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“A FLURRY OF ARRIVALS BY SMALL BOATS” – FRAMING ALBANIAN IMMIGRATION IN THE BRITISH PRESS

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Abstract

This article investigates the metaphorical representation of Albanian immigrants in the British press between January 2021 and September 2023, a period marked by a noticeable increase in Albanian asylum seekers and a harsh political rhetoric around immigration. Drawing on the framework of Critical Metaphor Analysis, the study examines how metaphors are employed to frame migration and construct public perceptions of Albanian immigrants in the British press. The analysis is based on a corpus of news articles from a range of ideologically different newspapers, such as *The Guardian*, the *Daily Mail*, and *The Telegraph*. Four dominant metaphorical scenarios emerged from the data: the space container scenario, the natural disaster scenario, the commodity scenario, and the war scenario. These metaphors consistently portray Albanian immigrants as dehumanized, threatening, or lacking agency. The space container metaphor scenario presents Britain as a space under pressure, while the natural disaster metaphor scenario emphasizes migration as an uncontrollable and overwhelming force. The commodity metaphor scenario reduces immigrants to objects of trade, often linking them with economic or criminal narratives. Finally, the war metaphor scenario depicts immigration as an act of aggression or invasion, especially prominent in right-leaning media.

Keywords: *conceptual metaphor, metaphor scenario, British newspapers, Albanian immigrants*

1. Introduction

Migration has consistently occupied an important place in the British press. While the media's primary function is to inform, it also plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions, attitudes, and policy responses towards immigration. A growing body of research has highlighted the media's tendency to frame immigration negatively, often reproducing discourses of fear, otherness, and social disruption (KhosraviNik, 2009, 2010; Isentyeva, 2021; Taylor, 2020). Within this context, the representation of Albanian immigrants has recently gained prominence, particularly among a rapid rise in Albanian asylum seekers arriving in the United Kingdom over the past two years.

This trend has been accompanied by an increased aggressive political rhetoric. In 2022, the former Home Secretary Suella Braverman described the influx of migrants as "an invasion on our southern coast," linking migration to criminality and national threat. Such statements have not only contributed to shaping official policy, often resulting in unfair deportations and strict asylum procedures, but have also influenced how the media frames and disseminates narratives about Albanian immigrants. This paper argues that language, particularly metaphor, plays a crucial role in this process of representation.

Drawing on conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and metaphor scenarios (Musolff, 2006), the present study examines the dominant metaphorical framings of Albanian immigrants in selected British newspapers published between January 2021 and September 2023. It explores how metaphors not only structure public discourse but also reflect and reinforce ideological positions.

In what follows, Sections 2 and 3 provide the theoretical foundation of the study by discussing the significance of metaphorical framing, with a particular focus on its role in news discourse and immigration narratives. Section 4 outlines the methodology and details the selection and categorization of the newspaper data. Section 5 presents the analysis of the corpus, focusing on the dominant metaphorical scenarios identified in the representation of Albanian immigrants. Finally, Section 6 concludes by summarizing the main findings.

2. Metaphor, metaphorical framing and metaphor scenarios

Metaphor is a powerful tool in discourse analysis because it shapes how individuals conceptualize and interpret the world. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) state, "metaphors do not constitute decorative language only but foundational conceptual frameworks that influence how people think about social issues", including immigration which is the main focus of this article. The persuasive power of metaphors lies in their emotional resonance (Deignan, 2005) and their ability to facilitate comprehension by mapping similarities

between a source domain and target domain. More specifically, conceptual metaphor is defined as the understanding of one more abstract domain of experience in terms of a more concrete domain of experience. This process, known in the field of cognitive linguistics as mapping, allows metaphors to foreground certain inferences while backgrounding others, thus guiding interpretation and evaluation (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In doing so, metaphors can even suppress alternative viewpoints or interpretations (Charteris-Black, 2011). As such, metaphors can be turned into effective tools for conveying ideology and shaping public opinion.

Metaphors can also function as framing devices in discourse. In line with Entman’s (1993) definition, framing involves “selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.” Scholars such as Burgers et al. (2016) have proposed that metaphor can act as a specific type of frame, “metaphor-based frames”, that influence how people interpret and evaluate issues. With regard to this, Semino (2020) emphasizes that “choices of metaphor in discourse can reflect, reinforce, or challenge audience beliefs and attitudes by framing complex issues in accessible and emotionally resonant terms”.

The connection between metaphor and framing is further developed through Schön’s (1993) view of framing as a linguistic process that reflects different ways of understanding and reasoning about the world. In discourse, metaphors are often used to communicate, justify, and legitimize decisions (Lakoff, 2002; Charteris-Black, 2011). However, metaphorical frames are frequently schematic and require elaboration to be meaningful in context. From a discourse-based perspective, these elaborations are captured through the notion of “scenarios”.

According to Musolff (2006), scenarios are “a set of assumptions made by competent members of a discourse community about ‘typical’ aspects of a source situation, for example, its participants and their roles, the dramatic storylines and outcomes, and conventional evaluations of whether they count as successful or unsuccessful, normal or abnormal, permissible or illegitimate.” Scenarios are thus extracted from empirical discourse data and provide “a platform to link the conceptual side of metaphor to its usage patterns in socially situated discourse” (Musolff, 2006). They differ from frames in that they are less schematic and involve more specific narrative and evaluative perspectives, making them particularly effective for drawing strong inferences (Musolff, 2016).

These concepts, metaphorical framing and scenarios, can be combined in empirical research to examine how different metaphorical representations of

the same topic influence public reasoning. This theoretical perspective is especially significant in the study of immigration discourse because of the range of conflicting metaphorical representation of immigrants (Santa Ana, 1999, 2002; Charteris-Black, 2006, 2011; Musolff, 2015; Taylor, 2020, 2021, 2022).

3. Metaphors and immigration discourse in the press

Media narratives constitute a significant domain for the study of figurative language, particularly metaphor. News media are not neutral conveyors of information but are socially structured institutions that actively shape public discourse. As Fowler (1991) argues, media do not simply reflect events but select and transform them based on institutional routines and communicative goals. This selection process is often influenced, implicitly or explicitly, by ideological beliefs and assumptions. For example, media outlets may foreground certain issues while backgrounding others, thus contributing to the framing of public opinion and, ultimately, influencing policymaking.

In this context, metaphors become particularly powerful communicative tools. As Krennmayr (2011) states, “reading newspapers differs fundamentally from reading academic texts: newspapers aim for accessibility, avoiding the need for specialized knowledge”. Consequently, the metaphors employed in news discourse are often easily interpretable, with their contextual meanings clearly delineated for general audiences.

A considerable body of research has examined how metaphor is used in media coverage of immigration to construct and reinforce particular ideological positions. For instance, Charteris-Black (2006) explores metaphorical strategies in right-wing British media during the 2005 general election, highlighting how metaphors shaped immigration policy debates. In a later study, Charteris-Black (2011) analyses the use of the “swamp” metaphor by British politician Norman Tebbit to evoke threat and contamination. Santa Anna (1999) systematically identifies metaphorical patterns in the *Los Angeles Times*, concluding that the representations of immigrants are overwhelmingly negative, with no positive metaphors observed. Similarly, Jenny Lederer (2013) examines the metaphor “anchor baby,” emphasizing its role in the dehumanization of immigrant children. Reynolds (2015) extends this discussion by analysing the metaphorical framing of Central American minors in 2014 U.S. newspaper coverage. Although the language may appear neutral on the surface, she notes, it often carries underlying negative connotations that suggest threat or harm. Musolff (2015) investigates dehumanizing metaphors in British online media, emphasizing the frequent depiction of immigrants as “parasites,” “leeches,” or “bloodsuckers.” In several studies, Taylor (2021), (2023) examines both persistent and emergent metaphors in immigration

discourse, arguing that their evaluative force depends heavily on the speaker’s perspective and ideological stance.

These studies collectively demonstrate how metaphor operates as a framing device in media discourse by shaping public attitudes and reinforcing dominant ideologies surrounding immigration.

Beyond the scope of metaphor, the discourse surrounding immigration, asylum seekers, and refugees in the British press has been the subject of several studies, particularly from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). These studies have pointed to the recurring use of discriminatory language and discursive strategies that reflect and reinforce societal biases, often regardless of a newspaper's ideological orientation.

KhosraviNik’s (2009, 2010) CDA work has been of significant importance in revealing how British newspapers, including *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, *The Times*, *The Sunday Times*, the *Daily Mail*, and the *Mail on Sunday*, tend to reproduce similar representational patterns when reporting on refugees and immigrants, despite their varying ideological leanings. His findings suggest that even liberal newspapers participate in the construction of exclusionary discourses, underscoring the pervasive nature of such representations across the British media landscape. Similarly, Baker and McEnery (2005) conducted a corpus-based study that identified common reoccurring framings in the press, such as refugees and asylum seekers being construed as “packages,” “invaders,” “pests,” or “water.” These framings dehumanize individuals and contribute to the portrayal of immigration as a threat. Expanding on this, Baker et al. (2008) utilized a large corpus of 140 million words from British news articles to examine collocation patterns around terms such as “refugees,” “asylum seekers,” and “migrants” (collectively RASIM). Their study highlights the efficiency of corpus tools in identifying dominant representational categories that shape public understanding of migration. Hart (2013) adds a cognitive dimension to the analysis of discriminatory discourse by linking discursive strategies to evolved cognitive mechanisms. He argues that media discourse often exploits innate biases such as cheater detection and epistemic vigilance to justify exclusionary and securitizing narratives around immigration, which can have an impact on public attitudes and policy support. In a more recent contribution, Isentyeva (2021) provides a detailed monograph on the discourse of “refugees,” “asylum seekers,” and “migrants” in the British press, focusing specifically on *The Telegraph* and *The Guardian*. Her analysis reveals how different political orientations influence language use, particularly in the context of Brexit reporting. Yet, she also concludes that exclusionary or inclusive representations of migrants are not solely context-dependent but are deeply embedded in British cultural narratives. Further insight into the ideological framing of immigration in the British press is offered by Mădroane (2018), who examines the representation of Romanian migrants during the

Brexit referendum campaign. Her study shows the selected newspapers played a performative role in constructing immigration as a public problem. Drawing on a combination of dispositive and argumentative analysis, she demonstrates that conservative outlets like *The Sun*, the *Daily Mail*, and *Express* framed Romanian immigration in highly dramatized terms, invoking metaphors of invasion, criminality, and social burden. In contrast, left-leaning newspapers such as *The Guardian* adopted a more critical stance, claims by foregrounding economic contributions and challenging racist stereotypes. Nonetheless, the study reveals that counter discourses were often overshadowed by dominant exclusionary framings.

All of these studies suggest that despite the timeframe, migrants' nationality, type of newspaper and ideological leaning, British newspapers tend to frame immigration as problematic or threatening.

4. Methodology and data collection

This study analysed a corpus of 25 articles published between January 2021 and September 2023 in three major British newspapers: *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph*, and the *Daily Mail*. More specifically, this article addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the dominant metaphorical scenarios used to represent Albanian immigrants in the British press?
2. To what extent do metaphorical framings vary across newspapers with different political orientations (e.g., left-leaning vs. right-leaning)?
3. What are the potential social and political implications of these metaphorical representations for public opinion and immigration policy?

Articles were retrieved using the keywords “Albanian,” “migration,” “immigrants,” and “asylum seekers.” After retrieval, the articles were manually reviewed and selected based on their relevance to the discourse on Albanian migration. The sample includes both liberal and conservative newspapers, as well as a mix of quality and tabloid formats, in order to explore how ideological leanings and publication style influence metaphorical representation.

For metaphor identification, the procedure developed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007) was followed. This method involves determining whether a word has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than in the given context and whether the contextual meaning contrasts with and can be understood in relation to that basic meaning. This lexical-based procedure was complemented by a discourse-oriented approach, which emphasizes that metaphor identification cannot always be reduced to individual lexical items. Instead, meaning emerges across stretches of discourse, requiring attention to narrative

development, syntactic structure, and contextual meaning. Thus, both individual words and longer segments of discourse were analysed for metaphor identification, particularly when the contextual usage invoked a more abstract or evaluative frame than the word’s basic, literal or concrete meaning.

The selection of newspapers was influenced by their ideological orientations. British newspapers have historically declared their political alignments, often supporting major political parties through their editorial content (Isentyeva, 2021; Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008). For example, *The Guardian* has traditionally aligned with progressive or left-leaning perspectives, while *The Telegraph* and the *Daily Mail* are associated with conservative viewpoints. These ideological stances are reflected not only in editorial positions but also in discursive choices, including metaphor use. Additionally, the variation in readership — across class, education level, and political orientation — has an impact on stylistic preferences and rhetorical strategies (Fowler, 1991). By considering both ideological and formal differences among these outlets, the study aims to identify how metaphor functions as a tool for framing immigration discourse across media genres.

Newspaper	Political Orientation	Historical Background	Content Focus	Party Support
The Guardian	Left-wing; originally associated with classical liberalism	Established in the 19th century; long-standing support for liberal causes	Politics, economy, culture, sport, national and international news	Labour Party and Liberal Democrats
The Telegraph	Right-wing; conservative	Founded in 1855; known for its conservative reporting style	Politics, business, economy, lifestyle, sport, and culture	Conservative Party (since 1945)
Daily Mail	Right-wing; tabloid genre	Launched in 1896 as a mass market paper	Politics, economy, lifestyle, celebrity, showbiz; strong tabloid orientation	Conservative Party (since WWII)

5. Findings and discussion

Previous research identifies two dominant metaphorical frames in public discourse on immigration: natural disaster metaphors, typically involving the behaviour of fluids, and container metaphors, often centred around ideas of pressure and capacity (Charteris-Black, 2006). These two metaphorical frames are conceptually related. Containers can hold fluids, and natural disaster metaphors frequently reference water, e.g., floods, waves, tides. When combined, they evoke potent emotional responses, especially fear, by representing immigrants as a threatening external force. The imagery of perforated containers and overwhelming flows contributes to a rhetoric of crisis, legitimizing restrictive immigration policies and undermining empathy by casting migrants as dehumanized entities and potentials for disruption (Charteris-Black, 2006).

In the selected media coverage of Albanian immigration, these metaphors play a central role in shaping representations. Both metaphorical frames are invoked to delegitimize Albanian immigrants and to position them as external threats rather than human agents. When considered from a discourse-based approach they translate into the space-container scenario and natural-disaster scenario

5.1 *The space-container scenario*

The *space-container* metaphor conceptualizes the nation, here, the UK, as a sealed and bounded physical space. This framing is particularly resonant in the British context considering its geographical status as an island (Charteris-Black, 2006). In the context of this scenario, the national border functions as a conceptualized wall or protective shield separating an “inside” (inhabitants, citizens) from an “outside” (foreigners, migrants). Immigrants are therefore portrayed as outsiders attempting to enter an already full or pressurized space, implying disorder, threat, and loss of control.

This spatial conceptualization is manifested in the language choices observed in articles from *The Guardian*, as in example (1):

(1) Some Albanian criminals have sneaked back into the UK after being deported, only to be arrested again. (*The Guardian*, August 2022)

The preposition “into” plays a key grammatical role in realizing the container metaphor. It implies movement across a boundary, often one that is impenetrable or meant to be secure. Moreover, the verb “sneaked” adds a covert, illicit dimension to the act of entry, suggesting a breach of control and reinforcing the narrative of threat. The framing of Albanian individuals as “criminals” further emphasizes deviance and illegitimacy, implying that their re-entry contaminates or destabilizes the bounded space of the nation.

A similar dynamic appears in example (2):

(2) More than 40 Albanian criminals and migrants who tried to enter the UK via boat arrive back in their home country aboard a Home Office removal flight after being deported. (*The Guardian*, December 2022)

Here, the verb “enter”, paired with the indefinite quantifier “more than 40”, reinforces concerns about the container’s capacity. The considerable number of individuals, framed as a collective incursion, implies that the national “container” is under threat. The mention of their mode of arrival (*via boat*) implicitly links this scenario to uncontrolled, unauthorized entry, linking with the natural disaster frame discussed below. This imagery directly fuels a broader discourse of national security and control.

In terms of evaluation the country/container is not depicted as a neutral space, but as a space that must be guarded. When boundaries are crossed, security is compromised, and fear is activated. This rhetorical effect aligns with Charteris-Black's (2006) notion that the loss of boundary integrity, conceptualized as the perforation of the container, arises anxiety and legitimizes defensive policy responses.

Example (3) illustrates the way pronouns and deictic language reinforce group boundaries within this metaphor scenario:

(3) A Home Office spokesperson said: “This government’s priority is stopping the boats. Last year, 28% of those who arrived by small boat to the UK were from Albania – a safe European country and NATO ally – placing further strain on our asylum system. We’ve worked closely with the Albanian government to disrupt criminal gangs and deter illegal migration. (*The Guardian*, 5 March 2023)

This extract reflects a clear ingroup vs outgroup dynamic. Phrases characterised by the use of pronouns such as “this government”, “our asylum system”, and “we” construct a unified, bordered national identity and are located inside the container space. In contrast, “those who arrived”, Albanian immigrants, are depicted as external and unwelcomed. Being located outside the container space, immigrants are framed as part of a problematic influx. The phrase “placing further strain” invokes the pressure element of the container metaphor, suggesting that the system is approaching its limit.

The usage of this metaphor is problematic since it normalizes exclusion. If a nation is conceptualized as a bounded space, then restricting access to it becomes necessary. This scenario generalizes asylum-seeking as a concept reduced to spatial intrusions into a closed system.

5.2 The natural disaster scenario

The natural disaster metaphor scenario frames immigration in terms of uncontrolled natural forces, particularly excessive water movement. This frame frequently involves terms such as surge, flow, wave, influx, or flood, all of which suggest powerful, unstoppable movements that threaten the boundaries. In the context of this scenario, immigrants are not individuals with agency and intent but are compared to elements of nature that must be stopped or controlled.

(4) Security fears over Albania boat surge: Arrivals hit 5,000 for the year so far as the nation dominates Channel crossings... and crooks are now recruiting 'cleanskins' with no criminal record to join UK operations. (*Daily Mail*, August 2022)

The use of “surge” in example (4) from the Daily Mail evokes the image of a surge, an uncontrollable and potentially destructive natural force. It implies sudden, large-scale movement and contributes to a narrative of emergency and instability. This sentence also juxtaposes this movement with criminal activity, intensifying the perceived threat and justifying heightened security concerns.

As noted by Santa Ana (2002), “the water metaphor contains several presuppositions. First, human beings are de-individualized and portrayed as a homogenous mass. Second, this mass movement is conceptualized as kinetic and dangerous. Third, it implies that such movement, if not contained, poses a significant threat to order and safety”. These assumptions are evident in multiple instances from all consulted newspapers. For example:

(5) It follows a series of comments by UK ministers and officials claiming that Albanians were behind a recent flurry of arrivals by small boats across the Channel and that many of them were involved in or the victims of organized crime. (*The Guardian*, 2 November 2022)

(6) An influx of Albanian migrants is expected on Friday as people smugglers advertise “100,000% secure” boats in good weather. (*The Telegraph*, 9 November 2022)

(7) The surge will put the asylum processing centre at Manston in Kent under fresh pressure after the Home Office dispersed more than 2,800 migrants to hotels and other accommodation from the “catastrophically overcrowded” site to reduce numbers to 1,147. (*The Telegraph*, 9 November 2022)

In these examples, the lexical items “flurry”, “influx”, and “surge” all recall the language of natural disasters. These terms signal unpredictability, large volume, and rapid movement, all of which enhance the perception of crisis. More importantly, this metaphorical framing directs attention away from the causes of migration, such as political instability or, poverty, and instead focuses on the effect in terms of arrival numbers, and threat posed to the host country.

The metaphor of influx implies a loss of control, in particular. It removes human agency from the migrants and positions them as part of a larger, uncontrollable phenomenon. In example (6), the prediction of an upcoming “influx” adds a sense of urgency and contributes at reinforcing the perception of Albanian immigrants as threats rather than victims.

Charteris-Black (2006) further argues that water metaphors not only create narratives of danger but also portrays the native population as passive victims of an ongoing disaster. By representing immigration as a flood or surge, the discourse positions the British society as under siege, thus legitimizing protective or defensive responses.

A deeper metaphorical analysis also reveals the role of directionality in these framings. Terms such as “stream”, “flow”, and “flood” inherently suggest forward movement that cannot reverse. This directional implication shows that migration is an irreversible process (Charteris-Black, 2006). By contrast, the metaphor of a “tide” introduces the notion of ebb and flow, which implicitly embodies the possibility of repatriation or return. This aligns with political narratives that emphasize deportation or voluntary returns as solutions to migration "pressure."

Moreover, the effectiveness of the natural disaster metaphor scenario in the UK context is linked to deep-rooted cultural and historical narratives. Britain's identity as an island nation historically concerned with invasion from the sea lends symbolic weight to water metaphors. The English Channel becomes more than a geographic feature, it is symbolically conceptualized as a protective boundary. Migrants arriving by small boats are thus seen as disrupting this natural and national defence. The evocation of past historical threats, e.g., Napoleonic or wartime invasions, heightens public fear and associates immigration discourse to past invasions. The natural-disaster metaphor scenario reconceptualises immigration as not just a political or economic issue, but a natural and existential threat.

Even though less prominent than the space container scenario and the natural disaster scenario, two other metaphor scenarios were identified in the corpus, namely the commodity scenario and the war scenario.

5.3 The Commodity scenario

Commodity metaphor scenarios conceptualize immigrants not as individuals with agency, but as inanimate goods or units of value that can be processed, exchanged, stored, or removed. This framing positions immigration as a transaction between governments, aligning it with the logic of commerce in place of that of humanitarian obligation. Within this metaphorical conceptualization immigrants are stripped of personal autonomy and reduced to policy challenges or logistical burdens.

(8) On Monday, the home secretary, Suella Braverman, told the Commons that there had been “some success in removing people back to Albania within quite a short period of time, but we need to go further and faster”. (*The Guardian*, 2 November 2022)

(9) An agreement with Albania means the process of returning people to the Balkan country will be sped up. The “vast majority” of asylum claims could be declared as “clearly unfounded”, he said. (*The Guardian*, 13 December 2022)

(10) Asylum seekers will no longer be housed in hotels but instead will be sent to disused former military bases, holiday camps and student accommodation. (The Guardian, 13 December 2022)

In examples (8) through (10), the metaphorical mapping constructs immigration as a matter of distribution and relocation of goods. Phrases like “removing people back”, “sped up process”, and “sent” to various facilities evoke bureaucratic efficiency and logistical management. The language used is borrowed from market and institutional discourse, where speed, volume, and destination matter more than individual circumstances (Zawadzka, 2023).

This metaphor aligns with an ideology where people are managed like inventory, objects to be processed or disposed of efficiently. For instance, Braverman’s use of phrases like “go further and faster” in example (8) frames deportation not only as an administrative goal but as a means to measure success, comparable to achieving output targets in a production line for instance. Immigrants become passive items in a larger system whose movements are dictated entirely by external decision makers.

Such metaphors are also linked to the language of “storage” and “containment”. In example (10), asylum seekers are to be relocated not to homes or communities, but to institutional spaces—former military bases, holiday camps, and student accommodations, repurposed as holding facilities. This reinforces the sense of immigrants as commodities needing to be housed temporarily before their eventual removal or “processing.”

In the context of Albanian immigrants, representation by the commodity metaphor also intersects with illegal trade metaphors, particularly when immigration is associated with smuggling or trafficking. These cases construct immigrants not just as objects, but as contraband and illegally moved goods that must be intercepted and controlled (Zawadzka, 2023).

(11) A total of 1,075 Albanians crossed the Channel in small boats organised by people smuggling gangs during a six-week period this summer. (Daily Mail, 6 August 2022)

(12) The home secretary, who has faced renewed criticism after claiming that the south coast of England is being invaded by asylum seekers, also criticized Albanian asylum claimants at the Conservative party conference last month. “Many of them claim to be trafficked as modern slaves ... the truth is that many of them are not modern slaves and their claims of being trafficked are lies,” she said. (The Guardian, 2 November 2022)

(13) Many of the illegal migrants were recruited by the gangs after a government crackdown on black economy work made it difficult for them to find jobs. (The Telegraph, 23 September 2022)

In these examples, the language of “organized crime”, “trafficking”, and “gang recruitment” merges with the commodity metaphor to frame immigration as a form of criminal enterprise. Immigrants are constructed as either objects of illegal transactions or as commodities exploited within a broader illegal trade network. Importantly, this metaphor tends to erase the agency of immigrants while also criminalizing them.

Yet, this metaphor is also ambivalent. While the framing of trafficking can dehumanize immigrants by presenting them as cargo, it also allows their portrayal as victims, subjected to exploitation and deserving of protection. This tension is particularly visible in example (12), where Braverman dismisses the legitimacy of trafficking claims. Her statement not only delegitimizes individual experiences but also undermines the possibility of compassion by asserting that such claims are fabrications.

The commodification of migrants ultimately contributes to a wider ideological view that frames immigration not as a human phenomenon but as an economic or logistical problem. This depersonalization allows for policies and rhetoric that emphasize control, cost-efficiency, and management over empathy or justice. As stated by Zawadska (2023), the reduction of people to trade objects feeds into a discourse where immigration is discussed in terms of market-like dynamics, supply, demand, surplus, and disposal. Therefore, it legitimates state control over migrants’ bodies and movements.

5.4 *The War scenario*

The war metaphor scenario is predominantly found in the right-leaning newspaper *The Telegraph* and functions as a powerful rhetorical tool to frame Albanian immigrants as a threatening mass. This metaphor depicts immigration not just as a problem to be managed, but rather as a threat, an attack on national sovereignty and security. Terms such as “invasion”, “invaders”, and “Trojan horse” describe immigrants in the role of an enemy, transforming border management into a form of national defence.

(14)... Home Secretary described an 'invasion' of migrants... She told the Commons on Monday: 'If Labour were in charge, they would be allowing all the Albanian criminals to come to this country, they would be allowing all the small boats to come to the UK, they would open our borders and totally undermine the trust of the British people in controlling our sovereignty'. (*Daily Mail*, November 2022)

In example (14), the Home Secretary Suella Braverman explicitly frames immigration as an “invasion” and implicitly aligns Labour with betrayal and loss of control. This metaphor places Albanian immigrants in the role of threatening outsiders, aligning their movement with military aggression. The

term “invasion” not only suggests threat and illegality, but also invites militaristic responses, framing border control as a matter of national security rather than legal or humanitarian policy.

Unlike the natural disaster or commodity metaphors, which dehumanize migrants by reducing them to uncontrollable forces or trade goods, the war metaphor re-humanizes them and attributes an agency to them, but only in the service of demonization. Albanians are framed as strategic adversaries. As Pickering (2001) argues, war metaphors polarize discourse: “there are simply sides: ‘ours’ and ‘theirs’”. The British society is positioned as being under siege, while migrants are positioned as aggressors.

The metaphor gains additional power when reinforced by cultural and historical references. For instance, *The Telegraph* uses a “Trojan horse” analogy to describe Albanian migrants allegedly concealed among Christmas cargo, suggesting deception and hidden threat.

(15) Albanian migrants are being smuggled into the UK with Christmas presents and festive goods in a new lorry scam to avoid the danger of winter Channel crossings by small boat. (*The Telegraph*, 10 November 2022)

This intertextual allusion to Greek mythology portrays immigrants not only as invaders, but as deceptive infiltrators, individuals whose true intentions are masked. Such framing intensifies public suspicion and causes anxiety around cultural contamination and security threats. Similarly, the metaphor is institutionalized in example (16), where military leadership is mobilized in response to migration:

(16) One of Britain’s top generals, who fought in the Afghan war, has been appointed to tackle the surge in Albanian migrants crossing the Channel. (*The Telegraph*, 25 October 2022)

Here, the government’s deployment of a senior military figure such as that of a veteran of the Afghan War, signals that immigration is being treated as a combat operation. The association between wartime leadership and migration management reinforces the perception of Albanian immigrants in this case as a dangerous, organized force requiring military intervention.

These metaphors serve several ideological functions. “First, they legitimize extreme measures such as militarization of borders or punitive asylum policies by constructing migration as an attack that requires defence. Second, they erase the individual contexts of immigrant by portraying asylum-seekers and economic immigrants in the same way as enemies. Third, they foster a black-and-white moral universe in which resistance is not only permitted, but necessary for national survival” (Zawadzka, 2023).

Also, while natural disaster metaphors position British society as helpless in the face of overwhelming forces, war metaphors suggest that resistance is possible, even though it may come at a cost. This encourages public mobilization, fear-driven policy support, and an acceptance of damage in the name of defence (Petersson & Kainz, 2017). The framing thus not only reflects public anxiety but actively shapes and intensifies it, creating a rhetorical environment where violence against immigrants can be justified as patriotic or protective.

As Zawadzka and Paluektau (2023) assume, such metaphors often draw on the topos of history repeating itself. Britain’s geography and memory of wartime invasions make the war metaphor particularly resonant in this context.

6. Conclusions:

This article examined the metaphorical representation of Albanian immigrants in the British press between January 2021 and September 2023. The analysis revealed that four dominant metaphorical scenarios are consistently employed in the representation of Albanian immigrants: The space - container scenario, the natural disaster scenario, the commodity scenario, and the war scenario. Each of these metaphor scenarios contributes to a discourse that often dehumanizes, objectifies, or demonizes Albanian immigrants, reinforcing fear and social division.

The space container metaphor scenario constructs Britain as a bounded space with limited capacity, highlighting concerns about overcrowding and violating borders. This metaphor, supports exclusionary rhetoric and legitimizes increased border control measures by framing Albanian immigrants as pressure-inducing outsiders. The natural disaster metaphor scenario, prominent in right-leaning newspapers, portrays immigration as an uncontrollable force such as waves, surges, and influxes that threaten societal stability. These expressions strip immigrants of agency and foreground their presence as especially dangerous.

The commodity metaphor scenario further depersonalizes Albanian immigrants by depicting them as objects of trade and removable goods managed by governments. This frame not only denies the immigrants' individual will but also reinforces state control and market driven discourse. It occasionally evokes sympathy when referred to trafficking narratives but still reduces immigrants to objects of exchange. Finally, the war metaphor scenario is the most explicitly hostile frame. It portrays immigrants as enemies or invaders, justifies military like responses, and moralizes the issue into a stark dichotomy of “us” versus “them.” This frame is primarily mobilized in right-wing discourse and serves to intensify the process of border securitization.

Overall, the study demonstrates that metaphorical framing plays a central role in shaping the ideological representation of migration. Despite their different ideological stances, all the three selected newspapers describe Albanian immigrants as dehumanized, depersonalized and threatening. By constructing immigrants not as individuals with complex motivations and rights but as anonymous masses, these newspapers may potentially contribute to a broader marginalization of Albanian migrants in British society and discourse.

The identified metaphors thus contribute to a discourse that problematizes immigration, fuels public anxiety, and legitimizes policies of exclusion. The findings underline the need for more critical awareness of metaphor use in media discourse, particularly when such language can have real-world consequences for marginalized groups.

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