), or lack thereof:

> (18) how are the empirical processes to be assessed against a normative *yardstick* of democracy? (Héritier 1999)
> (19) Consequently, the European level has to settle for more modest *measures* of democratization for want of something *bigger* and better. (Héritier 1999)
> (20) Across nearly every *measureable* [*sic*] dimension, the EU is at least as democratic, and generally more so, than its member states. (Moravcsik 2008)
> (21) it is not surprising that the volume, detail and complexity of European regulations are often *out of proportion* to the benefits they may reasonably be expected to produce. (Majone 2014a)

The problem is that, when an abstract concept becomes a tangible object, it may be subject to physical degradation and damage**:**

> (22) there was also a significant decline of lower-class electoral participation – which does indeed suggest a more serious *erosion* of political legitimacy (Scharpf 2011)
> (23) These Memoranda *cut* ever more deeply into details of national legislation (Scharpf 2011)

As the EU becomes tangible and has physical properties, the scenario is ready for one of the most important EU metaphors: the EU IS EQUILIBRIUM. Thus conceived, the EU is an object that is not only balanced, but also a source of balance, whereas for critics some EU policies are unbalanced, and such lack of balance may be a sign of lack of legitimization. This metaphor, which associates balance to positive outcomes and

imbalance to danger (in financial affairs, but also otherwise), has a number of manifestations, which include "stability" or the traditional "checks and balances" image:

> (24) The last decade has witnessed the emergence of a *stable institutional equilibrium* – let us call it the 'European Constitutional Settlement' – that serves as a de facto constitution for Europe. (Moravcsik 2002)

The image of "checks and balances" is a powerful one, which may be related to physical bodies, or, as Wootton (2006) mentioned, to that of a mechanism (see below). The comparison is not only a visual one, but also a highly persuasive instrument due to its association with reliable states: it lies at the roots of modern constitutionalism, and has been used since as early as the eighteenth century, to such an extent that it has become a *sine qua non* of modern democracies. This is why the debate on democracy in the EU may revolve around the existence of checks and balances: it is legitimate and democratic if it has them, illegitimate and non-democratic if it does not, as is observed in the comparison below between a supporter and a critic. As may be seen, the critic considers the ECB a "caricature" of democracy because it lacks the checks and balances that the Federal Reserve does have (the "vacuum" would be precisely the opposite of a balanced, stable environment), whereas the supporter proudly lists the checks and balances that are present in the EU structure:

> (25) Its [the EU's] institutions are tightly constrained by *constitutional checks and balances*: narrow mandates, fiscal limits, super-majoritarian and concurrent voting requirements and separation of powers. (Moravcsik 2002)
> (26) Those European scholars who look to the Federal Reserve as the better model –because it is politically more accountable, and not exclusively concerned with price stability – seem to forget that the Federal Reserve operates within the framework of a democratic polity capable of providing all the necessary *checks and balances*. In a comparative perspective, the well-nigh total independence of the ECB, its supposedly exclusive focus on the goal of low inflation, its mode of operation in a political *vacuum*, appear to be almost a caricature of how monetary policy is conducted in contemporary democracies. (Majone 2014a)

This concept of "vacuum" or "insulation", symbolically linked to 'lack of control', has such evocative power that EU supporters, far from denying such insulation, strive to reappropriate the connotations in such a way that "insulation" (negative) becomes "independence" (positive). According to those who agree with EU policies, such insulation protects bodies from the 'tyranny of the majority':

> (27) The most important is the structure of the European Central Bank, which is more *independent* of political pressure than any known national example. (Moravcsik 2002)
> (28) When we conduct the latter sort of analysis, we see that EU decision-making procedures, including those that *insulate* or delegate certain decisions, are very much in line with the general practice of most modern democracies in carrying out similar functions. (Moravcsik 2002)

Another extension of physical properties is that of transparency: if "LIGHT IS TRUTH, DARKNESS IS LIES", and "SEEING IS UNDERSTANDING", DEMOCRACY IS TRANSPARENCY is one of the foundations of the EU. As can be seen here, the equilibrium

metaphor and the transparency one are part of the same line of argument, from both sides of the debate:

> (29) Constitutional checks and balances, indirect democratic control via national governments, and the increasing powers of the European Parliament are sufficient to ensure that EU policy-making is, in nearly all cases, clean, *transparent*, effective and politically responsive to the demands of European citizens. (Moravcsik 2002)
> (30) The idea behind the *transparency* programme is to create support for European policies by disseminating information about them. (Héritier 1999)

According to EU critics, transparency is also a valid metaphor for accountable governance, but it seems to be lacking:

> (31) The process [nomination of a candidate] could have been much more *open and transparent.* (Follesdal and Hix 2006)
> (32) The NAFTA arrangements for dispute resolution […] are likely to be more cost-effective, as well as more *transparent*, than the more traditional, state-like mechanisms adopted by the Union. (Majone 2014a)

4.2.2 The building and structure metaphor

Although technically, all supranational bodies are "structures", in the sense that they are composed of different bodies responsible for different functions, it is seldom that a body makes explicit reference to its structure in its terminology, something that the EU proudly does For instance, alongside with the Cohesion Fund (another interesting image underlining the need for the parts to be together), the EU distributes what is known as "Structural Funds" in order to implement its regional policy. The image of the structure is always present in EU discourse, both among critics and supporters:

> (33) Yet the EU's ability to act […] is constrained by institutional checks and balances, notably the separation of powers, a multi-level *structure* of decision-making and a plural executive. (Moravcsik 2002)
> (34) Such a change in the governance *structure* of the euro zone would require a treaty amendment, which most likely would face a German veto. (Majone 2014a)

For their part, critics strive to point out that such structure, albeit tangible, is a breakable one (which is the non-animate parallel of the "weak" image we saw earlier):

> (35) All these doubts concerning the future development of the euro zone, and of the EU itself, contribute to the *fragility* of the present monetary union. (Majone 2014a)

More specifically, the EU has been frequently compared to a building, both as a structure and as a container (i.e., the "common European house"), although in the legitimacy/democracy discussion it seems that the building frame matters more than the container. Metonymically, if the EU IS A BUILDING, so are its policies, which lead to frequent reference to their structural strength:

(36) the features of the European polity itself, that is, the diversity of its actors and the fragmented nature of its *architecture*. (Héritier 1999)

Critics, for their part, point out that the foundations of the legitimacy edifice are weakened by the EU defects:

(37) But where the Commission's requirements would violate politically salient interests, preferences and values of national constituencies, compliance may again *undermine democratic legitimacy*. (Scharpf 2011)
(38) they may reduce the electoral support of governments and, in the extreme case, *undermine input legitimacy* regardless of their functional necessity for achieving acceptable macroeconomic outcomes. (Scharpf 2011)
(39) unsatisfactory economic performance over a period of years may impede the emergence of new sources of legitimacy, and thus further *undermine* the normative foundations of an elite-driven integration process. (Majone 2014a)

If abstract objects (institutions, policies) possess physical properties, they can be manipulated using tools. The "instrument" metaphor compares abstract actions to those carried out at the simplest level of human action. Thus, actions by the EU are performed through instruments and tools, which can either be used for positive or negative policies:

(40) Such institutional procedures are the conventional *tool* for protecting the interests of vital minorities. (Moravcsik 2002)
(41) From this perspective, then, the intended practice of the Excessive Imbalance Procedure would become another *instrument* for promoting market-liberalism in the European Union. (Scharpf 2011)

A similar metaphor, this time combined with process, is EU POLICIES ARE MECHANISMS. Again, the difference between supporters and critics is that, while the supporters argue that the mechanisms are in place and operational, critics point out the inefficiency or lack of such mechanisms:

(42) The process *mechanisms* at work in this case are control, criticism, the containment of power and the fending-off of policy proposals. (Héritier 1999)
(43) The match between preferences and policies should not only occur as a matter of fact, but there should be *mechanisms* that reliably ensure that this power will indeed be so used. (Follesdal and Hix 2006)
(44) an alert *mechanism* is established to facilitate early identification and monitoring of such conditions. (Majone 2014a)

4.3 Structural metaphors

4.3.1 Journey and position metaphors

The "path" metaphor is a constant reference in EU discourse: from the very foundation of the European Communities, they have been conceived of as a journey towards new goals, which at times are more ambitious ('integration') and on other occasions less so ('harmonization', 'approximation'). The scenario is a powerful one because of its association with human experience, whereas the absence of journeys and movement is linked to ineffectiveness (e.g. idioms like "this is getting us nowhere", "reach a dead end",

or the metaphorical meaning of "way" as 'manner to do something'). Interestingly enough, such institutionalization of the metaphor causes both supporters and critics to embrace it, although, also building on human experience, there are two types of journey with different connotations. Positive journeys are those with a purpose, properly guided and reaching their intended destination, whereas negative, useless or dangerous journeys are those which either should have not started at all, or those which have strayed from their destination due to wrong decisions. In both cases, there is a moral component, implying that those in command are directly responsible, which makes the scenario very useful for political discourse (see, for instance, Silaški and Đurović 2019 on journeys and Brexit). In the case of EU policies, for supporters MOVEMENT FORWARD IS IMPROVEMENT, usually linked to EU integration, whereas for critics MOVEMENT FORWARD IS NEGATIVE/DAMAGING (in the examples below, it is considered that that integration "goes too far" or has been achieved by force):

> (45) […] few other functional issues of significance are visible on the horizon. None of this will alter the essential *trajectory* of European integration. (Moravcsik 2002)
> (46) The depth of the current crisis justifies the widespread opinion that integration has *gone too far*. (Majone 2014a)
> (47) Given these beliefs, expensive guarantees and credits appeared as a lesser evil that was necessary to keep GIPS countries within the Monetary Union (and, perhaps, to provide a *push* for European solidarity and political integration). (Scharpf 2011)

One of the advantages of the "progress" metaphor is that it may be used to explain the differences between "the right path" and "the wrong path". This allows scholars to establish either what has been rightly done or should be done, in the case of supporters, or what has been wrongly done, as seen by critics:

> (48) In practice, this means the opportunity to *exit from a specific avenue of decision-making* which has proved less than promising and to test prospects in another arena. (Héritier 1999)
> (49) European integration produces '*policy drift'* from voters' ideal policy preferences. (Follesdal and Hix 2006)

Also, the "barrier" component, the subscenario whereby, if MOVING FORWARD IS IMPROVEMENT, then PROBLEMS ARE OBSTACLES, which would be probably a negative one, is used by EU supporters as an element of reassurance that "excessive progress or speed, something undesirable, is never attained". In this way, "barriers" become part of the case for the EU, by reversing the connotation and connecting to the "checks and balances" component: for supporters, the "barriers" are in place to prevent excessive EU legislation (and are therefore a good thing), whereas critics contend that the belief in such barriers is due to unjustified enthusiasm:

> (50) Normal "everyday" legislation in Brussels must likewise *surmount higher barriers* than in any national system. (Moravcsik 2008)
> (51) Indeed, in the euphoria created by the Single European Act and the very successful marketing of the 'Europe 1992' programme it became tempting to imagine that there were no effective *barriers* to the continuous, if incremental, expansion of European competences. (Majone 2014a)

4.3.2 Aggression and punishment metaphors

A metaphorical scenario which is (expectedly) favoured by critics is that of cruelty and punishment, i.e. EU MEASURES ARE PUNISHMENTS. Countries, as human beings, may be subject to discipline if they do not meet EU expectations: the notion of "punishment" adds a negative connotation to EU measures, which are seen as humiliating and degrading (and, of course, awakens the sense of 'wounded pride' in the victims):

> (52) Here, a first general observation is that you cannot require voters to be fair and that governments may be *punished* for outcomes over which they had no control. (Scharpf 2011)
> (53) EMU member states […] are subject to the intrusive supervision and potential *punishment* imposed by supranational authorities (Scharpf 2011)

In some cases, such penalties take on moral proportions, since national governments have acted against "religious rules", which justifies punishment as a way to deter re-offending and set an example to others:

> (54) So even though the more "*virtuous*" member states are now unable to refuse help to the "*sinners*," such conditions should never be allowed to reoccur (Scharpf 2011, author's italics)

In the previous example, the metaphor, combined with the irony in the quotation marks, shifts the burden of guilt from those who allegedly commit the sins to those who judge them: the hyperbolic image offers a view of the EU as an excessively 'holier-than-thou judge', acting as a God, dividing its flock into those who will be saved and those who will be 'damned' and shamed in public.

On other occasions, punishment measures are compared to criminal action against countries, or to victimization:

> (55) Thus after Germany (with the support of France) had successfully resisted punishment for operating automatic stabilizers during its deep recession between 2000 and 2005, it would have been politically difficult to *prosecute* high-growth Greece (even if its deficit had been correctly reported). (Scharpf 2011)
> (56) The first *victim* of miss-specified monetary impulses was Germany. (Scharpf 2011)

In such light, EU measures are directly portrayed as "cruelties", a view which runs counter to the image one would expect of the EU as a nurturing mother protecting its children (which seldom takes place, because it may be a "common house" or "a buidding", but unlike traditional countries, the EU is never seen as a 'motherland' or a 'fatherland'):

> (57) Here, all *cruelties* must be proposed, defended, adopted and implemented over an extended period by the national government. (Scharpf 2011))

4.3.3 Fight/battle metaphors

Academics who disagree with EU policies make reference to threats, either to democracy or even to the very existence of the EU. Such threats, depending on the sides of the debate, are either emphasized or negated:

> (58) More than this, the very idea of European integration, as conceived by the founding fathers, is *threatened* by the latest developments. (Majone 2014a)
> (59) The result is as much confederal as federal […], and almost eliminates any *threat* of a European superstate. (Moravcsik 2002)
> (60) Yet the *threat* of a European superstate is a myth. (Moravcsik 2002)

In this respect, policies are seen as weapons in the battle:

> (61) Such a proposal [a directive harmonizing hiring and dismissals] would be politically *explosive*, as this would involve a radical shift from the policy status quo for most Member States. (Follesdal and Hix 2006)

Where legitimacy and the EU authority are not accepted, fight inevitably ensues. Dissenters (both individuals and countries) have to struggle with the EU. In this case, while supporters of EU legitimacy would emphasize consensus, critics are quick to emphasize that EU policies have winners and losers (cf. Charteris-Black and Musolff 2003):

> (62) What is still missing, though, is the connection between these developments and the divisions in the EU's society at large, in terms of the potential *winners and losers* of potential policy agendas. (Follesdal and Hix 2006)
> (63) What may be needed is for the political elites to make a commitment to open the door to more politicization of the EU agenda, for example via a *battle* for the Commission President. (Follesdal and Hix 2006)

Given that states are containers or buildings, EU action may be seen as an intrusion. As described by Moravcsik (2008: 332), there is a perception of "EU governance encroaching on the rights and prerogatives of national citizens". This has been a powerful frame used by EU critics, who appeal to the fear and disgust of somebody taking over one's home or country, as seen during the Brexit campaign (Charteris-Black 2019: 116):

> (64) however, EMU member states cannot use these policies autonomously, but are subject to the *intrusive supervision* and potential punishment imposed by supranational authorities. (Scharpf 2011))

In some cases, the process of legitimization degenerates into war, where acceptance of EU policies is equated to humiliating defeat:

> (65) The "understandings" they had to sign in order to obtain the guarantees of the Financial Stability Fund read less like self-chosen programs than like protocols of an *unconditional surrender*. (Scharpf 2011)

5. Conclusions

The language of politics and international relations is fraught with metaphors. This should come as no surprise, since human beings resort to metaphor in order to make sense of what is remote and abstract: the further away something is from our daily experience, the more necessary it is to use metaphors in order to be able to comprehend it. However, metaphors, as has been seen here, do not simply allow us to understand things, but to understand them in a given manner: the filter of metaphor is not merely pedagogical, or if it is, it is by no means a neutral pedagogy. When used in persuasive settings, metaphors are not mere 'deviations' from normal language, but a way to shape discourses, and even, as we have seen, to create a foundational terminology which not only conditions perception, but attempts to exclude any counter-argument by setting the 'rules' through the vocabulary used.

In EU institutional discourse, metaphors have a dual role: on the one hand, as with all abstract conceptions, they serve the role of helping addressees to grasp complex, intangible notions by equating them to more familiar entities. On the other, and most importantly, they have an ideological role, which in the case of the object of analysis in this chapter, the EU, transmits an ideological stance and acts as a vehicle for justification of, or attack against, what the EU does.

Such constructions are even more important because, in traditional states, governmental action is 'justified' by means of a sense of belonging created through a common historical experience. This is not the case of the EU: as Moravcsik (2002: 604) explicitly points out, "[a]s a multinational body, […] it lacks the grounding in a common history, culture, discourse and symbolism". The consequence is that, given the lack of such symbolism, the justification for any common action is harder to perceive, and thus metaphor becomes essential. This is where, as shown in this chapter, shaping perceptions becomes is essential for the EU to reach the category of a legitimate body: the figures of speech used in order to emphasize or criticize EU legitimacy are key to the debate, especially when such debate may have consequences both for political decisions at high levels and also for specific voters' choices in elections.

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