

The emotive power of political metaphors in Rafael Behr's opinion articles in *The Guardian*

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Abstract

This paper examines the emotive power of two political metaphors in the British political commentator Rafael Behr's opinion writing in *The Guardian*: BREXIT IS A DOWNFALL and BREXIT IS A GAME OR A PLAY. It tracks the degree of emotionality based on De Landtsheer's (2009; 2015) model, which categorizes the emotive power of political metaphors into six levels: everyday-life reality; nature; political, intellectual and technological; disaster and violence; sports, games and drama; body, disease, medical and death. The methodology is predicated on what De Landtsheer (2009; 2015) terms as *metaphor content analysis*, supported by psycholinguistic and psychological theories as well as the empirical research conducted on the emotive power of political metaphors. Concentrating on the fourth, fifth and sixth levels, we argue that De Landtsheer's categories are flexible and can be reciprocated based on Behr's manipulation of political metaphors and their context. The paper concludes that Behr's political metaphors fall under the fourth, fifth and sixth categories, indicating a tendency to use a high degree of emotionality. One aspect that could perhaps be developed for further analysis is how to measure the actual (rather than only the intended) emotive power of metaphors by developing methods to investigate readers' reactions.

Keywords: metaphor content analysis; journalism; Brexit; emotive metaphor; political ideology

1 Introduction

The Daily Mail, days before the referendum to leave or remain in the European Union, wrote on its front cover: "Lies. Greedy elites. Or a great future outside a broken, dying Europe [...]" (Martinson 2016). This newspaper

sides with leaving the EU (Buckledee 2018: 101), and as a rhetorical strategy for adding an emotive power to its language, the front cover contains a metaphor associated with approaching death, namely, “dying Europe”. This metaphor has a stronger emotive power because it is related to human body and illness (Musolff 2004; De Landtsheer 2009; 2015). Reading through this front cover, one may notice the degree of emotionality this metaphor carries, arguably to make the front cover more appealing and persuasive (Steen 2008). Musolff states: “The most prominent, recurrent source concepts were: FIGHTING/WAR, JOURNEY, NATURAL DISASTER, DIVORCE, GAMBLE, and BODY/HEART” (2017: 643). In the political quandary of Brexit,¹ Behr’s choice of metaphors goes in tandem with the exacerbated situation in the UK. The pressing question is, how can we gauge the emotive power in political metaphors from a theoretical point of view?

Premised on De Landtsheer’s (2009) categorization of emotive metaphors, this paper examines the degree of emotionality in Rafael Behr’s opinion writing in *The Guardian* from the day of the referendum, 23 June 2016, up until the declaration of the UK’s departure. Behr interweaves political metaphors of BREXIT IS A DOWNFALL and BREXIT IS A GAME OR A PLAY in his writing to offer concrete examples in contrast to the complicated Brexit’s negotiations. He once wrote: “It pushes the metaphor too far to say that Brexit broke my heart. I was culturally and emotionally attached to the European project and still believe UK involvement has improved this country” (Behr 2020). Since this is a particularized observation and interpretation of a single case, we have randomly chosen Behr from a basket that has almost all opinion writers in the UK. Behr has written many political commentaries and opinion pieces that deal with Brexit. He also won the Editorial Intelligence Political Commentator of the Year Award in 2014 for his opinion articles and political commentaries, notably infused with metaphorical expressions

¹ *Brexit* simply means the withdrawal of the UK from the EU. According to the BBC political commentator Tom Moseley (2016), Peter Wilding, the chairman and founder of British Influence cross-party, was the first one to use the word *Brexit* in 2012. This phrase is a compound of two words: *British* and *exit*. Although the history of asking people in the UK to remain in or leave the EU goes back to 1975, the Brexit referendum was held on Thursday 23 June 2016. More than 26.3 million voted in the nearest polling stations, and 7.2 had cast their vote by post (Clarke et al. 2017: 1). The result was that 51.9 percent voted in favor of leaving the EU (Clarke et al. 2017: 4). On 29 March 2017, the UK government started the process of withdrawals. Brexit entered into force on Friday 31 January 2020. The prolonged process of withdrawal and the complicated negotiations of Brexit have thus occupied a large space in media worldwide – the British media is no exception.

(Editorial Intelligence n.d.). We aim at testing the applicability and viability of De Landtsheer's (2009) categorization of emotions in political metaphors, especially the fourth, fifth and sixth ones. Exploring metaphorical expressions in Behr's opinion pieces in line with De Landtsheer's categorization of emotive metaphors, we attempt to show the flexibility of the categorization depending on metaphorical context. A content-analysis methodology is applied, focusing on a single author who is randomly selected.

2 Literature review

2.1 Metaphor and British politics

Metaphor deployment can vary depending on the political situation (Musolff 2004; De Landtsheer 2009; Penninck 2014; Aljukić 2020). Penninck (2014) analyzes political metaphors used by the US and the UK politicians during the financial crises of 1929 and 2008. He focuses on rhetorical themes and metaphor density in political speeches, analyzing thirty-five speeches during the financial crises. The results indicate that there is a higher metaphor use during the 2008 financial crisis than in 1929, and that American politicians tend to use more metaphors in their speeches than British counterparts. He concludes that many politicians employ oversimplifying metaphors in their speeches to appeal emotionally to their audience.

Brexit as a political conundrum has witnessed a high degree of metaphor deployment in British political debate (Cap 2017; Musolff 2017; Buckledee 2018; Charteris-Black 2019). Cap (2017) claims that media outlets have incorporated metaphorical expressions associated with fear. Additionally, Buckledee (2018) maintains that Brexiters use a persuasive language that has been influential in their campaign to leave the EU. While exploring the linguistic and stylistic features of the political discourse by Brexiters and Remainers, he concentrates on the emotive power of metaphors by Remainers that influences the results of the referendum:

As noted previously, only a very small percentage of the electorate possessed the knowledge and expertise to make an informed evaluation of the advantages and disadvantages of EU membership, so “appeals to emotion and personal belief” were bound to have more impact on voters than facts and technical details that were beyond the grasp of most people. (Buckledee 2018: 151)

Two points here are of paramount importance: first, Brexiters resort to “less factual” examples and numbers and spread “lies” to convince the British people. Second, they oversimplify Brexit to reach many people compared to the complicated facts and figures provided by Remainers. To put it differently, Buckledee seems to argue that the Leave campaign strategically employs metaphorical expressions stronger in terms of emotion and persuasion and more simplified in terms of content.

The metaphorical expressions mobilized by Remainers and Brexiters have been given a scant analysis vis-à-vis persuasion and emotional intensity. Many studies have located creative metaphors such as marriage or divorce, eating cake and transportation in the British political discourse of Brexit (Berberović & Mujagić 2017; Đurović & Silaški 2018; Charteris-Black 2019; Tincheva 2019; Aljukić 2020). Đurović & Silaški (2018) investigate the proliferation of what they call “marriage partner scenario” in Brexit’s political discourse as a strategic tactic for simplifying the negotiation of Brexit. Charteris-Black (2019) explores the proliferation of metaphors during and after the Brexit referendum in 2016 and maintains that political metaphors, for example “the eating of cakes, the picking of cherries and emergency brakes”, reflect “the essentially popular language of the so-called ‘ordinary’ people many of whom are not experts and are not well versed in the discourse of trade agreements or international law” (2019: 12). He follows a Critical-Metaphor-Analysis approach comparing and contrasting metaphors in social media, political communication and press media. Berberović & Mujagić (2017) analyze how many politicians render Brexit’s conventional discourse more comprehensible through utilizing a set of cognitive mechanisms such as metonymy, metaphor and blending. They maintain that conceptual metaphors allow speakers to produce striking examples both linguistically and conceptually that directly appeal to many people. Aljukić (2020) examines metaphorical creativity in the political discourse concerning Brexit in line with Kövecses’s (2015) three cognitive mechanisms, including source-related creativity, target-induced creativity and context-induced creativity.

2.2 The emotive power of political metaphors

The study of metaphor has become a target for many fields of literature, history, psychology, linguistics, to name a few. Metaphors are not just an ornament for a speech or a defamiliarization of language; they are linguistic, functional

and pragmatic expressions mobilized to hide a reality from, or achieve certain effects on, the reader (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). The notion that metaphors are not randomly assigned takes us a step further to argue that the emotive power in metaphorical expressions is not randomly assigned as well. There is a purpose for a writer to use a metaphor loaded with emotional appeal.

The debate around metaphor and rhetorical persuasion has been thoroughly discussed in philosophy. Plato emphasizes the deceptive nature of metaphor and warns that metaphors may change reality (Gibbs 2015: 266). In *The Poetics*, Aristotle explains: “The greatest thing by far is to have a command of metaphor. This alone cannot be imparted by another; it is the mark of genius” (cited in Kövecses 2002: vii–viii). Though Aristotle refers to the great writers and orators, like Homer, who deploy metaphors as rhetorical devices and literary tropes to attract and please the reader, metaphors are everywhere and pervasive in daily communication (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Heyvaert et al. 2019). Most importantly, Aristotle accentuates the emotive, persuasive functions of metaphors pertaining to arousing feelings, argumentation and reasoning (Beer & De Landtsheer 2004; Charteris-Black 2011).

Recently, a few studies have stressed the emotive power of metaphors in persuasion (Kövecses 2002; Charteris-Black 2011; De Landtsheer 2009; 2015). Charteris-Black argues that political speakers can engage emotionally with their audience by “heightening the emotional impact [...] through empathy, humour or arousing feelings such as fear or hate” (2011: 15). Some scholars have also offered various methodologies to categorize metaphors and emotions. Kövecses states that emotions can be categorized into five basic levels: “happiness, sadness, anger, fear, and love” (2004: 4). He maintains that these basic-level emotions are prototypical examples when compared to less prototypical emotions such as “hope, pride, surprise, and lust” (Kövecses 2004: 4).

Political metaphors can be different depending on the political and economic situation (De Landtsheer 1994). While metaphors tend to be rational in time of peace and economic prosperity, they are more emotive and intensified during political and economic crises. De Landtsheer states:

While the 20th century mass media political discourse should be influenced by the economic circumstances the way that they affect the lives of the mass audience, the same can be supposed for political factors, as far as their impact on the everyday life of mass audiences is considerable because their effects are deeply connected to economic

circumstances, as is probably the case for most revolutions and wars.
(De Landtsheer 1994: 66)

De Landtsheer suggests that in political crises, there is an increase in metaphor power in mass media and journalism. The intensity of metaphors and their emotive power are elevated to mirror political crises. De Landtsheer (2009: 65) proposes three variables to determine metaphor power and level of emotionality in political writing: metaphor frequency, metaphor intensity, and metaphor content. Since examining all three variables would go beyond the scope of a single article, out of these three variables, we choose metaphor content analysis because it is the most fitting variable for locating metaphor power and levels of emotionality in Behr's opinion articles, and because we want to address the flexibility of De Landtsheer's (2009) categorization of emotive metaphors.

In metaphor content analysis, De Landtsheer (2009; 2015) suggests six levels to categorize metaphors according to their level of emotionality and appeal to the audience. But we are only interested in the fourth, fifth and sixth categories. The fourth category includes disaster and violence metaphors like war metaphors. These kinds of metaphors, according to De Landtsheer (2009), can be controlled by humans despite the anxiety and negative emotions they arouse. The fifth category includes sports, games and drama metaphors. These metaphors score high in the level of emotionality because they appeal to many people. They also include losing and winning, which are emotional components of sports and games. The sixth category includes body, disease, medical and death metaphors. These metaphors score the highest in De Landtsheer's scale since they have a direct effect on the human body.

However, we argue that De Landtsheer's (2009) fixed categorization is flexible and can be regrouped based on metaphorical context. Sports, games or drama metaphors show a higher degree of emotionality when they are compared with disaster and violence metaphors, according to De Landtsheer. Her reasoning is that sports, games and drama metaphors appeal to many people because they include winning and losing (2009: 68). But metaphors in the fourth category can potentially arouse pity and fear, to use Aristotle's words; they are also concerned with human survival. Comparing Brexit with an earthquake, for example, can add an emotive power to political metaphors because of the probable fear of death, destruction and bodily damage. Therefore, our contribution to this categorization is that these

categories are flexible, and metaphors can be moved up or down based on their context.

3 Methods and procedures

In this paper, we report the findings of a qualitative study in which we analyzed one writer's opinion writing about Brexit. It does not offer generalizations about the diffusion of political metaphors in journalistic writing. This single-author investigation allows us to provide an in-depth content analysis and a detailed interpretation of metaphors to contextualize them within the existing literature. Since the number of opinion columnists in the British newspapers writing about Brexit is huge, we randomly choose one writer only to analyze his/her political articles. To do this, the names of almost all the UK opinion columnists were written on pieces of paper and were put in a basket. Rafael Behr was the selected writer. It should be noted that the total number of Rafael Behr's articles concerning Brexit is 313 from the day of the referendum, 23 June 2016, up until the UK's declaration of its departure from the EU.

Both authors read these articles separately over an extended period of time. They examined Behr's opinion articles twice within two months. In the first reading, coders collected 213 metaphorical expressions. In the second reading, the number increased to 252. The first and second coding processes reached 87% agreement. The coders collected a group of metaphors from Behr's opinion pieces and metaphorical expressions pertinent to our analysis. One problem encountered in the coding process, however, was how to extract metaphorical expressions. There are no external features that can be used to locate metaphors compared to other linguistic categories such as letters, words and morphemes (Musolff 2004: 8). Data corpora can help find the frequency of words in written texts, but metaphors are not mere words carrying meanings. They are concepts and thoughts that can be culturally constructed, universally shared or individually created. Therefore, the discussed metaphors were selected from our close readings conducted over an extended period of time.

This study uses metaphor content analysis as a methodology to test the emotive power of political metaphors based on De Landtsheer's (2009) categorization. This categorization is conducive to gauging "the level of emotionality in public debate, to direct attention towards ambitious leaders, or promote (deviating) opinions and worldviews" (De Landtsheer

2009: 69). De Landtsheer maintains that metaphor content analysis is based on psycholinguistic and psychoanalytic theories, and “has been validated empirically in a number of cases that focus on political and mass-media discourse” (2009: 66). While De Landtsheer’s model helps us see where Behr’s political metaphors are located, this paper illustrates the flexibility of the fourth, fifth and sixth categories in analyzing the emotive power of Behr’s political metaphors.

4 Results and discussions

In this section, two types of political metaphors in Rafael Behr’s articles concerning Brexit are discussed, namely, BREXIT IS A DOWNFALL and BREXIT IS A GAME OR A PLAY.

4.1 BREXIT IS A DOWNFALL

The first metaphor to be discussed here is: BREXIT IS A DOWNFALL. This metaphor consists of the verb *fall*, which means ‘to drop from a higher to a lower position’ (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). Falling as a metaphor often points to disastrous consequences. If a building falls, there will be physical losses; if someone falls from a high building or a cliff, the results will possibly be harmful; if a plane falls, it will crash, and people on board will most likely get injured or die. Falling in these examples suggests unknown but catastrophic outcomes. Behr uses *earthquake*, *cliff-edge* and *plane crash* as extended metaphors to show how serious Brexit is.

4.1.1 Earthquake metaphor

Behr compares the EU to a building that shelters the UK and other European countries. But there is an earthquake that may lead to its downfall (for the depiction of the EU as a house or a structure, see Chilton & Lakoff 1995; Grady 1997; Kövecses 2002; 2009). Using an earthquake as a metaphor to describe Brexit is possibly effective, for many people may have experienced earthquakes or have seen damages of earthquakes on media. The title of Behr’s piece reads: “Brexit earthquake has happened, and the rubble will take years to clear” (2016a). An earthquake as a natural disaster can have unpredictable consequences and can cause long-lasting damages.

Throughout the piece, Behr uses a cluster of words, for example, *falling*, *dropping*, *crashing*, *shredding*, *busting*, *cracking*, *crumbling*, and *rupture*, to stress the state of change from one point to another. Since houses stand for security and familial harmony, the collapse of this structure, i.e., the departure of the UK from the EU, suggests insecurity and familial discord. Brexit also has caused “trepidation” and “disorienting feeling of the ground lurching violently beneath your feet” (Behr 2016a). The end of Brexit is rubble and debris, Behr suggests, where the UK will “breathe” hard from “the thick air” (2016a). Drawing on Kövecses’s (2004) basic prototypical classification of metaphors, the earthquake metaphor is alarming and may cause fear and trepidation. The outcomes of a violent earthquake are probably destruction, death and bodily injuries. Behr’s prediction that “the rubble will take years to clear” reflects Brexit’s negotiations. The earthquake metaphor scores number four in De Landsheer’s (2009) categorization, which suggests a higher degree of emotionality. But if an earthquake leads to human loss and destruction, this metaphor, then, goes up to the sixth category.

4.1.2 Plane crash metaphor

Another metaphor stressing the danger of falling is flying. Flying as a means of transportation involves a journey with a departure and an arrival. It is a metaphor conceptualized to describe the role of politicians and officials in making sure that travelers arrive safe (Charteris-Black 2004; Forceville 2016; Aljukić 2020). Interestingly, Silaški & Đurović examine Brexit as a journey in their analysis of British cartoons and maintain:

The choice of this means of transportation for portraying Brexit is also heavily dependent on our physical experience and knowledge that objects falling through the air are under the influence of the force of gravity, which results in a rapid and uncontrollable downward movement, which may be suggestive of an extreme political change whose outcome can be potentially fatal. (Silaški & Đurović 2019: 7)

The metaphor of falling from a plane indicates disastrous consequences that may not be measured or contained. Behr, too, equates Brexit with a plane that carries the British people. Theresa May is a pilot in a cockpit “circling the Brussels sky and low on fuel. Time to buckle up” (Behr 2018c). In aviation, taking off and landing are the most critical parts (Farrier 2017). Any mistake can lead to a plane crash. The results of the referendum mark the point of taking off in a long-lasting journey with no specific destination. The problem,

according to Behr, is where to land. In these metaphorical expressions, there are signs that predict a calamitous future: *low on fuel* and *time to buckle up* (Behr 2018c). These warnings indicate how serious the situation is, and soon, if May does not land safely, everyone will get hurt. The current Prime Minister Boris Johnson is the pilot who has successfully landed the plane, that is, he has declared the UK's separation.

There are three groups in the UK as far as Brexit is concerned (see Henley 2018). The "no deal" group prefers "hard" Brexit and recommends that the UK must leave without any condition from the EU. The "soft" group calls for negotiations and demands a "Canada-style" deal.² The Remain group encourages another referendum to stay in the EU. Behr shows how all these groups are on the same plane. He claims that while hard Brexiters want to "ditch the plane in the sea or slam it into a cliff", the option of remaining in the EU also seems to be complicated because there is not enough fuel to take the plane back to its first destination (Behr 2018c). Behr ends his piece with a strong note describing how cowardly and reckless politicians are: "They don't want to tell the public that the options are either: a deal worse than membership or no deal, which is worse than the worst deal" (Behr 2018c). In other words, the source domain is a possible plane crash, and the target domain is the politicians who are leading Brexit negotiations. The failure of British politicians in their negotiation with the EU may end up in a political impasse.

The plane metaphor is predicated on its extension and the collocations that come with it, for example, *pilot*, *cockpit*, *landing*, *runaway*, *crash* and *buckle up*. It also highlights the act of change from one status to another, and from an upper to a lower level. Consider the following metaphorical expressions:

- (1) No one else wants to make the announcement: fasten your safety belts, we are starting our descent. The days when Brexit meant gazing out of the window at wispy cloud castles are over. (Behr 2018c)
- (2) But there is also no political leader with the courage to admit it. Instead we have our prime minister, afraid of the runway, without a clue how

² According to the "Brexit phrasebook" prepared by John Henley, a "Canada-style" deal is described as follows: "A free trade agreement identical to the EU's deal with Canada (Ceta) would abolish almost all tariffs on goods and reduce some – though by no means all – non-tariff barriers through mutual recognition of selected standards. But it would not cover some sectors, such as food or chemicals, that are important to the UK, nor many services, which account for 80% of Britain's economy. In a Canada-plus deal, the UK would therefore be looking for more mutual recognition of standards in sectors that matter to it, and a greatly enhanced services component" (Henley 2018).

- to turn the plane around, flying on empty. (Behr 2018c)
- (3) Farage has hijacked the Tories' flight to Trumpland. (Behr 2016f)
 - (4) Anticipating turbulence, and with poor visibility, the chancellor [Philip Hammond] tells us to keep safety belts fastened. (Behr 2016f)
 - (5) Now the horizon has darkened. The engines have fallen quiet. Nerves fray. So the Tories call out to the cockpit for more thrust, more confidence, more optimism. (Behr 2016f)

Statement (1) implies that everyone knows the danger of flying, particularly politicians. Yet everyone is afraid to reveal the critical consequences of falling, that is, leaving the EU. Statement (2) is inseparably bound up to the first argument, but with an elaborative intensity and an accusatory tone. It is an individual attack on Theresa May, who is depicted as an incompetent pilot, a coward, and a clueless leader. Statement (3) extends the accusation to another politician, Nigel Farage, a hardline Brexiter and the vice-president of the pro-Brexit organization Leave Means Leave. Behr not only calls Farage a hijacker, but also associates him with the US President Donald Trump, who is notorious for his Eurosceptic remarks. Statement (4) talks about Philip Hammond, who was the Chancellor of the Exchequer in 2016. Hammond is a Remainer, yet as the Chancellor, he warns people of the “turbulence” and of the economic downturn after the complete separation from the EU. Example (5) suggests that regardless of assurances, the “engines” are quiet and seem to come to a halt – the calm before the storm. Despite the optimism of the Brexiters, Behr contends that Brexit has terrible consequences to come. The flight metaphor along with its other linguistic expressions thus provide visual portrayals of Brexit by tracing the plane’s metaphorical extensions.

Like earthquakes, plane crashes are likely to end in explosions. A plane crash often symbolizes destruction and uncontained outcomes (see Kövecses 2002; Charteris-Black 2016). The alarming metaphors Behr mobilizes in his writing – like *low fuel* or *time to buckle up* – can lead to fear, which, according to Kövecses (2002), is a hidden enemy. One may link fear aroused by a possible plane crash to Brexit and may interpret Brexit as a hidden enemy. This metaphor can be grouped in the fourth and sixth categories in De Landtsheer’s (2009) model. That is, if a plane crash does not cause human casualties, it is placed in the fourth category of violence and disaster. Yet if it involves human losses or injuries, it is, then, placed in the sixth category of bodily injuries, destruction and death.

4.1.3 Cliff-edge metaphor

The last metaphor that has to do with downfall is the cliff-edge metaphor (see Henley 2018). This metaphor is widely used to refer to the critical stance of Brexit and its complicated negotiation process. Barnden (2008) connects falling with failing. He writes: “Provided that the source-domain network has the right structures to predict falling from walking to the cliff’s edge, the system can infer the target domain conclusion that the economic policy will fail” (2008: 324). Yet in Behr’s falling metaphor, the source domain suggests not only an anticipated failure, but also a haphazard danger with grave consequences. Like the metaphor of a plane circling with low fuel, standing on the edge of a cliff shows how dangerous the situation is:

- (6) May has conceded that a spell as a “rule-taker” is necessary to avoid a cliff-edge Brexit. (Behr 2018a)
- (7) Some Tory cliff-jumpers (with their own private financial parachutes) will reject any deal. (Behr 2018f)
- (8) Tory wreckers – the MPs who would launch the UK off the Brexit cliff without a legal safety net. (Behr 2018e)
- (9) Only when the cliff comes into view do they start denying its existence, while reaching to grab the wheel from Theresa May to steer towards the edge. (Behr 2017d)

The edge of the cliff points to a danger lurking behind Brexit. Hardliners, who ask for a total separation of the UK from the EU, recklessly prefer to jump off the cliff and face the unknown consequences. Jumping off the cliff suggests that separation must come into force without a deal or further concessions. Barnden (2008) is right here when he connects falling and failing with economic policies. Therefore, example (7) is an accusation of the Tories for benefiting financially from Brexit. It also indicates that while Brexiters have their own “financial parachutes”, the rest will be affected by this dangerous jump and thus be hurt.

Based on De Landtsheer’s (2009) categories of the emotionality of political metaphors, the conceptual metaphor BREXIT IS A DOWNFALL scores number six, which indicates a stronger and a higher intensity if this metaphor entails physical harm to the human body. It can also be placed in the fourth category if it is seen as causing violence or leading to a disaster. Yet what is troubling in De Landtsheer’s categorization is that she places disaster and

violence metaphors in the fourth category, suggesting less emotive power compared to metaphors that include bodily damage. But do not disasters, especially natural ones, sometimes cause greater physical damage compared to sport, game, drama metaphors (these metaphors are placed in the fifth category)? It should be noted that De Landtsheer puts body, disease, medical and death metaphors in the sixth category because they inflict bodily damage, but violence and disaster metaphors like earthquakes and plane crashes can potentially lead to physical damage and death as well.

4.2 BREXIT IS A GAME OR PLAY

The second conceptual metaphor dominating Behr's writing is: **BREXIT IS A GAME OR A PLAY**. He states that "politics is drawn to sporting heroism by a less analytical appetite. It is the fervour of the crowd, the uncomplicated allegiance, the sense of shared national endeavour that unifies in victory and consoles in defeat" (Behr 2016d). The game metaphor suggests that politics includes winning and losing, thereby evoking emotions (De Landtsheer 2009). There must be a crowd chanting and cheering for the competing contestants. The importance of this metaphor comes from its pervasiveness.

There is a difference between play and game (Chilton & Lakoff 1995: 47). While play has no goal to achieve, except for pleasure, games are goal-oriented activities in which competitors strive for winning. Behr utilizes both to draw attention to politicians who may not be serious about what they do, and when they play a game, they aim at winning for one side to the detriment of the other. To be part of a game, there are often two competitors or more. Each competitor strives to achieve goals and win the game regardless of the means and consequences. This section sheds light on how play and game metaphors, e.g., gambling, boxing, prevail in Behr's writing to concretize Brexit's negotiations and to comment on the failure of politicians to reach an agreement.

4.2.1 Brexit is children's play

Behr equates politicians with children playing but without a goal to achieve. Since it is childlike play, no one will be responsible for the results. Behr refers to "Paddington Bear and the Disappearing Trick" to highlight the Brexit negotiations (2016b). In this trick, Paddington Bear fails to accomplish his disappearing trick by smashing a watch into pieces. His mistake is that he

forgets to read one of the instructions for this trick. The result is that the watch is hammered into pieces. The decision to leave the EU is parallel to this trick. Brexiters may fail to foretell the outcomes of leaving the EU, which may cause the watch, i.e., the EU membership, to be smashed into pieces. Behr writes: “Boris Johnson’s career is founded on a Paddington myth – the creature of kindly intent whose bumbling charm excuses chaotic misadventure” (Behr 2016b). As a prototypical metaphor, Paddington Bear may evoke sadness, for the bear cannot complete the trick. Comparably, Brexit is a chaotic misadventure that may culminate in economic or political downturn.

In his article of 3 October 2017, Behr describes the Tories as children who play peek-a-boo (Behr 2017c). He claims that the Conservatives’ political endeavors are nothing but “an infantile game of hide-and-seek” (Behr 2017c), which foreshadows a total failure as everyone sees them:

- (10) Children under the age of five struggle with the difference between seeing and being seen. They cover their eyes and suppose that they are invisible. Brain development eventually corrects that error, but some mental residue lingers. Confronted with a stressful task we retain the psychological urge to cover our faces and pretend that the problem [Brexit], once obscured from view, has gone away. (Behr 2017c)

This comparison seems to be the harshest concerning Brexit and its complicated negotiations. He attributes this behavior to lack of “[b]rain development,” as if those who engage in Brexit negotiations are not old enough to realize that covering their eyes does not make them invisible. Brexiters try to hide their failure and pretend that Brexit is good for the UK’s future. The problem is that everyone, according to Behr, can see Brexiters and their childlike involvement in negotiations.

Another example is describing the Leave campaign as “children whose Christmas present arrives in fiddly parts, batteries not included” (Behr 2016e). The political implications of equating Brexiters – the target domain – with children’s play – the source domain – foregrounds the uselessness of politicians. Brexiters are excited with their present, i.e., the results of the referendum, but they do not know how to make it function and want someone else to do it for them (it took British politicians almost four years – from 23 June 2016 to 31 January 2020 – to officially announce the British separation from the EU). While Paddington Bear’s trick evokes sadness because of

failure, playing peek-a-boo makes a five-year-old child happy, which is a prototypical emotion according to Kövecses (2004). Yet it shows lack of seriousness among Brexiters. Interestingly, these metaphors score five in De Landtsheer's (2009) categorization. We can also put these expressions in the first category of everyday life metaphors because childlike play represents families and ordinary life.

4.2.2 Brexit is a gambling game

Unlike play metaphors, which lack goals to achieve, game metaphors include winning and losing, and there are goals to be accomplished, most importantly winning. Gambling metaphors are frequently used in political campaigns (Deignan 2005). In his opinion writing, Behr mocks Brexiters as dilettantes who treat Brexit as a game. But he regards their game risky with no consequences (Behr 2016b). He claims that Brexit is a “parlour game” and “a ritualised sport for rich and articulate dilettantes [...] who face no material risk in the event that their gambles fail” (Behr 2016b). The Cambridge Dictionary website (1999) defines *dilettante* as a “a person who is or seems to be interested in a subject, but whose understanding of it is not very deep or serious”. It is also connected to such adjectives as *amateurish* or *superficial*. Behr seems to accuse politicians of being superficial and amateurish in their treatment of Brexit. The source domain here is the *parlour game*, which stands for Brexit's negotiations. The rich and dilettantes are the British politicians who put the UK in danger, yet they will not be responsible for their failure.

Behr describes Brexit's negotiations as “gambling on the unknown” (Behr 2016c). Gambling metaphors are deployed in his opinion articles to emphasize the risks that may follow Brexit. Politics is a gambling game, yet the difference is that in gambling, loss will affect individuals; in politics, a large group of British people will face the consequences of leaving the EU. Charteris-Black (2011) elaborates on the rhetorical function of gambling metaphors in suggesting high probability of financial loss and unexpected results. The following examples show Behr's use of gambling metaphors:

- (11) The prime minister [Cameron] and his chancellor grapple with failure of their great gamble and with it the inevitable demise of their decade-long project at the helm of the Conservative party. (Behr 2016a)

- (12) She [May] gambles but does not see herself as a gambler. She plays politics while supposing she doesn't like games. (Behr 2017a)
- (13) The dilemma: gamble on a people's vote, reigniting a horrible culture war with no guarantee of victory, or concede defeat with the consolation prize of a customs union. (Behr 2018f)
- (14) In a normal game of poker, a bluff cannot continue once it is called. But for Boris Johnson an exposed bluff can just be re-bluffed. The stakes get higher even when the poor hand lies open on the table. (Behr 2019b)

Gambling is often based on luck and involves emotions. Miscalculation can result in great losses. Behr's examples seem to indicate a possible loss and risk taking by British politicians in putting the country at stake. Behr accuses David Cameron, Theresa May and Boris Johnson of gambling on the future of the UK. Example (11) clearly states that Cameron's referendum is a failure, especially because he did not expect the referendum to end in separation of the UK from the EU. Example (12) suggests that May does not see herself as playing. Gambling, as (13) suggests, precipitates "a horrible culture war" inside England (among the political parties) and outside (with England and Wales on one side and Northern Ireland and the EU on the other). Behr's insistence in using gambling metaphors to describe the political situation in the UK illustrates his intended message, which is to view British politicians as gamblers. They bet on the future of the UK, and their gambling may lead to disastrous outcomes politically and financially.

Example (14) talks about the current Prime Minister Boris Johnson. He is compared to a bluffer, which refers to a poker player who bets to trick his opponents in believing that he has the best cards. Bluffing in poker is very risky when there is more than one opponent, and it is hard to re-bluff because the bluff is most likely to lose. In the target domain, Behr suggests that bluffing is likely to cause financial losses, especially when a bluffer plays against many opponents. Behr thus shows how risky Johnson's political moves are since his "re-bluffing" in Brexit negotiation is hazardous. Gambling metaphors score five in De Landtsheer's (2009) categorization, and as discussed earlier, they trigger emotions because they may lead to winning or losing. It should be noted, however, that these metaphors will probably only make sense to those who are familiar with gambling games.

4.2.3 Brexit is a boxing match

Violent games share certain characteristics, for example, winning and losing (Chilton & Lakoff 1995; De Landtsheer 2009). They are also associated with political debates in which violence is presented through words (Gibbs 2015: 265). Behr associates Brexit with dangerous and violent games that can possibly cause bodily injuries (for more on violent games and politics, see Kövecses 2002; De Landtsheer 2009). He equates the schism among the Tories, the Eurosceptics and the Europhiles with a “a prize fight”:³ “They [Tories] were ‘in a prize fight’ and they needed a knockout; that there wasn’t going to be any reconciliation if they lost” (Behr 2016c). To show the futility of the Remain side, Behr quotes a Downing Street source saying that Remainers “bring knives to a gun battle” despite the impression “that leave were outgunned” (Behr 2016c). He also compares May’s “soft” negotiation with the famous boxer Muhammad Ali’s “rope-a-dope” tactic that subdues his opponents to knock them out. May does not prefer a “hard” Brexit and strives for a “softer” deal, yet hard Brexiters “throw their fists wildly, threatening to resign or to unseat their leader, but May is still standing and her Brexit agenda is softening daily” (Behr 2018d). This is true as May survived many votes of confidence – the last one was 15 October 2019. In this example, Brexit as a boxing match can be flexibly moved between the fifth and sixth categories of De Landtsheer’s (2009) model. Boxing can be entertaining and may end without harm to the body. Yet when it includes blood, cuts and broken jaws, skulls or bones, it can be relocated in the sixth category.

Another interesting boxing metaphor used by Behr is when he compares the clash between Labour and the Tories as “a tender embrace”: “When boxers go into a clinch it looks more like a tender embrace than a fight. The same is true of the clash between Labour and the Tories” (Behr 2019a). Behr suggests that the division between the right and the left or Labour and the Tories seems to be blurred by Brexit. While Jeremy Corbyn reveals his neutrality concerning another Brexit referendum (Stewart & Walker 2019), Johnson demands a separation without a deal. These complicated political rivalries between the two major parties in the UK are illustrated in “a clinch” in a boxing match, but the clinch is “a tender embrace”. Behr relies on these metaphors that bring images of blood, violence and injury to underline the seriousness of Brexit’s negotiations. This metaphor scores number five in its

³ Eurosceptics are those who are skeptical of the financial and political benefits of the UK being part of the EU. Europhiles, on the contrary, are those who want to remain in the EU.

emotional intensity in De Landtsheer's categorization. The result of winning or losing, potentially causing either sadness or happiness, possibly carries emotional appeal.

5 Conclusion

The political implications of Behr's metaphors rely on adding an emotive power that could serve as a persuasive tactic. His metaphors are also concretized through the use of popular examples that can relate directly to many people. Such source domains as earthquakes, plane crashes, or jumping off a cliff are likely to end in physical damage or death. Thus, metaphors involving threat to human existence should be placed at the highest level of emotionality vis-à-vis political metaphors. Additionally, and as the paper has shown, the target domain, which represents the abstract and complicated discussions and negotiations of Brexit, is illustrated in metaphors that may sound relatable to many people.

Behr tackles Brexit as a political phenomenon with high emotive power. As we have explained, the analyzed metaphors are placed in the fourth, fifth and sixth categories, showing a tendency for using a high level of emotionality. We also show De Landtsheer's (2009) categorization's flexibility. As argued before, natural disasters and violence can be regrouped in the sixth category if they include physical injuries or death, which is the highest in terms of emotionality. We can conclude that the fourth, fifth and sixth categories offered by De Landtsheer are not fixed or linear but changeable and can be moved either up or down the scale based on their context and the results that these metaphors may suggest. While this particularized observation helps recategorize Behr's emotive metaphors, further analysis can be conducted on how to measure the actual (rather than only the intended) emotive power of metaphors by developing methods to investigate readers' reactions.

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