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Ariane Bogain

Department of Languages, Northumbria University, Newcastle

Northumbria University, School of Arts and Social Sciences, Lipman 029, 1, Elison Place,
Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 8ST

ariane.bogain@northumbria.ac.uk

Telephone: 0191 227 3800

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Abstract:

Since the beginning of the Euro crisis in 2009 a succession of one "last chance" meeting after another has exposed deep rifts over the policies to implement in order to ensure the permanence of the Euro. From austerity measures to curb swelling public deficits put forward by Germany to European growth plans and solidarity mechanisms suggested by France disagreements have been deep and infighting widespread. The agreement of a new European treaty creating a tight fiscal pact, at the European Summit on 7 December 2011, brought these tensions to the fore, leading to a barrage of criticisms in France against Germany imposing its austerity agenda on the whole Eurozone. This article seeks to analyse how Germany has been portrayed in the French political discourse by focusing on the vast array of reactions to this new treaty. It will show a discursive struggle between three discourse types representing Germany as an evil force intent on dominating Europe, a virtuous and unwittingly dominating Europe and an economic giant but a political dwarf. These discourses will show how Germany is trapped into past representations and how they reveal far more about France's self-image in relation to its neighbour than about Germany itself.

Demons, ants, giants and dwarves: the construction of Germany's handling of the Euro crisis in French political discourse.

The 2007 sub-prime crisis led to a global financial meltdown, which turned into a sovereign debt crisis in the Eurozone (Van Riet 2010), starting with Greece which was rescued in 2010, followed by Ireland and Portugal in 2011, which were granted bailout plans involving strict fiscal measures aimed at reducing public deficits (Begg 2012). The debt crisis was transformed into a specific Euro crisis, when many investors worldwide started to doubt the permanence of the single currency, in view of the dithering and conflicting attitudes of the Eurozone leaders as to which policies should be adopted to prevent the Eurozone from collapsing under asymmetric debt shocks in a monetary Union that did not include fiscal solidarity between its members (Begg 2012). It has been widely reported that Germany and other Northern European countries have been in favour of reducing budget deficits and debt levels to restore credibility in the eyes of the financial markets (Hubner 2012), before envisaging any form of European solidarity mechanisms, such as the mutualisation of debts through Eurobonds (Hubner 2012). Meanwhile, countries such as France, Italy or Spain have advocated a mutualisation of risks, a European-wide growth strategy to compensate for national austerity measures and generally speaking more European solidarity (Kauffmann and Uterwedde 2010). It is against this conflictual backdrop that one 'last chance' meeting after another led European leaders to adopt various plans designed to consolidate investors' faith in the Euro, whilst erecting safeguards to protect the Eurozone against further deterioration (Cohen 2012). These efforts to find a solution to the Euro's woes culminated in a new intergovernmental treaty agreed at the European Summit held on 7 December 2011, under which the Eurozone States pledged to adhere to a fiscal pact to maintain structural budget deficits under 0.5% of GDP and overall budget deficits under 3% of GDP or face sanctions (European Council 2011).

The run-up to this December summit and its aftermath witnessed a flurry of criticisms from French politicians targeting Germany, seen as having imposed its views on the Eurozone. These criticisms against a domineering Germany had been simmering in France since the beginning of the Euro-crisis (Kauffmann and Uterwedde 2010) but they were brought to the fore by a vitriolic attack from Arnaud de Montebourg, who had just come third in the Socialist nomination process to be the party's candidate for the 2012 presidential race. In a radio interview on 30 November 2011, followed by a post on his blog (Montebourg 2011c), he accused Angela Merkel to be a new Bismarck bent on European domination:

The issue of German nationalism is reappearing through the Bismarck-like policy (*la politique à la Bismarck*) implemented by Mrs Merkel. What does that mean? She creates confrontation to impose her domination. Mrs Merkel has decided to impose a German order on the Eurozone. It means German demands and diktats on what will remain of the Eurozone once the countries that cannot cope are expelled.

This attack led to a myriad of reactions about the role of Germany in the Euro crisis, both in support of and against de Montebourg's arguments. This debate resurrected the negative German trope in French political discourse, so widespread after the defeat in the 1870 war and the loss of Alsace-Lorraine and even more so during the interwar period (Aslangul 2009), which represented a radical departure from years of political discourses being dominated by the Franco-German friendship theme (Jurt 2001). This study aims to contribute to an analysis of how Germany and its handling of the Euro crisis was constructed in French political discourse in the context of the new fiscal treaty, by investigating the discourse types, the discursive strategies and the linguistic structures implemented and what the discourses developed about Germany reveal about France's self-image.

Theoretical and methodological framework

This study is based on discourse analysis in general and more particularly the theoretical framework of critical discourse analysis. Following Foucault's seminal definition of discourse as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (1974, 49), discourses have been characterised as constituting reality by creating norms, allocating meaning, status and social grounding to social actors and shaping development between them. Discourses 'are not about objects, they do not identify objects, they constitute them' (Foucault 1974, 49), as what is said about something becomes the basis of our knowledge. Discourse analysis is now a cross-disciplinary method to analyse texts and talks which shape our reality (Brown and Yule 1983; Coulthard 1994; Fairclough 1997; Van Dijk 1997). It is through discourses that we access reality (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002) and it is through them that reality is constructed and socially constituted. Discourse analysis does not have a unified definition and varies depending on the discipline, such as language use in Linguistics, cognition in Psychology or social interaction in Social Sciences (Van Dijk, 1997). A wide range of practice can be found, from a detailed textual analysis to the broad quest for general patterns in socio-cultural discourses, from purely concentrating on the text itself to focusing on the connection between the text and the social condition under which it has been produced (Keenoy et al. 1997). In this article, discourse, following Fairclough (1992), is defined as socially conditioned, i.e. a text in context and socially constitutive, in that it forms social identities and interactions (Fairclough and Wodak 1997).

In terms of methodology this article draws upon the discourse-historical approach in Critical Discourse Analysis as developed by Wodak (2011), which studies discursive strategies through which political identities are constructed. This methodology goes beyond the purely linguistic aspect of a text to include historical, political, sociological and psychological dimensions when analysing a specific discourse (Wodak 2011). This study engages in two of

the discursive strategies laid out by Wodak: Nomination, in other words the construction of actors through the way they are referred to and Predication, i.e. the attribution of properties and traits to actors. The analysis centres on the following overall research question: how was Germany constructed in the French political discourse in the context of the Euro-crisis and more specifically the new treaty of December 2011? This is subdivided into the following three questions: How was Germany referred to linguistically? What characteristics and features were attributed to Germany? What does Germany's nomination and predication reveal about France?

The empirical source material of this study is French political discourse, defined as the oral and written speeches of politicians, as reported by the media, as well as the media coverage of the issues they raised, reactions and commentaries. Data was collected from the day de Montebourg launched his attack until the election of a new president on 6 May 2012, Francois Hollande, which marked the end of the Merkel-Sarkozy relationship, dubbed in the media 'Merkozy', and a yet to be defined new relationship between the two countries. To put these debates into a broader context, data from two months before de Montebourg's outburst and two months after the election of a new president were also included. The sample of the French press covered the political spectrum in terms of Right/Left, Euro-enthusiasts / Euro-sceptics and liberal / anti-liberal economically. It included the three main national dailies, *Libération* (Left), *le Monde* (centre-left) and *le Figaro* (right), the two economic dailies, *les Echos* and *la Tribune*, a selection of political magazines, *l'Express* (right), *le Point* (right) and *le Nouvel Observateur* (centre left), as well as a selection of online news websites such as *Slate* (left), *Rue 89* (left), *Mediapart* (left) and *Atlantico* (right). Blogs from politicians active on the web were also used. All the resources were accessed online, which enabled the inclusion of numerous reactions from readers.

A large corpus was created, which was analysed in three stages: a preliminary analysis to summarise the main themes provided in relation to Germany's handling of the crisis; a deeper content analysis to identify discursive patterns, focusing on the discourse types and discursive strategies used; the identification of linguistic-rhetorical strategies implemented. This led me to identify three discourse types which I will analyse in turn.

Nomination and Predication strategies: Germany, from oppressor to clumsy giant.

Establishing boundaries between insiders and outsiders has been shown to be the staple of identity formation (Rose 1995; Bauman 1990). Identity needs an Other to exist (Connolly 1991) and that is why the delineation of the Self and the Other, the in- and outgroups, is always the first step in the discursive construction of collective identities. The construction of Germany through the nomination and predication discursive strategies, i.e. the delineation and labelling of the actors involved, saw a discursive struggle between three main competing discourses. In all cases, Germany was cast as the dominant Other, whereas France was presented as the weakened ingroup. However, the first discourse type presented Germany as intent on dominating Europe and France as surrendering, whereas the second one showed Germany as unwittingly dominating Europe through its economic strength whereas France could not compete and the third one characterised Germany as an economic giant who would have been lost in the Euro crisis without France's help.

Germany the oppressor

In the first discourse type, Germany was constructed in such a way as to cast it as a ruthless oppressor determined to dominate Europe, through various discursive strategies. The first

was the selective use of negatively connotated nouns to refer to the Germans, presenting them as the menacing evil Other by drawing on an imagery developed since the 19th century. They were constantly referred to as ‘the Krauts’ (les Boches), ‘the Fritz’ (les Teutons) and ‘the Prussians’, all historically connotated in reference to the evil enemy invading France, starting with the 1870 war and the loss of Alsace-Lorraine through the First World War, when these words became staples of French war propaganda, and the interwar period when Germany was represented as the Prussian helmet-wearing hostile neighbour (Aslangul 2009). These words tapped into the past representation of Germany as the enemy, the ever menacing Other, and acted as allusions, defined by Wodak as ‘suggest[ing] and address[ing] negative associations and connotations without being responsible for them. Ultimately, the associations are only hinted at. The listeners/viewers/readers make them explicit in the act of reception’ (Wodak 2007, 213). Germany was not directly accused of being bent on domination but the words used in the nomination of this country implicitly did.

Two other words reinforced the nomination of Germany as the dangerous Other, when Angela Merkel was compared to the ‘Valkyrie’ and the adjective ‘German’ (allemand) was replaced by ‘Germanic’ (germanique). These words also acted as allusions, based on the imagery developed since 1870 and in particular during the heyday of the ‘folk psychology’ during the interwar period (Jennings 1999), which ascribed characteristics to individual nations. Jules Romains, a prominent French writer in that period, can serve to illustrate the two main characteristics then given to the Germans: irrationality, illustrated by German romanticism which had gone the furthest away from Reason and a love for order leading to authoritarianism (Romains 1933). Such a contradiction led to unpredictability, delirium and untrustworthiness. The word ‘Germanic’ used to refer to present day Germany alluded to its rigidity and blind obedience to order and ‘Valkyrie’, the epitome of German wild

romanticism in France, to its irrationality, thus alluding to Germany being an unhinged neighbour, therefore a constant threat to France.

This historical lexicalisation, grounded in the imagery from the period between 1870 and 1945, presented Germany as the menacing Other ready to pounce on the ingroup. It reactivated old images still present in the French social imaginary and helped the speaker transfer negativity from the past to today's Germany. This lexicalisation was heightened by specific historical references pertaining to that period and all pointing to Germany not only as the enemy but also as an oppressor. The most prevalent were Bismarck, Nazism and Daladier. First, many references equated Angela Merkel to Bismarck and his 'spiked helmets' (casques à pointe) were a recurrent image to refer to Germany. In the French collective mind, Bismarck is the man who 'stole' Alsace-Lorraine and humiliated France by having the German Emperor crowned in the Versailles castle (Aslangul 2009). The image of 'les casques à pointe' became synonymous with German imperialism and savagery (Proust 2011). Germany was therefore clearly nominated as the attacking oppressor and France as the victim.

Second, several historical references directly equated Germany with Nazism. Thus, austerity measures were presented as 'imposed by this German government, just like Nazi Germany dictated its conditions to Europe between 1940 and 1944' (Forum Scpo 2012). Present day Germany was cast back to its Nazi past and its actions judged through this prism with constant references to occupied countries, for example 'what Germany is imposing on European people, once occupied' (Forum Arrêt sur images 2011). The starkest image was found in the Germans being referred to as 'Arbeit Macht Frei': 'They have always been a bit "Arbeit Macht Frei"' (Forum Figaro 2011d). With its explicit reference to extermination camps, the Germans were cast as the ultimate oppressors. If presenting Germany as Nazis would suggest that the ingroup was presented as an innocent victim, this was rarely the case, as

numerous references were made instead to the Vichy regime (1940-1944) and more particularly its collaboration with Nazi Germany, which changed the nomination of the ingroup from oppressed to willingly partaking in its own subjugation. This strategy can be illustrated by the following two extracts: ‘A large part of the French “elite” has always shown some kind of (shameful) admiration towards Germany. It is no wonder that collaboration in 40-44 was so successful (it had started well before the war)’ (Forum Arrêt sur images 2011); ‘Do you want France to conform with Germany at any cost (s’aligne à n’importe quel prix) in order to save the obsession with the Euro (le fétiche euro)? I keep telling you, this is following the example set by Vichy (c’est du vichysme), supported by Maurras (amongst others) while the true patriots were in London fighting for a free and independent France’ (Forum Quatremer 2011). As Vichy has become the symbol of abject submission to the enemy, the implicit message was that, just like in 1940, the French government was willingly letting itself fully dominated and controlled by the same foreign power. Another image drawn from the Vichy period reinforced this message, when Julien Dray (2011), a Socialist MP, condemned Sarkozy’s speech about the future of the Euro, which was held in Toulon, using this historical reference: ‘It’s in Toulon harbour that the French navy sunk itself (s’est sabordée) when the German troops entered the free zone (la zone sud)’, thus implicitly accusing Sarkozy of not following this example and accepting France’s oppression by following Merkel’s line.

The final most prevalent historical reference continued the negative nomination of the ingroup by equating Sarkozy to Daladier, the French Prime Minister between 1938 and 1940. For example, the socialist MP Le Guen (2011) stated that ‘Sarkozy is a bit like Daladier in Munich’. Many comparisons were found in comments from readers, for example ‘Countries like Greece, Italy and Portugal suffer, and Germany is in the vanguard (aux avant-postes) with our Daladier’ (Forum Mediapart 2011). This referred to Daladier’s signature of the

Munich agreement with Hitler, along with Chamberlain, in 1938, which enabled Hitler to annex the Sudete area of Czechoslovakia and six months later the whole country. Historians may still debate on how wise this agreement was but it has acquired in France the status of the ultimate symbol of capitulation (Weinberg 1988). To apply it to Sarkozy suggested that France was not only utterly dominated in the Euro-Crisis but also lost its dignity in the process.

The historical lexicalisation and references reactivated negative images about Germany which cast this country as a negative force bent on dominating the Eurozone and subjecting its members to its demands. If the outgroup was clearly nominated as the enemy, the construction of the ingroup oscillated between a country under attack and a country humiliated for not putting up a fight, or, even worse, partaking in its own indignity. A rhetorical analysis further revealed a vast array of metaphors designed to highlight Germany's domination and France's subservient status, with the same ambivalence between being a victim or a willing participant to its own domination.

The most prevalent metaphors to predicate the two actors pertained to the military world. Typical military words included 'diktats', 'hegemony', 'injunctions', 'controlling body' (directoire), 'stick' (trique), 'schlag', 'ultimatum', 'control centres' (postes de commande), 'to be in control' (tenir les manettes), 'to hold the stick' (tenir le gros bout du baton) and 'dictatorship' for Germany, clearly predicated as imposing its will, just like an invading army would. As for France, the military terminology highlighted both its subjugated state and its utter humiliation: 'abdication', 'capitulation', 'selling off national interests' (bradage des intérêts), 'to be dictated', 'subservient', 'to be under someone's command' (aux ordres de), 'to be on one's knees begging', 'to be under someone's heels' (à la botte de). France's subservience was reinforced by Master/Slaves metaphors. The images of 'France is giving in to Germany' (La France se couche devant l'Allemagne) and 'France is working for its

master' (la France au service de son maître) were both a recurring theme. As a result, France was shown to be following orders like a subordinate: 'Mrs Merkel decides and Mr Sarkozy follows suit' (Hollande 2011); 'In reality he bows to German wishes' (Le Pen 2011) ; 'The French president has become the European lackey (valet) of the German Right' (Montebourg, 2011b). France's subordinated nature was graphically summarised by various striking images reducing France to a liegeman (vassal) ('Today France is the liegeman of Germany which makes all the decisions') (Forum La Tribune 2012)), a telegraphist ('Sarkozy is no more than Merkel's telegraphist' (Forum Le Figaro 2011b)) or even a part of Germany ('Nicolas, the American, has become Mrs Merkel's foreign minister' (Forum Figaro 2011d)).

Some metaphors went further, by reducing France to an extremely obedient dog. Nicolas Sarkozy kept being referred to as a poodle, with its negative connotation of doing whatever its owner asks: 'Sarkozy in his role as a poodle, just like Blair with Bush' (Forum Rue 89 2011); 'France behaves like mummy's little doggy' (La France fait le chienchien à sa mémère) (Forum Le Figaro 2011d). Not only was France a poodle but a particularly pathetic and weak one, made apparent through a lexical field typically used by dog owners to their beloved subservient pets: 'Our president follows Angela Merkel in a pathetic way like a frightened little doggy' (un toutou apeuré) (Parti de Gauche 2011b); 'France is turning into Germany's little doggy. Every time, France gives its little paws to get its little treats' (La France lève la papatte pour avoir son susucre) (Forum Figaro 2011d). This subservient status was also highlighted through metaphors belonging to the cycling world. They expressed how France was forced to follow Germany's lead, without being able to dictate the pace: 'Despite his humiliation, Sarkozy accepts to trail behind Merkel' (Parti de Gauche, 2011a); 'Sarkozy might pretend to control the Paris-Berlin tandem but actually he is sitting on the carrier of the German Right' (assis sur le porte-bagage de la droite allemande) (Montebourg 2011a). These metaphors were sometimes replaced by musical or writing ones to present Germany as the

director / author who orchestrated every decision: ‘Germany truly sets the tone’ (donne le la) (Koller 2012); ‘Sarkozy has followed the story far more than he has written it’ (Koller 2012).

All these metaphors culminated in sexual ones, with S&M and emasculating undertones, when Merkel was presented as the domineering figure in the Franco-German couple and Sarkozy as the humiliated partner: Sarkozy ‘dropped his pants for Merkel’ (a baissé sa culotte devant Merkel) (Forum Figaro 2011b); Angela Merkel ‘wears the trousers’ (porte la culotte) (Woodward and Newton 2012) and the French government ‘systematically gives in (se couche) to satisfy Germany’s desires’ (Forum Figaro 2011d). This led to the most famous metaphor traditionally used to refer to France and Germany, that of a ‘couple’, to be emptied of its substance, so big the imbalance between the two countries had become, which was neatly summarised by this image: ‘If I could come up with an image about this unlikely couple I would say that one lives in the flat and the other one lives outside the door (sur le palier)’ (Forum la Tribune 2012).

All these metaphors can be characterised as a code strategy creating a network of interrelated terms all predicating the outgroup as the domineering Other bent on dictating its orders on the ingroup. As for the ingroup, it was presented as being so weak that its dominated status became an utter humiliation. Germany’s negative nomination and predication through the historical lexicalisation and metaphors were reinforced by a third discursive strategy, the use of negatively-connotated stereotypes.

As Van Dijk (2000) showed, the categorisation of people in in- and outgroups is not value free but loaded with ideologically based applications of norms and values. Attaching positive values to the self and negative values to the other are two well-known strategies of predication. Both were widespread through the use of stereotypes designed to predicate Germany as the ‘nasty’ Other jealous of the ingroup’s superior civilisation. The main traits of

the interwar German ‘type’, as expressed through Folk psychology, were found exactly word for word. Authoritarianism and rigidity were reactivated to portray Germany as the inflexible type, with ‘an authoritarian culture’ (Todd 2011a), a country that will not change its mind, however wrong it might be, which cast it as a difficult Other to deal with: ‘This country rests on a particular culture based on the family. It has a quite authoritarian system with a single heir (à héritier unique). Hence its industrial efficiency, its dominating position in Europe, hence also its mental rigidity’ (Todd 2011a); ‘these obsessions for austerity (obsessions rigoristes) are engrained in the German mind-set (la mentalité allemande)’ (Forum Quatremer 2012). Irrationality was also reactivated, with the explicit message that here was a country riddled with ‘a thirst for power’ (une ivresse de puissance) (Todd 2011a), which meant that it could not be trusted, thus reactivating a third traditional stereotype: ‘History hasn’t taught us that Germany is a reasonable country. Its particular spirit (genie particulier) is to stick stubbornly to its mistakes and to be irrational’ (Todd 2011b). Finally, Germany’s arrogance was also recycled: ‘A weakly managed France can lead to Europe breaking up and the resurgence of a strong arrogant Germany which despises its neighbours’ (Forum Arrêt sur images 2011), making it a very dangerous and nasty Other who could not be trusted.

A final element in these stereotypes was to attribute this nastiness to jealousy of the in-group who possessed all the traits that the Other could only dream of. A series of binary oppositions was implemented to present the Other as intent on dominating its vastly superior neighbour, as illustrated by the following extract:

This German nationalism [...] is based on a huge feeling of inferiority. [...] Deep down, Germany cannot forgive France for inventing modern democracy 200 years ago, following the Enlightenment and the Revolution, at a time when it consisted simply of a patchwork of principalities where they didn’t even speak the same language. [...] Hostility towards France is something vital for the German

elites. [...] Germany was unable to find in itself the resources to exist as a Nation, it needed war and to hate someone else. This someone else was France. Therein lies the problem (Forum Figaro 2011c).

The binary oppositions in terms of enlightenment / delirium, democracy / war highlighted the nastiness of the outgroup presented as riddled with engrained jealousy leading to a pathological desire to dominate and punish its superior neighbour, which cast the in-group as the beautiful civilisation attacked by its uncouth and aggressive neighbour.

To summarise the first discourse type on Germany, the characteristics of the nominalisation/predication discursive strategy were as follows: through the rhetorical-linguistics elements of historical lexicalisation, historical references, metaphors and stereotypes, Germany was cast as the nasty Other and France as the victim: on the one hand an arrogant jealous domineering outgroup intent on controlling Europe, just like it tried to do in the past, and on the other hand an utterly dominated ingroup who suffered humiliation by being unable to fight back or even worse by accepting its own degrading status. This first discourse type, due to the ferocity of its attacks, tended to dominate the headlines and the media coverage. However, it was challenged by a different discourse type which also nominated and predicated Germany as the dominant Other but this time not in a bellicose fashion. In this discourse, Germany was not seen as the nasty Other hungry for power but as dominating by default through its economic superiority.

Germany, the virtuous ant

In the second discourse type, Germany's domination was not bellicose but brought about by its economic excellence, which France was unable to follow. This discourse relied on the reactivation of a traditional stereotype when it comes to the Germans, their industriousness, which was positively compared to France's more frivolous nature, in a re-enactment of the

Ant and the Grasshopper's tale. The negative stereotypes of discipline and rigidity of the first discourse were transformed into a positive predication of responsibility and seriousness: 'It is a disciplined country where hard work is sacred (sacralisé) (Beylau, 2011); 'You are hardworking (bosseurs) and serious' (Forum Figaro 2011d); 'They (eux) are responsible people' (Forum Figaro 2011d). The use of 'you' and 'them' implicitly suggested that France did not possess these positive traits. Indeed, the ant-like quality of Germany was opposed to the more idle-prone France, using the grasshopper metaphor and a series of binary oppositions nominating Germany as a virtuous ant and France as a frivolous grasshopper: 'The truth is, France is a grasshopper and Germany an ant' (Forum Figaro 2011c); 'Germany is not like us. While we live on credit and spend like there is no tomorrow (sans compter) they (eux) spend their time saving and exporting' (Forum Figaro 2011c). Germany was therefore nominated and predicated as the good hardworking responsible ant whereas France was the frivolous irresponsible grasshopper who squandered its money.

This negative comparison with the industrious Germans led to a discursive strategy based on self-flagellation, in which France was predicated as lacking qualities to compete with Germany, through its own frivolousness. Just like in the tale, when winter comes, in this case in times of economic crisis, the grasshopper cannot cope whereas the ant is safe and sound. This was made clear through a series of binary oppositions, based on comparing France's economic indicators with those of Germany and systematically presenting them as inferior: 'The competitiveness gap keeps widening. We don't play in the same category anymore' (Ménudier 2012); 'Germany has succeeded in finding a place (réussi son entrée) in the global economy whereas France has found it more difficult' (Le Maire 2012). A device often implemented was the fact and figure approach, i.e. an accumulation of statistics all proving how far back France was compared with Germany. By using a non-emotionally loaded vocabulary, in contrast to the first discourse type, this approach removed any bellicosity in

Germany's domination by presenting it as the natural consequence of its economic superiority and France's inability to follow suit. A typical example was the following extract:

The fact that Germany is in a strong position politically and economically is easy to understand. The German economy represents 30% of the Eurozone GDP against 21% for France. [...] The German GDP has increased by nearly 10% since 2005 against 5% for France. [...] Since the launch of the Eurozone the debt level of both countries had progressed in a similar fashion. This is no longer the case: Germany is about to reduce its public deficits [...] whereas France's debts will continue to swell (Lechevalier 2011).

Germany dominated, not because it wanted to but because it had a better economy and better finances. The self-flagellation strategy explained this domination through France's own flaws, which suggested that France had only itself to blame: 'It [France] listened too much (a accordé une oreille trop complaisante) to discourses which refuse to accept the world as it is' (Le Maire 2011); 'When you are too deep in debt you are always in a weak position. But you can only blame yourself when you have been a grasshopper for decades' (Forum Figaro 2011b). France was blamed for its own economic misfortune with self-accusatory examples: 'The German made efforts that our grasshoppers haven't made in the last few years'. (Forum Figaro 2011c); 'These two countries [Germany and Finland] have succeeded to do what we have been unable to consider! They have adapted to this new currency and to its constraints in order to use its advantages to the maximum' (Forum Slate 2011). This debunked the first discourse by putting the blame of France's economic woes into the French corner and absolving Germany of any will to dominate. Indeed, in view of France's failings, Germany was cast as dominating Europe by default: 'Germany rules (dirige) Europe today because it is the leading economic power on the continent' (Forum Figaro 2011c); 'He [Montebourg] would be better off (ferait mieux de) understanding that Germany simply has the power it deserves' (Forum Figaro 2011a). This explains why, in contrast to the previous discourse which called for France to refuse Germany's domination, in this discourse Germany was

presented as a model to follow: 'Let's see what they do well and let's work to reach their level' (Forum Figaro 2011d); 'It would be better to be inspired by what the Germans, who work hard, do' (Forum Le Point 2011). Germany became a beacon to follow and its critics, in a reversal from the first discourse type, became jealous creatures who refused to face economic reality.

Indeed, the critics of Germany were targeted through a negative lexical field aimed at presenting them as 'simpletons' who did not understand the situation and looked instead for a scapegoat: 'Simple souls (les esprits simples) need an enemy. It is far easier than sorting out one's problems' (Forum Slate 2011); 'I fully understand that some French people are refusing to face reality but this is no reason to criticise (taper sur) those who are better than we are. [...] It would be better to look at one's own deficiencies and try to remedy them' (Forum Rue 89 2011). Their arguments were dismissed as a smokescreen in order not to face the harsh reality: 'The hegemony you invented is nothing less than the decadence of the other countries in the Eurozone' (Forum Le Point 2011); 'The books (les comptes) have to be balanced, otherwise you are in trouble (c'est le bouillon). This notion of a so-called authoritarian Germany is just fudging the issue (noyer le poisson)' (Forum Figaro 2011a). This discourse exonerated Germany of any wrongdoing by accusing the ingroup of shifting the blame onto others for problems of their own making. The vocabulary used was often derogatory or ironic: 'It's the others' fault! This is a typical French attitude when we put ourselves in the shit (dans la merde) and we refuse to acknowledge it' (Forum Rue 89 2011). This predicated the in-group as ignorant, incapable of accepting responsibility for their own problems and vindictive towards the outgroup whose dominance was only due to the ingroup's weaknesses. Through positively connotated images for the outgroup and negative metaphors and lexis for the outgroups, this self-flagellation discourse was scathing for France, the Grasshopper, and presented Germany, the Ant, as a paragon of economic virtue. The outgroup was no longer

nominated and predicated as the nasty domineering figure intent on ruling Europe but a victim of its own success who dominated Europe through the economic weaknesses of its partner who preferred to shift the blame onto Germany instead of facing up to the harsh reality. This self-flagellation discourse was challenged by the final discourse type which accepted Germany's economic might but refused to accept the idea that France was utterly dominated.

The teacher and the stumbling giant

In this discourse type, Germany was still nominated as the dominant one in economic terms but the ingroup appeared in a much more positive light as the country which helped Germany, predicated as 'clueless', find the right path in the Euro crisis. To start with, this discourse accepted Germany's economic superiority but instead of berating the in-group, it re-asserted its standing through self-promotion and self-aggrandizement discursive strategies. In a reversal from the first two discourses, France's economic situation was presented in a far more flattering light, using an exceptionalising device to minimise Germany's economic domination. This entailed removing its exceptional export records in order to show that on all other aspects France equalled Germany or even performed better: 'If we look at the reality of the economic situation of both countries, beyond this exceptional German result in terms of exports, the differences are not that great. Over the past 10 years there have been few differences in terms of GDP growth or productivity gains' (Lorenzi and Rückert 2011). This enabled to present Germany's supposed economic superiority as the tree that hid the forest and nominated France as an economically strong country.

The second exceptionalising device was to focus on the long-term rather than the current situation and then cast France as having better assets than Germany: 'In the long term the

French economic fundamentals are as good as or even better than Germany. Our demography is more favourable, our geography is a huge asset as is our education system' (Le Maire 2011). Instead of focusing on temporary factors like exports one should analyse the whole picture, as France's economic standing would then appear in a far more flattering way. This is why the conclusion reached was 'Let's not have any inferiority complex towards the Germans' (Le Maire 2011); 'We are still equal to the Germans and we need to do everything to remain equal' (Le Maire 2012). This discourse presented France as having nothing to be ashamed of compared to Germany. This self-reassuring discourse turned into self-glorification when the issue of German domination was concerned, as France was predicated as having imposed its will on Germany, portrayed as a bumbling economic giant who might have had the strongest economy but who was a political dwarf with no vision.

France's role was indeed glorified: 'The idea that Germany, because it is the best pupil, has won all the political decisions (arbitrages politiques) is wrong. History will show that the role of France and Nicolas Sarkozy was decisive' (Baroin 2012). Using an inversion strategy from the first discourse type, military metaphors were used to highlight that France had imposed many decisions on Germany: 'given in to France' (concéder à la France), 'extracted by Sarkozy' (soutiré par Sarkozy), 'French victory', 'concessions agreed to' were recurrent images. This led to statements aimed to prove that France steered Germany in the right path, using the discursive strategy of self-glorification through lists of achievements. A typical example was the following:

It is difficult to state that the reforms carried out since the beginning of the crisis were wholly decided (téléguidées) by Germany. The first Greek bail-out plan was extracted (soutiré) by President Sarkozy from Angela Merkel who had not understood at the beginning of the crisis that it would quickly affect the whole Eurozone. Similarly, the creation of the European stability fund to support the countries with

the highest debts in the Eurozone was a 'French victory', if war-like terminology is to be used (Les Echos, 2011).

In this extract, Germany was implicitly predicated as 'clueless' and needing France's insights. It reactivated an old stereotype regarding the Germans, that of 'un garçon mal dégrossi' (Romains, 1933), a very strong but somewhat intellectually limited person. France appeared as a teacher who needed to be patient with a pupil slow to understand, which was made even more apparent in this extract:

It seems to me, however, that Mrs Merkel [...] was in 2008 against Germany guaranteeing the EFSM, in favour of punishing the sinners, against a fiscal supervision [...], against the Commission's involvement in bail-out plans, [...] against unconventional measures from the ECB [...], against any control (ingérence) over German banks. [...] But if you'd like to think that Germany led the way (a conduit le bal), so be it (grand bien vous fasse) (Forum Quatremer 2012).

The rhetorical devices of repetitions and anaphors were very powerful to cast Germany as the one which eventually had to change its mind through what was implicitly presented as France's superior vision. This list, along with the repetition of the binary opposition Merkel was against / then she was for, cast France in the very favourable light of a visionary and Germany as lacking political knowhow and needing to be led by France. Germany may have been the economically dominant force in Europe but politically France was leading the way. These rhetorical devices debunked the first two discourses and presented France as the co-leader of Europe with Germany.

France's leading role in the crisis enabled this discourse type to reassert the Franco-German couple, so derided by the first discourse and ignored by the second. The main theme was summarised by this statement: 'We are dealing with the Germans as equals' (d'égal à égal) (Le Maire 2011). Thus, 'French ideas contribute to move things forward. [...] There are French ideas, there are German ideas and at the end of the dialogue we reach a consensus'

(Juppé 2011). A 'shock and awe' discursive strategy was implemented, through the use of extensive lists and hyperboles to present France as a co-leader:

What is essential is that without the Franco-German couple, the Euro would probably not exist anymore today. Thousands of hours of discussions, often difficult, led to (ont accouché) Greek, Irish and Portuguese bail-out plans. They led to creating the EFSM, then the permanent mechanism. They led to 23 countries reaching a compromise on a new treaty. [...] It is impossible to deny that the Franco-German couple were firefighters (endossé les habits de pompier) and is doing everything it can (se démène) to save the Euro (Seux 2012).

This typical extract showed France under the best guise, that of a courageous firefighter always ready to fight a new fire along Germany. This led to the conclusion that France and Germany were the joint leaders of Europe: 'Today, just like yesterday, there is no alternative to the Franco-German relationship. These two countries are the only ones able to create a driving force for Europe (une dynamique européenne) through their history, their geography, their demographic and economic weight' (Caresche 2012). All the key decisions on the Euro crisis were the results of their joint efforts: 'If truth be told, if France and Germany sought the support of other countries to reinforce their positions, it always ended up with a Franco-German compromise they both supported (assumé solidairement)' (Caresche 2012). These typical extracts reactivated a traditional discourse harking back to the 1930s, the idea of France and Germany as the spearhead of European integration (Jurt 2001), which minimised the role of other countries and reasserted France's standing in Europe.

This third discourse type presented a very different in- and outgroups. Through exceptionalising devices to minimise Germany's economic performances, self-aggrandisement strategies based on hyperboles to reassert France's standing as well as binary oppositions to present Germany as needing France's vision, France was nominated and predicated as the clever country which steered Germany in the right path, each time

overcoming its initial reluctance or opposition. Germany was nominated as the ‘best pupil in the class’ economically but predicated as ‘dim-witted’ when it comes to finding the right solutions for the Euro crisis.

Conclusion

This article has analysed the nomination and predication of Germany in its handling of the Euro crisis prior to and following the European summit in December 2011, when a new treaty on a fiscal pact was signed. Emphasis has been placed on the discursive strategies and linguistic structures used. Three discourse types were detected, as summarised in the table below:

Nomination / predication of the outgroup	Nomination / predication of the ingroup	Rhetorical devices used	Discourse type
Germany is an oppressor intent on dominating Europe.	France is a victim France is participating in its subjugation	Negative historical lexicalisation Negative historical references Metaphors pointing to Germany’s domination Negative stereotypes	Germany the ultimate oppressor
Germany is dominating Europe through its economic strength	France cannot compete through its own flaws	Positive lexicalisation of Germany Positive stereotypes of Germany Negative stereotypes for France Self-flagellation devices	Germany the unwitting dominating ant

		for France	
Germany is dominating Europe through its economic strength	France is not far behind France leads Germany to find solutions to the Euro-crisis	Exceptionalising devices Self-boasting strategy Self- aggrandisement devices	Germany the bumbling economic giant

In all the discourses Germany was nominated as the dominant other, either through its desire to dominate or unwittingly through its economic achievements which made it the ‘best pupil in the class’. It was predicated either as the ‘nasty’ other in the first discourse or, in the other two, as the economically efficient non-bellicose Other. In all three discourses, today’s Germany was presented through the reactivation of past representations dating back to the first Franco-German war in 1870. Whether they were negative (authoritarianism, arrogance, rigidity), positive (industriousness) or poking fun (the strong but slightly dim-witted Germans), the stereotypes used trapped the Germans into a dated and fixed representation. Present-day Germany was viewed through a prism harking back to 1870 and reactivating a latent social imaginary still very much intact despite 50 years of official discourses on the Franco-German friendship. France, in contrast, appeared dominated in the first two discourses, either through incapacity or even unwillingness to oppose Germany or through not being as strong economically, which put the country in a position of weakness. This position was greeted either with deep anger at what was perceived as national humiliation or with self-flagellation for having been incapable of keeping up with Germany. Only a minority view predicated France as being capable of steering Germany on the right path. Through a vast array of rhetorical devices the three discourses presented France in relation to Germany in three different ways: self-hatred, self-flagellation and self-glorification. This study therefore highlights that the construction of Germany was far more about how France saw itself than about Germany, which was reduced to past constructs. The different ways of constructing the ingroup strongly suggest that the Euro-crisis rocked France’s self-identity

and that its focus on Germany was a sign of uncertainty about its own standing and a desire to reassert oneself, through anger, self-flagellation or self-boasting. This study has built a foundation which should now be taken further in order to analyse the argumentation schemes behind these starkly different visions of Germany in order to determine the points of views from which they were uttered and the ideological statements they revealed about who was to blame for the Euro crisis.

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