



***Maritime journey* metaphors in British and German  
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## ***Maritime journey* metaphors in British and German public discourse: *transport vessels* of international communication?**

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Metaphors play a central role in public debates about the structure of the European Union, both nationally and internationally. Some metaphors are shared across different languages; however, the "same" metaphor may have contrasting argumentative functions in different discourse communities. The article investigates the argumentative potential of ship journey and convoy metaphors that have been used in the public debates about Europe in Britain and Germany and relates their main variants to prevalent attitudes towards the EU integration process in the two countries. The study is based on a bilingual corpus of British and German media texts from the period 1989-2000, which has been assembled as part of a collaborative project on "Attitudes towards Europe", funded by the British Council and the DAAD under the "ARC" programme. The article raises methodological issues concerning the use of corpus data in metaphor analysis and points out possibilities for the use of contrastive metaphor analysis in German area studies and comparative media studies.

### **1. Maritime imagery in political discourse**

In early 1999, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* published a commentary on the work of the European Commission, in which the editor, Johannes Willms, likened the European integration process to a *ship journey* in so far as European unity can be seen *as a distant, exotic destination*, but in order to reach it you need to apply the *prosaic techniques of avoiding dangerous currents and heavy seas*:

- 1) Bislang war man aus vielen guten Gründen geneigt, eine hohe Meinung über die Europäische Kommission zu hegen. Unbeirrt von mancherlei Einreden oder gar der Schelte (...) steuerte sie ihren Kurs zur Beförderung der europäischen Integration. Ein solches Unterfangen ähnelt einer Schiffsreise zu fernen, exotisch lockenden Gestaden, die aber die meiste Zeit ziemlich prosaisch vor allem darin besteht, widrige Strömungen und hohen Wellengang zu meistern. (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 14 January 1999)

In the context of allegations of mismanagement and nepotism in the EU Commission, this simile of EU politics as a *ship journey* advanced a defensive argument in favour of the Commission, i.e. that its difficult work deserved some public recognition (the article went on to argue that, notwithstanding such recognition, the Commission should be held responsible for proven cases of mismanagement). Such *maritime journey* imagery is not infrequent in public discourse and indeed in everyday language use; it forms part of a whole system of *journey/transport* metaphors that pervades our conceptualisation of processes extending over a period of time (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 41-45; 1999: 137-160). In political writing, the *maritime journey* metaphor has a long-established tradition of use dating back at least to Aristotle, who in his *Politics* explained the interdependence of different kinds of citizens' contributions to the affairs of state by way of an analogy with *sailors' work on a ship*:

- 2) Like the sailor, the citizen is a member of the community. Now, sailors have different functions. For one of them is a rower, another a pilot, and a third a look-out man (...); and while the precise definition of each individual's virtue applies exclusively to him, there is, at the same time, a common definition applicable to them all. For they have all of them a common object, which is safety in navigation. Similarly, one citizen differs from another, but the salvation of the community is the common business of them all. (Aristotle 1941: 1180).

Some media commentators of EU politics seem to have taken a leaf straight from Aristotle's classic description. *The Economist*, for instance, used the *ship* metaphor to draw the following conclusion concerning the Commission President Jacques Santer's handling of the nepotism scandal in 1999, especially his leniency towards one of the chief suspects, commissioner Edith Cresson:

- 3) [...] if, as president of the European Commission, you have a choice between dumping overboard someone like Mrs Cresson on the one hand, and risking the shipwreck of your whole commission on the other, you will do better to choose the first of those options. President Jacques Santer chose the second, to ruinous effect. (*The Economist*, 20 March 1999).

Here, the Commission president is pictured as a hapless *captain* who was not decisive enough to dump a *sailor* that was not able or willing to contribute towards achieving the 'salvation of the community'; consequently, the *ship* (here: the Commission) was ruined. Just as in examples (1) and (2), the *maritime journey* metaphor in (3) serves an argumentative purpose – here it is used to support the conclusion that in a political institution, as on a ship, someone must have enough authority to guarantee that all

*crew members* contribute to the common objective. The image is thus an essential part of the argument rather than a mere ‘illustration’: without the analogical application of the common-sense evaluation of a captain’s actions to Santer’s management of the Commission crisis the editor’s criticism of Santer would not make much sense.

This argumentative function of *maritime journey* metaphors forms the focus of the following analysis. In particular, I shall try to relate differences in the use of these metaphors in British and German public debates to prevalent stereotypical perceptions regarding the EU in the two discourse communities. The basis of this study is a bilingual corpus of texts from public debates about the EU in Britain and Germany during the period 1989-2000, which has been assembled as part of a collaborative project on ‘Attitudes towards Europe’, conducted at the German Department at the University of Durham and the *Institut für Deutsche Sprache* in Mannheim (cf. the project internet web-site: [www.dur.ac.uk/SMEL/depts/german/euro-arc.htm](http://www.dur.ac.uk/SMEL/depts/german/euro-arc.htm) and Kämper 1999). The metaphor corpus amounts to 550.000 words and contains some 2100 entries of passages from 28 British and German newspapers and magazines; it can be accessed at the web-site: [www.dur.ac.uk/SMEL/depts/german/Arcindex.htm](http://www.dur.ac.uk/SMEL/depts/german/Arcindex.htm).

The imagery of British and German Euro-debates can be grouped broadly into seven thematic domains: I) *general transport*; II) *specific modes of travel*, III) *geometric and architectural structures*, IV) *social groupings*; V) *life, birth and health, strength and size*; VI) *competition, sports and war*; VII) *show and theatre*<sup>1</sup> <sup>100</sup>. With 50 occurrences, *ship journey* metaphors constitute the second-largest group of metaphors specifying a particular means of *transport* (= group II), after *train journey* metaphors (96 occurrences). Together with general *journey/movement* imagery (= group I; e.g. references to *milestones on the road* to EMU, *crossroads*, *cul-de-sacs*, *two-speed Europe*, *slow and fast lanes* towards integration/EMU etc.), they form one of the main metaphor fields of Euro-debates, accounting for 373 occurrences in the corpus.

The purpose of the study is to complement and, if necessary, correct the results of previous case-studies, many of which follow the cognitivist approach to metaphor

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<sup>100</sup> For an overview over all seven domains in the corpus cf. Musolff (in press).

analysis as developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson<sup>2</sup> <sup>[21]</sup>. Thus, *dynamic* and *geometric* metaphors as well as *construction* and *architecture* imagery have been analysed in regard to specific international disputes in European politics (e.g. over Gorbachev's *Common European House* metaphor or the 1994 row between the French, German and British governments over proposals for a *two-tier/circle* structure for the EU) and have been related to general conceptual metaphors, such as TIME-AS-MOVEMENT and STATE-AS-CONTAINER<sup>3</sup> <sup>[31]</sup>.

However, these studies were usually based on a small (single-figure) number of examples, which makes it hard to draw any conclusions about their significance for the national and international debate. This is unfortunate, as the cognitivist approach seems to lend itself to the an analysis of the ideological function of metaphors in political discourse by focusing on their conceptual aspect. From the cognitivist viewpoint, metaphor is a general thought mechanism that 'maps' matching aspects of a conceptual 'source domain' onto a 'target domain', thereby depicting an abstract or new notion in terms of more concrete concepts that are closer to everyday common experience or generally accepted folk-theories. Based on such primary image schemas, complex metaphorical mappings pervade our cognitive systems of physical and social orientation and form hierarchies of 'entailments', which provide the framework for higher-order conceptual inferencing (Lakoff and Johnson 1999: 60-73). Contrasts between metaphors used in national debates on international political issues are thus understood as reflecting differences of conceptual and ideological patterns in the respective groups. Chilton and Lakoff (1999: 37) go as far as to assert that metaphors "structure the 'discourse' of foreign policy in the deepest sense – not just the words used but also the mode of thinking". Taken to its ultimate conclusion, this argument would support the view that members of one discourse community are almost at the mercy of the metaphor systems that dominate their discourse. If metaphors were indeed powerful enough to structure whole belief systems and their "entailments", one might wonder how international communication was at all possible between nations and cultures that use different metaphors. As long as we rely

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<sup>2</sup>[21] Cf. Lakoff & Johnson (1980) and (1999), Lakoff (1987, 1993, 1996).

<sup>3</sup>[31] Cf. Chilton & Lakoff (1999); Musolff (1996, 1997); Reeves (1996); Schäffner (1993, 1996).

on case studies, however, the evidence for or against such hypotheses remains rather slim. By contrast, corpus-based studies would appear to provide a broader empirical basis for the comparative study of metaphors in different discourse communities<sup>4,141</sup>.

## 2. The *Euro-ship* and its crew

A first look at the sample of maritime imagery shows that they are used widely in the British and German EU debates alike, and in both their main variants, i.e. *single ship* metaphors and *convoy* metaphors. Both variants account each for 45% of the sample; the remaining 10 percent are made up of singular *ship*-related metaphors (e.g. references to EMU as a *haven* for currencies or phrases such as *laying the keel of* European policies), which will not be considered here further. Most instances of *single ship* metaphors are based on the ‘Aristotelian’ argument regarding the necessity of collaboration, i.e. the EU or one of its institutions is depicted as a *ship* where *all crew members must fulfil their respective tasks and co-operate under one command if they want to finish the journey successfully*. Whereas in example (3) Jacques Santer was criticised for not having asserted his authority as *captain* of the EU-Commission strongly enough (and in consequence suffering *shipwreck*), Wim Duisenberg, the first president of the European Central Bank (ECB), was praised on his appointment as a *trustworthy helmsman on an adventurous journey*:

- 4) Immerhin ging es bei der EZB um einen verlässlichen Steuermann auf abenteuerlicher Fahrt. (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 8 May 1998).

Whilst the notions of authority and hierarchy that come with the role of *helmsman* or *captain* can be applied in a more or less straightforward way to politicians or top functionaries ‘in command’ of organisations such as the EU Commission or the ECB, they become problematic and controversial if they concern the EU itself, understood as a union of principally equal, sovereign states. Thus, when the EU itself is the “target domain” of the ship metaphor, we find a first set of contrasting quotations from the German and British samples:

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<sup>41</sup> For general methodological issues of corpus-based approaches in metaphor analysis cf. Deignan 1999: 180-199; Charteris-Black 2000: 155-163.

5) Weil der Tanker EG keinen Kurs ändert, ohne daß alle Hände das Ruder in dieselbe Richtung drehen, umgibt Maastricht als Anlaufhafen die Aura der Unabänderlichkeit. Der Vertrag wird jedoch längst milder interpretiert. [...] Die Erweiterung um vier neue Mitglieder schließlich wird nicht nur jede europäische Übereilung verhindern, sondern eher das durchaus nötige Einigungstempo zusätzlich bremsen. (*Die Zeit*, 15 October 1993).

6) Welcome aboard the Euro Titanic

Everyone knows that within a monetary union there can be only one bank rate. [...] Suppose then that one country [...] needs lower interest rates to avoid sliding into a recession or slump, but the bankers decide that Germany needs higher rates to cool down a boom. [...]. Suppose, then, at an election the people elected a parliament committed to lower interest rates and taxes. What then? Tough luck. That is what I described as the Euro *Titanic* – with no lifeboats. (Lord Tebbit, quoted in *The Times*, 18 June 1998).

In example (5), the EU's principle that any major policy change has to be agreed by all union members is expressed by the proposition that *all hands turn the steering wheel*. However, as the further argumentation shows, this arrangement is criticised as hindering *smooth or fast progress of the ship*, causing its *speed to fall below the necessary minimum*, especially with ever more *crew members joining*. Whilst this criticism is rather moderate, focusing mainly on a potential decrease of the *EU steamer's speed*, the scenario presented by the former Conservative party chairman Lord Tebbit in example (6) is one of impending disaster. It shows the *EU steamer* as the *Titanic*, i.e. *doomed to go under*, as a result of a decision in Germany's favour by a group of anonymous bankers; one "other country" (= Britain?) is the helpless *victim*, dying through no fault of its own.

The political arguments expressed in the two metaphorical scenarios are thus diametrically opposed: Tebbit sees monetary co-ordination under EMU as a disastrous policy that might *sink the EU-ship*, whereas the *Zeit* commentator uses a maritime version of the proverbial saying 'Zuviele Köche verderben den Brei' to express his misgivings about the alleged lack of co-ordination and loss of *speed* in the integration process. The contrast between the two scenarios and the concomitant arguments is obviously not caused by opposing source domain structures but has to do with the political evaluation of the target domain topic, i.e. the issue of political and economic integration.

A further aspect of the EU's metaphorical *ship journey* that is mentioned frequently is the question of *crew membership* of individual nations, or their presence aboard the *European boat*:

- 7) Die Engländer hängen außenbords an der Reling des Eurodampfers und wagen weder loszulassen noch sich ganz an Bord zu schwingen – ein kläglicher Anblick; dabei könnten sie mit auf der Brücke stehen. (*Die Zeit*, 16 September 1994)
- 8) Fears grow that Germany may miss the EMU boat. German economic performance may not be able to deliver the Maastricht criteria by the end of 1997, leaving Luxembourg the only remaining racing certainty. (*The Guardian*, 13 January 1996)
- 9) Germany took its federalist European agenda to Oxford last night, where the foreign minister, Klaus Kinkel, delivered an impassioned plea for Britain to end its ambivalence towards European integration [...]. “It is better to catch the boat than swim after it,” he said, opening a centre for the study of European law at Oxford University. (*The Guardian*, 18 January 1996)
- 10) Die Frage, ob die Briten ins gemeinsame Boot gebracht werden können, muß zunächst offen bleiben. [...] [sie] ließen keinen Zweifel daran, daß sie auf keinem Gebiet zur Abkehr von den Spielregeln des klassischen Nationalstaates bereit sind. (*Die Welt*, 7 October 1996)

Although the corpus includes British statements about Germany not *catching the boat*, as in example (8), German criticism of Britain's role on (or rather, off) the *EU ship* is more frequent and much more colourful and outspoken, as in example (7) with its portrayal of Britain as *hanging over the ship's railings* and being in danger of *going overboard when it could be standing on the bridge instead*. This perception is shared by pro-European British commentators — for instance, in his book on Britain's post-war relations with Europe, *This Blessed Plot*, the *Guardian* columnist, Hugo Young, applies the *missed boat* metaphor twice to Britain's reluctance to join in the early preparations for the EEC (Young 1998: 268, 308); and in a variation on this theme, a *Guardian* leader portrayed Britain as having been “a drag anchor in the community, the slowest and the grouchiest member” (*The Guardian*, 4 June 1992).

Besides Britain, the only other country which is criticised for *obstructing the ship's progress* in the corpus is Denmark, on account of its first, negative referendum about the Maastricht treaty in 1992. The *Guardian* article quoted above contemplated that Denmark had “stolen” Britain's “familiar role” (as the Community's *drag anchor*),



and *Die Zeit* depicted Denmark as an *obstacle in the shipping channel* used by the *EC ship*, but even in this context Britain received most of the blame:

- 11) Noch liegt das dänische Hindernis in der Fahrrinne. Vor allen Dingen steuert die britische Maastricht-Debatte in gefährliche Gewässer. Die Briten, die derzeit die Präsidentschaft innehaben und deren Aufgabe es eigentlich wäre, das leckgeschlagene Schiff abzudichten, sind tief zerstritten. (*Die Zeit*, 25 September 1992).

Britain is criticised not for being a mere *obstacle* like Denmark but for failing to fulfil its responsibility to *repair* and *save* the *European ship*. On the other hand, when German politicians speak about their own country's duty for the *EU ship*, they demand an increase in the nation's efforts, because without it the EU would be without guidance:

- 12) [...] Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany yesterday stepped up his mission to entrench the prospects for a federal Europe [...] In his speech to the Christian Democratic Union's annual congress, Mr Kohl made it clear that he regarded the battle to shape the future of the European Union as a fateful one for Germany [...] "If we don't act now, the ship of Europe will be cast adrift". (*The Guardian*, 17 October 1995)

Although Kohl does not explicitly claim the role of *Euro-captain* for his own government or for the German nation, his statement that without German action, the *ship of Europe* is in danger rests on the assumption that Germany has a say, if not a commanding role in determining the EU's *progress*. This presupposition of a decisive German contribution also underlies German criticism of Britain not joining or obstructing the *EC/EU boat*, which is more frequent in the corpus than similar British criticism of Germany (for which there is only one example, i.e. example (8) quoted above). Neither are there any claims by British politicians or media that Britain should or could be the EU's *captain* — rather they debate about whether to welcome or bemoan its *outsider role on the EU ship*. These findings confirm the general assessment by political and social scientists that the British public's attitude towards the EU has become far more sceptical if not downright hostile over the 1990s in comparison to prevalent attitudes in Germany<sup>5151</sup>.

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<sup>5151</sup> Cf. e.g. Baker & Seawright (1998); Grosser (1998); Schoch (1992).

### 3. The European *convoy*

The asymmetry between German and British uses of *maritime journey* metaphors is even more marked in the second main image variant, i.e. that of the EC/EU as a *convoy of ships*, with each *ship* representing one member state. All ‘original’ occurrences of this variant are on the German side; British media and politicians only use it in reports of or comments on German usage. The earliest example in our corpus dates from 1989; it sets the tone for the later debates:

- 13) Das Integrationstempo muß beschleunigt werden, damit die Gemeinschaft unter dem Druck des europäischen Umwandlungsprozesses nicht auseinanderbricht. Wer den Geleitzug bewußt bremst, wird abgehängt. Zur Not muß ein Kerneuropa aus elf oder gar zehn Mitgliedstaaten weiter dem Kurs auf eine Europäische Union folgen. (*Die Zeit*, 24 November 1989).

*Differences of speed* among the members of EU *convoy* are perceived as a problem, because the *slow ships* may hinder the *group's* progress and thus endanger its safety. If they ‘insist’ on going slowly, they will be *left behind* by the *fast ships*. As the following example shows, the German commentators leave little doubt about the identity of the *fast convoy members* but are less specific concerning *ships in the convoy that may be left behind*:

- 14) Der Geleitzug der Europäischen Union [...] ist auseinandergerissen. Die schnellsten Schiffe, Deutschland und Frankreich, haben sich das Privileg gesichert, das Ziel einheitlicher Währung von 1998 an allein anzukreuzen, falls die Mehrheit dazu 1997 nicht bereit ist. [...] Europa, wie es sich nach Maastricht ausnimmt, ist in ökonomische Spitzengruppe, schwer stampfende Seelenverkäufer, britische Sonder-Fregatte und eine von Evolutionsklauseln durchfurchte Politische Union geteilt. (*Die Welt*, 11 December 1991).

Whilst this comment on the Maastricht treaty openly states that France and Germany are the *front-runners* in the EU *convoy*, it refers only vaguely to the *slow group* of potentially *doomed ships* (“Seelenverkäufer”) and reserves a special role for the British *frigate*. This last image is ambiguous: on the one hand, a *frigate*, as a typical *escort ship* (*Oxford Reference Dictionary* 1986: 321), could be assumed to be *fast*, on the other hand it is set apart from the *elite group* of France and Germany. Whatever the precise target referents of the *slow ships* may be, it is worth noting that the *division of the convoy into several groups of ships* is assumed to be a *fait accompli* in

this quotation from 1991, whereas two years earlier it had only been the object a warning (cf. example 13).

The increasingly frequent German uses of the *convoy* metaphor during the early 1990s became the focus of British media comments (interestingly, without any explicit references to Allied convoys in World Wars I and II). The first such comment in the corpus dates from October 1992, when the *Guardian's* correspondent, David Gow, quoted Chancellor Kohl's *convoy* reference in a speech to the annual CDU party congress:

- 15) In an impassioned defence of the [Maastricht] treaty at the annual congress of his Christian Democratic Union, Dr Kohl repeatedly warned of the imminent dangers of a rebirth of chauvinistic nationalism in the West as well as in the East. And, in a pointed intervention in the British debate over ratification, he declared: 'We don't want a two-or-three-speed Europe ... but nor do we want a Europe in which the speed of the slower ship determines the pace of the entire convoy.' (*The Guardian*, 28 October 1992).

Gow reported that Kohl's aides stressed that "this was not meant as a specific threat to John Major"; however, the *Guardian* journalist still interpreted Kohl's speech as proof that the Chancellor "laid claim to the supreme role of leading the European Community in ratifying the Maastricht treaty" (ibid.). Kohl's use of the *convoy* image was thus firmly linked to European leadership aspirations, if not hegemonial interests. These suspicions did not hinder Kohl from recycling the metaphor in a letter to the *Financial Times*, which was meant to boost EU-sympathies. Again, the German Chancellor insisted:

- 16) I am against the idea of a two-or-three-speed Europe. But I would add just as clearly that, in view of the importance of European Union for us Germans, we cannot accept that the speed of European integration will be dictated by the slowest ship in the convoy. (*Financial Times*, 4 January 1993)

Like the *Guardian's* David Gow, the *Financial Times* editor, Quentin Peel, interpreted it as an admonition by the (self-appointed) *convoy leader* to the *laggards*, i.e. as "a thinly veiled warning to countries such as Britain and Denmark" (ibid.). Given that even the newspaper that published his text saw it as a "veiled warning", it might have become obvious to Kohl that the *convoy* image had no reassuring effect but came across as an attempt to bully Britain into *catching up* with the *fast group* of EU countries. However, this deterred neither the Chancellor nor other members of his

government from continuing to use the *convoy* scenario<sup>6</sup> <sup>[61]</sup>. During the next big Anglo-German dispute on EU-policy in September 1994 – triggered by the publication of a ‘discussion paper’ of the governing German Christian Democrat parties, in which they pleaded for a strengthening of an EU *core* group of states – British newspapers again found ample occasion to comment on German *convoy* statements:

- 17) A plan put forward by German Christian Democrats for a two-tier reconstruction of the EU has destabilised European diplomacy because it dares to suggest that Europe cannot expect to achieve “ever closer union” if it steams at the speed of the slowest ships in the convoy. (*The Guardian*, 7 September 1994).
- 18) While restating Bonn’s commitment to integration, Mr Kohl insisted that Germany did not want the “convoy’s speed dictated by the slowest vessel.” (*The Daily Telegraph*, 8 September 1994).
- 19) [...] dynamic metaphors have been turned against Britain as it seemed to be dragging its feet. [...] critics [...], like Helmut Kohl last week, [...] insist that the convoy “cannot move at the speed of the slowest ship.” (*The Independent*, 11 September 1994).

As these quotations show, British commentators continued to read Kohl’s use of the *convoy* image as a warning or as a threat, e.g. as a suggestion with “destabilising” results, as a condition for Germany’s official “commitment to integration”, or as an argument “turned against Britain”. This critical attitude was even adopted by Tory government ministers in explicit protests against the ‘discriminatory’ use of the *convoy* metaphor. In 1996, for instance, the then Defence Secretary, Michael Portillo, criticised the “slow boat taunt” as expressing an anti-British bias (*The Times*, 5 February 1996) and a year later, in the run-up to the general election, the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, carried his government’s criticism of Kohl’s metaphor to the lion’s den, i.e. the CDU’s *Konrad Adenauer Institut* in Bonn:

- 20) [...] Mr Rifkind was in effect urging the German to ditch the ideas of their leader. [...] There was no point in talking about a faster integration which left behind the ‘slowest boats’ in the convoy: ‘We are not talking about convoys, we are talking about democracy’. [...] Other Kohl metaphors were also thrown overboard. (*The Times*, 20 February 1997).

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<sup>61</sup> For similar statements by foreign minister Klaus Kinkel cf. e.g. *Die Zeit*, 9 September 1994 and 10 March 1995.

Rifkind, in a daring attempt to turn the tables in the EU integration debate, which was most probably aimed more at winning favours with the British Eurosceptic constituency rather than persuading his audience in Bonn, tried to shift the blame for the EU division back onto the self-styled *convoy leader*. By juxtaposing *convoy* hierarchy and democracy, Rifkind suggested that using the *convoy* image amounted to speaking in favour of an undemocratic Union.

Shortly after Rifkind's speech, the Conservative government ship in Britain was sunk, so to speak, by the election results of May 1997. The German Christian Democrats' crew also sailed into troubled waters when a severe recession seemed to damage Germany's credentials for meeting the EMU convergence criteria. In April 1998, shortly before the EU commission deemed Germany and France to have met the criteria after all, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* warned that both nations might be viewed *by the other members of the European convoy* as hindering its progress:

- 21) Wenn in diesen beiden Ländern das Wachstum aus strukturellen Gründen nicht so richtig vorankommt, dann könnte es leicht passieren, daß sie von den anderen Mitgliedern des europäischen Geleitzugs als Hemmschuh empfunden werden. (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 15 April 1998)

Thus, the erstwhile *convoy avant-garde* – cf. example (14) – was apparently in danger of *falling behind* the supposed *laggards*. This applied to other areas of EU-policy as well. By the end of 1998, *Die Welt* praised the British and French governments for having taken the initiative to intensify military co-operation within the EU. Germany, now ruled by a coalition government of the Social Democrats and the “Greens”, was not mentioned among the states promoting this initiative. However, the newspaper remarked philosophically, it was not necessary that all EU member states fully participated in the new scheme from the start: those who were ready should *move forward* first – *the rest of the convoy would surely follow*:

- 22) Was Tony Blair und Jacques Chirac jetzt skizziert haben, läuft auf ein enges militärisches Zusammengehen etlicher EU-Staaten hinaus [...] bei europäischen Jahrhundertprojekten [...] immer erst die vorangehen [...], die sich früher bereit fühlen als die anderen. Der Rest des Konvois folgt dann schon. (*Die Welt*, 5 December 1998)

Here, *making up the rearguard of the EU convoy* is not even seen as such a bad thing – the readers are reassured that, *as long as there are some ships that take the*

*initiative, all will be well.* Germany is apparently no longer seen as being under the obligation to be part of the head group. This non-elitist German self-perception seems to have caught on also in government statements. In March 1999, after his first finance minister, Oskar Lafontaine, had resigned, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder sought to reassure the other EU member states that his government would in future *fall in line with the European convoy* in matters of finance policy:

- 23) Zu Beginn seiner Rundreise durch die Hauptstädte der EU hat Bundeskanzler Gerhard Schröder erklärt, Deutschland werde sich auf dem Gebiet der Finanzpolitik künftig ‘im europäischen Geleitzug bewegen’. (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 16 March 1999)

Little had remained of the self-confident assumption that Germany occupied a guaranteed place at the *top of the convoy* and could admonish other states to *catch up* – now the German government was happy if it just could *sail along with* and *stay in the European convoy*.

When we look at the overall distribution of *convoy* imagery in the corpus, the asymmetrical pattern of German and British perception of nations’ roles that we found for *single ship* metaphors is even more clearly noticeable. Up until 1998, all uses of the *convoy* metaphor in the German sample assume *convoy leadership* for Germany either explicitly or implicitly (in the latter case, tacitly assuming that the German side can admonish *slow ships* to *catch up*); the *laggards* in the *convoy* are rarely ‘named and shamed’ but the pragmatic context leaves little doubt that it is the two EMU ‘opt-out’ nations, Great Britain and Denmark, that are being targeted. This finding is confirmed by the consistent interpretation of German *convoy*-quotes as threats or warnings by British media and politicians. In addition, just as there are no claims at all to *ship captaincy* on the British side of the corpus, there are none regarding *convoy leadership* either. Since 1998, the German public has started to question their nation’s role as being one of the *EU convoy leaders*; the British sample has no further examples since the row over the *slow boat taunt*.

#### 4. Conclusion

The stark discrepancies between the German and British uses of *ship* and *convoy* metaphors can be interpreted as an indication of significant differences of attitude

towards the EU in the both countries. Whereas the German public are strongly concerned about the *EU ship's or convoy's progress* (towards EMU or political integration) and – at least until 1998 – appear to expect that their own country's role should be that of the *captain, helmsman* or a *convoy leader*, the British sample is dominated by an argument about the rights and wrongs of the (German) perception of Britain as the *laggard* or *lost crew member* or *passenger*. Some strongly Eurosceptic voices even plead in favour of Britain not being at all on the *EU ship*, which they see as being doomed to go under like the *Titanic*.

This asymmetry of the metaphorical roles of Britain and Germany on the EU's *ship journey* is repeated throughout the corpus, especially in the other fields of transport imagery; e.g. depictions of Germany (together with France) as the *locomotive* of the *Euro-train* vs. Britain as trying to *apply the brakes* or *jumping off the train*; of Germany's or the EU Commission's *Mercedes driving* on the *autobahn* vs. Britain's *car breaking down in a by-lane*, or of Germany *moving ahead* at *top speed* vs. Britain being on *the slow track* in a *two-speed EU*. These stereotypical patterns of contrastive metaphorical evaluation account for roughly three thirds of all the occurrences in the respective fields. Although they cannot be interpreted as being validated – due to imbalances in some of the samples and general problems in precisely defining metaphor fields<sup>7171</sup> –, this consistency of asymmetrical national roles in the British and German samples reflects, and indeed, highlights the differences in opinions and attitudes.

It is here where didactic applications of metaphor analysis for both area studies and media comparison studies may lie. In the first place, some metaphorical formulations of policy initiatives give rise to high-profile international debates, which explicitly demonstrate differences or indeed conflicts of interest and political programmes between governments. The British-German row over the *slow boat* accusation, the dispute over an exclusive *core* or *inner circle* within the EU, or the debate about Gorbachev's *Common European House* are cases in point. They provide official statements as well as a host of interpretations and reformulations by the media which

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<sup>7171</sup> For discussions of this fundamental problem of applied metaphor analysis cf. Peil (1993) and Low (1999).

can help students to research and compare government and public opinion positions on international policy issues, e.g. in our case, in Britain and Germany.

Secondly, the study of public discourse metaphors can complement knowledge about prevalent attitudes in Britain and Germany towards the EU by providing insights into the development of specific public discourse agendas. Metaphors are particularly adaptable to new political constellations, as the swift changes in German formulations of the *convoy* metaphor since 1998 demonstrate: instead of claiming leadership for Germany in the *EU convoy*, it became more relevant for politicians and media to discuss their country's efforts to *catch up with* or *stay in the European convoy* (there can thus also be no question of imagery 'determining' the political "modes of thinking" of a discourse community). The creative application of metaphors to new political developments is a characteristic feature of public discourse, which students should get acquainted with in order to understand the political bias and 'spin' of arguments in the respective discourse community.

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**Biodata**

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