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Abstract

This article explores how metaphors contribute to the formation of legitimacy in right-wing political communication on immigration policy in the 2005 British election campaign. It investigates the role played by metaphors in the formation of right-wing political legitimacy and the differences in how metaphor is used by the far and centre-right. The two main types identified are ‘natural disaster’ metaphors – predominantly relating to fluids - and ‘container’ metaphors concerning a build up of pressure within or outside a container. These two types are related through the notion of a bounded area protecting what is within from external danger. The container metaphor is persuasive in political communication because it merges a fourth dimension of *time* with *spatially* based concepts of two or three dimensions. It implies that controlling immigration through maintaining the security of borders (a spatially-based concept) will ensure control over the rate of social change in Britain (a time-based concept). It also heightens emotional fears associated with the penetration of a container.

Key Words:

METAPHOR - RIGHT-WING – LEGITIMACY – COGNITIVE HEURISTIC –
NATURAL DISASTER – WATER - CONTAINER – PRESSURE – PENETRATION -
EMOTION

Britain as a Container: Immigration Metaphors in the 2005 Election Campaign

1. BACKGROUND

During the period leading up to the 2005 General Election, immigration shifted from being a topic of marginal interest to becoming a central issue for right and centre-right parties in British political communication. The growth of immigration as a major political issue for the British political right relates to their recent electoral failure, the absence of an alternative political agenda and the topicality of immigration and asylum in the media. British elections are usually fought over the political centre – as evidenced for example by the relatively poor electoral performance of extreme right-wing parties (such as the BNP) or extreme left-wing parties (such as the Socialist Workers Party) compared with their European equivalents. Poor performance by the Conservative party in the previous two elections meant that it could no longer rely on traditional Conservative policies, such as support for the family, to win the political centre. Moreover, a number of centralist policies initiated by the Conservative party in the previous two elections had already been adopted – without acknowledgement - by New Labour¹. There was, therefore, a perceived need for an innovatory policy area that was historically associated with the right and would be difficult for New Labour to adopt as its own: immigration provided just such a policy area.

¹ These policies include free market neo-liberal economic policies, the reduction of the welfare budget through welfare into work, conceptualizing the user of public sector services as a consumer and therefore encouraging ‘choice’ in schools and hospitals, a focus on crime and dealing with young offenders –as well as support for the family through policies supporting ‘hard working families’.

In addition, an increase in the actual number of immigrants arriving in the United Kingdom received extensive attention from right-wing newspapers such as *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Telegraph*. This increase had occurred for a number of newsworthy reasons of which the British public was made increasingly aware. These include the growth of political and economic instability in the countries surrounding Europe (e.g. Algeria, Iraq, Iran and Kurdish parts of Turkey) which led to the emergence of ‘people smuggling’ as a lucrative, illegal, activity, for which the penalties have been lower than, say, for drug trafficking. Economic migration was stimulated by the relative buoyancy of the British economy that had grown faster since 2000 than nearly all other European countries and the construction of the Channel Tunnel facilitated stowaways on lorries and trains. France was accused of encouraging emigration of its own migrants via the Sangatte camp in Calais until its closure. A further political factor was the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 from 15 to 27 countries— leading to migration of mainly male workers from countries such as Poland who have been attracted to the relatively high rates of pay available in Britain. All of these factors created a degree of uncertainty that could readily be exploited in a discourse elaborating the political, economic, social and cultural uncertainties arising from globalization.

Evidence that immigration was a recently adopted policy for the Conservative Party in the 2005 election can be found by measuring the lexical frequency of the words ‘Immigration’ and ‘Asylum’ in party political manifestos since the Second World War. ‘Immigration’ occurs on average once every Conservative manifesto in the period 1945-1997 (or once every 7,676 words), while the word ‘asylum’ does not occur at all. In the

2001 manifesto ‘immigration’ did not occur, but ‘asylum’ occurs once every 1,332 words. In the 2005 manifesto ‘immigration’ occurs once every 625 words and asylum occurs once every 1,250 words – clear evidence of the extent to which ‘immigration’ and ‘asylum’ had become acceptable policy areas. Prior to 2003 the topic of ‘immigration’ was restricted largely to right-wing parties such as the British National Party – although ‘asylum’ had become a topic for the Conservative party in 2001; however, by 2003 both ‘immigration’ and ‘asylum’ had become adopted as issues by the centre-right Conservative Party. This was partly on the advice of a new Australian campaign manager - Lynton Crosby – who had organized four successful campaigns for the Australian Prime Minister John Howard. The Conservative Party leader, Michael Howard - ironically, the son of a Jewish immigrant - supported the new strategy. Both had identified the absence of an alternative political agenda and sought to exploit the topicality of immigration and asylum in the media. This topicality was the major inspiration behind selecting it as the focus for this research that investigates the role of metaphors in right and centre-right political communication in the period leading up to the 2005 General Election.

2. METAPHOR AND RHETORIC IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE ON IMMIGRATION

There is a developing line of research regarding how metaphor is employed persuasively by providing cognitive frames for perspectives on social issues. Major policy areas investigated by metaphor researchers have been security policy (Chilton, & Ilyin 1993, Chilton 1993, Thornborrow 1993), unemployment (Straehle et. Al. 1999) and racism (Van

Teeflen 1994). Mio (1997) identifies the major functions of metaphor in politics as to simplify and make issues intelligible, to resonate with underlying symbolic representations and to stir emotions and bridge the gap between the logical and the emotional. This socially cognitive research towards on political issues may be traced to Schon (1993) who saw a dynamic role for metaphor in communicating conflicting social policies through competing generative metaphors.

The role of metaphor as a cognitive heuristic is likely to be especially important in relation to immigration because of the range of conflicting representations in public discourse. For example, immigration is sometimes represented as desirable because falling birth rates create problems in supporting the cost of pensions for an increasingly aging population, while at others it is represented as undesirable. There is the possibility of immigrants undercutting the wages of those who are employed, the cost to the social welfare system and an association with human smuggling. The idea of embracing the victims of political repression or economic devastation is counterbalanced by fears of terrorist attack, Islamic fundamentalism and fraudulent asylum seeking. Moreover, the symbolism of a native people threatened by outsiders creates a powerful political myth evoking cultural-historical fears of ‘invasion’ by alien ‘others’. Though metaphors can sometimes assist in making confusing issues more intelligible – as Mio (1997) points out, they ‘are also effective because of their ability to resonate with latent symbolic representations residing at the unconscious level’ (ibid. 130), which is not part of a logical thinking process.

In a fascinating study of metaphors in the early US immigration restriction debate, O'Brien (2003) provides a good illustration of their rhetorical potential for the discussion of immigration as a social problem - reinforcing conscious and subliminal fears in American public opinion. He illustrates how the conceptual metaphor IMMIGRANT AS OBJECT is evident in language that represents immigrants either as waste material from Europe or as being an object of labour. He identifies an ORGANISM METAPHOR in which immigrants are 'digested' and 'absorbed' as if they were food for ingestion and other organism based metaphors such as those relating to disease. He explains how these activated fears of infectious diseases arriving into American from Europe through unsanitary conditions on ships and the conditions of overcrowding in which recent immigrants often lived. He also identifies metaphors representing immigrants as a cause of natural catastrophe and invasion and animal metaphors. He argues that such representations are required precursors to inhumane social policies affecting immigrants and that identifying the role of such metaphors in public policy formation is important because it identifies the source and nature of social myths about immigrants. In a study of the same topic in recent editions of the Los Angeles Times, Santa Anna (1999) discovers a racist conceptual metaphor IMMIGRANTS ARE ANIMALS and identifies the absence of positive metaphors for immigrants – a finding that is common across research on discourse and immigration.

Research generally supports Van Dijk's (1993) view – based on a study of the political discourse of parliamentary debates on race and ethnic affairs in several European countries – that positive self-presentation and negative other-

presentation are fundamental argumentative strategies for legitimation and persuasion by the political right. Other strategies include appealing to represent 'ordinary people' through the quotation of invented language claiming to represent the view of 'the man in the street' and by *assuming* popular resentment towards immigration. Another common right-wing strategy is reversing the accusation of racism so that being 'soft' on immigration is represented as *the real cause* of assumed popular resentment. In a study of right-wing parliamentary discourse on immigration in France, Van der Vilke (2003) refers to Van Dijk's other argumentative strategies of de-emphasizing negative things about 'us' and de-emphasizing positive things about 'them'. He argues that the discourse of post-war ideological legitimation of racist practices is a complex rhetorical exercise that seeks to establish the superiority of one's own culture on the basis of 'principal otherness' in which 'Presumed biological-genetic differences in the post-war period are replaced by differences between cultures, nations or religions represented as homogenous entities' (ibid. 313).

A good example of ideological legitimation occurs in the speeches of Enoch Powell. Chilton (2004) analyses Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech and identifies three related lexical sets: 'those to do with spatial containment, those to do with movement in and out of a containing space, and those that conceptualize moving bodies (here immigrants and emigrants) as a fluid, whence the recurrent vocabulary of 'inflow' and 'outflow'' (ibid. 117). He relates this both to evocations of 'intuitive, emotionally linked mental schemas' and to a self-other schema that 'involves a covertly metaphorical mode of expression that

is derived from representations of physical space' (ibid. 117). He identifies two types of coercion: emotional and cognitive. Emotional coercion induces fear by predicting that immigration will cause damaging effects and he argues that 'feeling oneself to be 'in the right' is not simply cognition of a state of affairs but that such cognition may also be linked by emotional pathways of the brain. The emotions involved could, perhaps, be connected to protection of the family, protection of the group, protection of territory, fear of aggression, fear of loss of control' (ibid. 119). The idea that metaphors have the potential to unify a sense of moral rightness, epistemic truth and human emotions aroused by the desire to protect that which is closest to the self seems potentially important in understanding right-wing immigration discourse.

In a study of political speeches Charteris-Black (2005) traces the cognitive and emotional rhetorical potential of metaphor to the classical concepts of *logos* (reasoned argument), *pathos* (appeal to the emotions) and *ethos* (establishing the speaker's ethical credentials). He argues that all of these are related to the primary rhetorical purpose of establishing legitimacy and identifies the following roles for metaphor: communicating political arguments, communicating ideology by political myth, heightening emotional impact and establishing the ethical integrity of the speaker. These roles for metaphor often overlap and he suggests that metaphor holds an attraction for politicians because it simultaneously performs a range of functions. For example, the use of the verb 'swamp' in relation to immigration – first by Enoch Powell, then my Margaret Thatcher – evokes strong emotions *and* creates a myth that immigration is excessive *and* communicates the ideological political argument that it should be stopped – or even be reversed. Charteris-

Black (2004 & 2005) also argue for the importance of critical evaluation by the public of the metaphors in political discourse; this article aims to contribute further to our understanding of how metaphors are used in relation to the topic of immigration in right-wing political communication.

3. METHOD

For the purpose of investigating the communication of policy on immigration I created a corpus comprised of three distinct spoken and written sources of right-wing political communication and media reporting. The spoken source were transcriptions of 13 speeches given by members of the Conservative Party on the topic of ‘Asylum & Immigration’ in the period July 2002- April 2005²; this was supplemented by searching the terms ‘immigrant’ and ‘immigration’ on the speech section of the Conservative Party web site. The written source was the party political manifestos of the Conservative Party & British National Party in the 2001 and 2005 elections and 18 press articles from the Migrationwatch UK web that originated from the Daily Mail; these were supplemented by searchable electronic versions of the Daily Telegraph and the Daily Mail. Taken together the spoken and written components give a representative sample of political and media communication over a broad spectrum of the British political right. I will refer to this corpus as ‘the British right-wing corpus’.

²Available on the Conservative Party web site at
<http://www.conservatives.com/tile.do?def=policy.topic.page&tabID=5>

I was interested primarily in the rhetorical purpose of metaphors as persuading the text receiver to approve of the stance taken by the writer/ speaker in relation to immigration. Since the primary function of most political communication is to legitimize a particular set of social actions, I was interested in how far metaphors contributed to such an exercise of legitimacy formation and whether there were differences between the data sources – either as regards political orientation in terms of centre- or far-right. These aims may be summarized as follows:

1/ How do metaphors contribute to the formation of legitimacy in right-wing political communication on immigration?

2/ Is there any difference in how metaphors are employed when discussing the topic of immigration in centre and far right political communication?

Initially, I undertook a lexical analysis of the words ‘immigrant’ and ‘immigration’, I then searched the corpus for evidence of the types of metaphor usually employed in relation to immigration based on the literature reviewed in the previous section. I analyzed the metaphors occurring in the British right-wing corpus and classified them initially according to their source domains. I also undertook a general rhetorical analysis to identify how metaphors contribute to legitimacy formation in right-wing political communication and sought to explain this by identifying an interaction between the two major conceptual groupings identified that relate to disasters and containers respectively.

4. FINDINGS

The lexical analysis of the corpus shows that the centre-right discusses ‘immigration’ while the far right tends to discuss ‘immigrants’. For example, the 2005 BNP manifesto refers 24 times to ‘immigrants’ (as compared with 44 times to ‘immigration’) while the Conservative party manifesto does not refer to ‘immigrants’ at all, though it has seven references to immigration. The same pattern is indicated in the speech corpus; in all Conservative Party speeches in the period January 2001 until May 2005 there are 108 references to ‘immigration’ and only 15 to ‘immigrants’. The only nouns that occur are in the phrase ‘illegal immigrants’. Santa Anna (1999) identified the conceptual metaphor IMMIGRANTS ARE ANIMALS - as in ‘ferreting out illegal immigrants’ and ‘to catch a third of their quarry’ and IMMIGRANTS ARE WEEDS as in a ‘new crop of immigrants’ and ‘to weed out illegal aliens’. However, these representations did not occur at all in the British right-wing corpus that focuses on the *process* of immigration rather than on the agents themselves. This in itself is a type of grammatical metaphor in that the immigrating activity of individuals is nominalized into an abstract noun – immigration. Therefore, the conceptualizations I propose relate to *immigration* rather than to *immigrants*.

We can see why the political right tend to avoid the term ‘immigrant’ - except in an established legal category such as ‘illegal immigrants’- when we consider a decision taken by the Court of Appeal case on 22nd April 2005. It ruled that using ‘immigrant’ can justify treating an assault as racially aggravated. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 defines an offence as ‘racially aggravated’ if the offender demonstrates hostility based on

the victim's membership of a racial group. A doctor brought a charge of racially aggravated assault against a woman who referred to him as 'an immigrant doctor' in the statement: 'I can't find another doctor. All the good doctors are taken up by asylum seekers and I am left with an immigrant doctor'. The Luton Crown Court judge initially ruled that the word 'immigrant' was not racially aggravated. However, the Court of Appeal overruled this judgement because the decision should have been left to the jury. Such linguistic issues explain why the British centre-right refers to 'immigration' and legal categories such as 'asylum seeker' and 'illegal immigrant' rather than 'immigrant' which is restricted to the far right.

There were two main areas of metaphor that occur in relation to immigration; the first are metaphors of natural disaster – predominantly the behaviour of fluids and the second are container metaphors – especially those relating to the build up of pressure. The container metaphors predominated in the Conservative Party speeches and manifestos but the natural disaster metaphors predominated in the political statements of the far right by the BNP. The right-wing press employs both types of metaphor. I will argue that since containers frequently contain fluids, and that the most common natural disaster metaphor relate to water (floods and tidal waves), there may be a conceptual link between the more cognitive container metaphors and the more transparently emotive disaster metaphors. Liquid metaphors are therefore common in the communication of right-wing views on immigration because they activate both disaster and container scenarios. There is persuasive subliminal communication because the emotion of fear can be aroused by disaster and containment scenarios through the perforation of a boundary around the

container allowing the inflow or outflow of liquids. Therefore both metaphor groups contribute to legitimacy formation by the political right.

What both ‘disaster’ and ‘container’ metaphors have in common is that they discourage empathy with immigrants by treating them as objects rather than as the subjects of life stories. Inanimate metaphors take the perspective of the observer of an inanimate phenomenon rather than of a human participant; had a human perspective been adopted, then different metaphors drawing on domains such as journey or family may have encouraged greater empathy with - and interest in – immigrants themselves. Metaphors based on the behaviour of liquids have the potential to represent natives as victims of a social or a personal disaster. While the disaster scenarios are more typical of right-wing discourse – the greater the disaster the further to the right - container metaphors reflect a more general centre-right world view. I will also show how the Conservative Party conceptualizes the *management* of the current system for dealing with immigration and asylum³ as a *man-made* disaster and therefore in psycho-cognitive terms also relies on activating the fear of loss of control that is present in the more transparent natural disaster metaphors of the far right. Fear of loss of control and resistance to social change contribute to the centre-right word-view.

IMMIGRATION IS A DISASTER

³ The two issues of immigration and asylum are rarely separated

Disaster metaphors have an important history in political communication on the topic of immigration. In 1968 Enoch Powell - quoting Virgil - declared: “As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding. Like the Roman, ‘I seem to see the river Tiber foaming with much blood’”; what became known as the ‘Rivers of blood speech’ sparked serious racial division and ended his frontbench career. Before her first election victory, in 1979, Margaret Thatcher was criticized after claiming that Britain might become ‘swamped by people of a different culture’. The same metaphor has more recently been used by the British Home secretary, David Blunkett, who claimed on April 25th 2002 that some local schools were being ‘swamped’ by the children of asylum seekers.

The largest group of natural disaster metaphors in the British right-wing corpus conceptualize immigration with the related image of an excessive flow of water; these include metaphoric uses of the words ‘flow’, and ‘wave’ as in the following:

A BNP government would accept no further immigration from any of the parts of the world which present the prospect of *an almost limitless flow of immigration*: Africa, Asia, China, Eastern and South Eastern Europe, the Middle East and South America would all be placed on an immediate ‘stop’ list. (BNP 2005 Manifesto)

Britain also faces a further *massive and unnecessary wave of immigration* from Eastern Europe due to the eastern expansion of the European Union. (BNP 2004 Manifesto)

A particular hyperbole that is typically employed by the far right but can also be taken up in the centre-right media is the metaphor of a tidal wave:

Britain is facing a *nightly tidal wave of asylum seekers* from Cherbourg, France's second biggest port. (News.Telegraph: 25/08/2002) ⁴

However, the most frequent natural disaster metaphor for immigration was ‘flood’:

We will also clamp down *on the flood of ‘asylum seekers’*, the vast majority of whom are either bogus or can find refuge much nearer their home countries. (BNP 2005 Manifesto)

The collocation of ‘immigration’ with ‘flood’ scores 56 hits on the Telegraph web site. We should recall that flooding was widespread in Britain in the early part of 2001 and has become a more familiar experience, probably as a result of climate change. Often the ‘flood’ metaphors becomes more hyperbolic by being nested within another disaster related metaphor:

If even Tony Blair can say that it is "neither racist nor extremist" to raise "genuine concerns" about *the flood of asylum seekers*, then it is no longer feasible to pretend that *this crisis* does not exist. (BNP Manifesto 2005)

So, *unless a flood of refugees from a civil war* in France or Denmark shows up on our shores, these refugees are simply not Britain’s responsibility and have no right to refuge here. (BNP Manifesto 2005)

Another characteristic of ‘flood’ metaphors is that they are often used to describe *an increase in the rate* of migration by conceptualizing immigration in terms of the flow of water. The rhetorical contrast between a situation where there was less immigration and

⁴ The metaphor of the ‘tidal wave’ pre-dated the devastating tsunami of December 2004.

one where there is more, highlights the emerging nature of the problem and that immigration is a process that is liable to fluctuation over time:

A few years ago there was a *growing flood of Roma asylum seekers* from the Czech Republic, 1200 in 2000 alone, and the UK Government took up its concerns with the Czech government. (MigrationWatch UK)

Since then *the trickle of applicants has become a flood* and Parliament has been called upon to pass six substantial Acts in eleven years, trying to cope with the increasing numbers and progressively tighten up procedures at the application and appeal stages. (Asylum and Immigration Act 2004)

It is interesting to note that metaphor is used here in an act of parliament and therefore for policy creation as well as policy communication. In this respect political communication has indeed legitimized the conceptualization of immigration as excessive. The argumentative potential of using metaphor to communicate a process is potentially important because it implies the possibility of *decrease* as well as increase.

There was relatively little migration into Britain (other than from Ireland) until New Commonwealth immigration began in the 1950s. Legislation in *the early 1970s was intended to reduce this to a trickle*. (MigrationWatchUK)

However, focus on the directionality of the process potentially has a highly significant implication for policy formation in another phrase that is much used in the BNP manifesto - 'reversing the tide':

We recognise that *a reversal of the tide of immigration* can only be secured by negotiation and consent, and that it is probably now too late to anticipate a return to the status quo ante 1948. (BNP 2005 Manifesto)

These considerations, rather than intolerance and bigotry are what informs the British National Party's determination not simply to stop any further mass immigration into the British Isles , but also *to reverse the tide which has transformed* vast areas of our country out of all recognition over the last fifty years. (BNP 2005 Manifesto)

Conceptually, since high and low tides constitute part of our knowledge of a natural process, they are politically persuasive in representing as legitimate highly controversial policies such as repatriation. This idea of bi-directionality does not occur in metaphors such as 'stream' and 'flood' that imply a uniquely forwards direction (streams do not go in reverse and once a flood subsides, it is by definition no longer a flood). The metaphor evidently evokes the concept of repatriation⁵ - though is probably not effective in forming legitimacy since it evokes the image of King Canute's futile attempt to order the tides to reverse as a display of divine right.

In right-wing political discourse physical change (in terms of movement of peoples) is typically associated with social phenomena such as rising crime, terrorism, social anarchy and chaos, the breakdown of orderly civil society. It is perhaps not surprising that other disaster-related terms are combined with specifically flood related disaster metaphors as the following:

Tony Blair's response to the *immigration crisis that has engulfed his Government* has followed a now traditional pattern under New Labour. ([News.Telegraph: 05/04/2004](#))

⁵ It should be noted that BNP policy is to offer financial incentives for voluntary repatriation rather than to enforce re-patriation.

A BNP government would drastically curtail immigration into Britain, stop bogus asylum seeking and stop this new influx that is about to engulf us. (BNP 2004 Manifesto)

From the above analysis of far right-wing discourse there is evidence of a conceptual metaphor IMMIGRATION IS A NATURAL DISASTER. Flood based natural disaster metaphors may be employed in legitimization because they fit in with underlying myths related to Britain as an island that has been historically threatened by invasion and also for reasons of argumentative simplicity. As Mio (1997:130) suggests: ‘Because of information-processing demands, people cannot pay attention to all aspects of political evidence. Therefore, something is needed to simplify decision making, and metaphor and other shortcut devices (e.g. cognitive heuristics) address this need’, however I would argue that metaphor is the major cognitive heuristic. Reinterpretations of historical experience evoke atavistic fears of invasion by uncouth hordes from mainland Europe and provide a symbolically simple, yet potent, heuristic. In addition, a further reason why these metaphors occur is probably because many immigrants arrive in Britain by water and because of the importance of the sea in British cultural and historical identity. However, they are not exclusive to the British political right, as Van der Vilke (2003) found, water metaphors were used in parliamentary debates by the French political right to symbolize a potentially disastrous loss of control over immigration (see also Chilton 1994).

The main sub-heading at the start of the 2005 BNP manifesto is ‘Immigration – A crisis without parallel’ and it seems that for the far right assumes that immigration is quite literally a disaster. In right-wing discourse the physical movement of people comes to symbolize much more than a physical issue over resources (housing, jobs, transport etc)

but is concerned, rather, with other changes in society such as issues of identity: immigration implies the arrival of new identities, new religions and new cultural practices – diet, method of child rearing etc.. The extent to which these are positively or negatively viewed depends on whether society is perceived as being in need of change and whether this change is for the better or for the worse.

At a still less conscious level, I suggest, conceptually metaphors referring to liquids are preferred because of the knowledge that - by their nature – liquids: tides, rivers, waves etc. move around; they can therefore be related to a more primary conceptual metaphor: CHANGES ARE MOVEMENTS that is part of the ‘event structure metaphor’ (Kovecses 2002: 134). An important corollary of this conceptual metaphor is the entailment LACK OF CONTROL OVER CHANGE IS LACK OF CONTROL OVER MOVEMENT (ibid.: 136). I suggest that ‘liquid’ or ‘water’ metaphors are not so much about controlling the physical movement of people but controlling the level of historical change in a society over time, this is why, broadly, they are attractive to the right-wing, since right-wing parties *advocate a much more slower rate of social change than left wing parties that seek to ‘embrace change’*. Water metaphors have the potential to evoke historical experience of a more glorious and imperial past – by contrast with which any change may be represented as change for the worse. From a right-wing perspective the past is nearly always better than the present and therefore immigration is conceptualized as a disaster because it causes change. This gives evidence of a conceptualization IMMIGRATION IS A SOCIAL DISASTER that is related to a further conceptualization: CONTROL OVER SOCIAL CHANGE IS CONTROL OVER THE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE. Physical

control over a moving entity communicates the control of negatively evaluated social changes and therefore legitimizes right wing political policies to prevent change.

In many cases disaster metaphors refer to the immigration system itself (rather than to immigration per se) and imply a conceptualization THE IMMIGRATION SYSTEM IS A SOCIAL DISASTER

The revelations, in recent weeks, *about the meltdown in the immigration system* have simply brought the subject into the open - and not before time. (Sir Andrew Green, The Daily Mail, April 2, 2004)

The collocation ‘chaos’+ ‘immigration’ + ‘system’ scores 60 hits in the Telegraph corpus. It is significant here that the source domain of natural disasters is used to refer to ‘the immigration system’. This is because an accusation of incompetence is an explicit way of undermining the legitimacy of political opponents because competence is a basic requirement of government. The argument is that the cause of popular resentment is not immigration as such but the government’s incompetence in dealing with it. This is in fact a major theme that is developed in the Daily Mail articles:

Where has the Government been for the past eight years as our *border controls were allowed to crumble?*
The truth is that immigration and asylum are indeed out of control. The protection of our borders is a prime responsibility of government, and it has been ducked for years. (Sir Andrew Green, The Daily Mail, 8 February, 2005)

The claim that the immigration *system* is failing assumes that immigration itself is a negative social phenomenon. The accusation of governmental incompetence is also

combined with an argument that the government is reluctant to discuss immigration for reasons of political correctness:

For too long, people have felt unable to talk about their proper and legitimate concerns. Why? Because they are frightened they will be accused of being racists. Well, I have a simple message: it's not racist to talk about immigration, and not racist to criticise the system. And it's not racist to impose limits on immigration. (Howard, 28 January, 2005)

The use of disaster metaphors both to refer to immigration and *the system of* immigration is intended to create a relationship of equivalence between them; using disaster metaphors for the immigration system because it is incompetent also implies that the social phenomenon of immigration is dangerous. At the emotional level, both are represented as grounds for fear – and this is reinforced by another social phenomenon - that of terrorism. If immigrants can arrive illegally because the system is inefficient, dangerous terrorists can also arrive:

That is why a Conservative Government will make tackling illegal immigration a priority - putting 24-hour security on our ports and restoring embarkation controls on those entering and leaving the UK.

It is only through a combination of tough anti terror laws and strict border controls that we will defeat the terrorist threat. (Howard, 11 March, 2005)

In fact, this is double metonymy in which a particular example of an immigrant, 'the terrorist', represents a sub-category of immigrants – 'illegal immigrants' – that in turn represents the whole category of 'immigrants'. Because *some* immigrants are illegal

immigrants and *some* illegal immigrants are terrorists, an illogical link can be made between terrorists and *all* immigrants. This link is assisted by the idea that terrorists and illegal immigrants belong to the same social category of ‘criminal’ because they have both broken the law. This relationship of equivalence creates semantic contagion between the two categories of ‘immigrant’ and ‘terrorist’. Adjacent textual positioning contributes to this equivalence:

Firm border controls are essential if we are to:

- Limit immigration;
- Fight crime; and
- Protect Britain from terrorism.

In 1997 Mr Blair promised that he would deliver "firm control over immigration". That was all talk. Mr Blair has totally failed to secure Britain's borders. (Howard, 29 March 2005)

This metonymic chain can be verbally represented as: TERRORIST FOR ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT (i.e. criminal) and ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT FOR IMMIGRANT.

In the rhetorical formation of right wing political legitimacy immigration, crime and terrorism are classified as equivalent social problems that are equally in need of control. Failure to ‘control’ one of these – immigration – is then treated as equivalent to a failure to deal efficiently with the others. When we look at the topic positioning of immigration in the British right-wing corpus we find that it is frequently adjacent to discussion of crime, terrorism and other social disasters such as disease. Drawing on a well-established

right wing rhetorical association between immigrants and disease (e.g. Sontag 1989, O'Brien 2003), the Daily Mail brings Aids into a discussion of migration:

.....heterosexually-acquired HIV has taken off, growing by a factor of five in the last 10 years to reach 3,800 new cases last year. And of those infections, 90 per cent are believed to have been acquired overseas, mostly in Africa.

According to Dr Kevin Fenton, a co-author of the report, 'this increase...is largely contributed to by the migration of people from areas of the world where there is a high prevalence of HIV, such as sub-Saharan Africa.' (Sir Andrew Green, Daily Mail. 02 December, 2004)

By arguing that immigration policy contributes to crime and other social problems, the political right seeks to delegitimize immigration as a policy, and the government, because it is represented as ineffectively operating its policy.

BRITAIN IS A CONTAINER

Chilton (2004) argues convincingly for the importance and pervasiveness of spatial metaphors in relation to political discourse. He argues for a container schema in which 'what is inside is close to the self, and what is outside is also outside the law'. He also refers to 'a spatial containment schema which grounds conceptualizations of one's country as a closed container that can be sealed or penetrated' (ibid: 118). Cognitive linguistics has revealed evidence of the body itself as being conceptualized as a container

– and words themselves may be conceptualized as containers of meaning that are then physically moved in communication. The ‘conduit’ metaphor represents language as ‘containing’ ideas in which all the hearer has to do is ‘unpack’ the message (cf. Reddy 1979). We have seen in the preceding section how by creating relations of equivalence between legal and illegal immigration *all* immigration is represented as *outside* the law, so the law is conceptualized as a type of container.

The British right-wing corpus shows evidence of many underlying conceptualizations of the nation as a container; the most transparent example of this concept in the corpus is as follows:

Britain *is full up* and the government of Britain has as its first responsibility the welfare, security and long-term preservation of the native people of Britain. (BNP 2005 Manifesto)

The container notion is not restricted to British political discourse; Pim Fortuyn, the maverick Dutch academic turned politician who was assassinated by a white animal rights activist in 2002, campaigned against immigration using the slogan ‘*The Netherlands is Full*’. Britain’s geographical status as an island encourages perceptions of it as a container: in right-wing political communication its walls are represented as ideally strong and rigid but as under constant threat of perforation and rupture - and therefore in need of continuous support and reinforcement.

The container is perhaps best conceived as a bounded space rather than as a three-dimensional entity. A bounded space could exist in two, three or more dimensions and

may be mental or physical. Evidence for this more abstract conceptualization of a container is found in the theme of ‘securing Britain’s borders’ that became a major slogan in the 2005 Conservative campaign:

To defeat the terrorist threat we need action not talk - *action to secure our borders. Action to secure our borders* will also help in the fight against crime. (Howard, 29 March, 2005)

Evidently, the choice of the active transitive verb ‘secure’ implies notions of security from an unspecified external threat and emotively equates immigration with invasion – hence the potential for penetration of the container. This is developed especially in the BNP manifesto:

In particular, the first company of British troops to be withdrawn from Iraq on the day a BNP government assumes office would be *redeployed to secure the Channel Tunnel* and Kent ports against illegal immigration. (BNP 2005 Manifesto)

These types of political argument imply a conceptual metaphor THE NATION IS A CONTAINER. In terms of evaluation, the notion of security is important because security from danger is a basic human need. Security is closely related to control because something that is represented as dangerous is something that threatens our security because it is ‘out of control’. THE NATION IS A CONTAINER concept reinforces the argument that if the Labour government has lost control of immigration, it has also lost control of national security. The concept of a loss of control can be equated to the perforation of a container and penetration of a bounded area, hence in rhetorical terms

loss of control arouses the emotion of fear of external dangers. The BNP manifesto explicitly refers to ‘war’:

The British peoples are embroiled in a long term cultural war being waged by a ruling regime which has abandoned the concept of “Britain” in pursuit of globalisation. We are determined to win *that cultural war*, and to that end, we *must take control of our national borders* (BNP 2005 manifesto)

Control over social changes in British society (such as the ethnic composition of the British people) is represented as an issue of spatial control over physical movement across borders. The movement of people across borders is represented as weakening the container because it leads to social change and this is associated with a loss of security. In this respect time or change could be interpreted as a type of fourth dimension of containment metaphors and as adding significantly to the legitimacy of the political agents who restrict change. Chilton (1996) has explained how the notion of containment was used by the USA in relation to controlling the spreading of Communism in Eastern Europe in 1946 and how the Cuban missile crisis of 1961 was conceptualized as penetrating the American security sphere. Containment and control are therefore two very closely related and mutually supportive concepts that integrate the historical experience in right-wing political discourse.

The existence of a clearly defined container also implies a conscious controlling entity that fills or empties the container – just as a government controls the flow of people into and out of the country. Even when we think of the BODY AS CONTAINER, the bodily functions of what goes into or out of the container are both conceptualized as being under

the control of a conscious entity. In the following the act of opening the container is represented as a conscious choice:

Miss Hughes was praised for turning around the asylum problem, but managed immigration *ran out of control*, as Britain prepared to open its gates to a flood of immigrants from the poorer accession countries of Eastern Europe, using the European Community Association Agreement (ECAA). (News Telegraph, 4 April, 2004)

The evaluation of container metaphors is positive when referring to the agent of control but negative regarding that which is controlled. The existence of a container implies both an inside and an outside and therefore in relation to political discourse requires both the ‘us’ and the ‘them’ referred to by Van Dijk (ibid.); the penetration of the boundary of a container implies the ‘them’ symbolically entering the ‘us’⁶.

While control metaphors highlight movement towards the container from an external source, there are also those that refer to pressures on the container from the inside. The rhetorical and discourse role of container metaphors in the British right-wing corpus occur particularly in the use of the term ‘pressure’:

Take housing, for example. The majority of immigrants settle in London and the South East, *where pressures on housing are most pronounced*. By contrast, many disadvantaged communities will perceive that newcomers are in competition for scarce resources and public services, such as housing and school places. *The pressure on resources* in those areas is often intense and local services are often insufficient to

⁶ The image of invasion as rape is discussed in Lakoff (1991)

meet the needs of the existing community, let alone newcomers. These fears cannot be disregarded".
(Howard, 22 September, 2004)

In cognitive linguistics a build up of pressure is treated as an entailment of the conceptual metaphor ANGER IS HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER (cf. Gibbs 1990); this may be summarized as follows:

A) INTENSE ANGER PRODUCES PRESSURE ON THE CONTAINER

e.g. He was bursting with anger.

B) THE ANGRY PERSON TRIES TO KEEP THE PRESSURE BACK

e.g. I suppressed my anger.

C) WHEN THE ANGER BECOMES TOO INTENSE THE PERSON EXPLODES

e.g. When I told him, he just exploded ⁷

We perceive the situation from the perspective of the entity that is *experiencing the pressure* rather than that *which is apparently causing it*. – from the ‘us’ who are already in the container rather than from that of ‘them’ who have just entered it.

Based on an analysis of fictional best-sellers that portray the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Van Teefelen (1994) describes a metaphor scenario for a racist understanding in which a build up of pressure is summarized in the following stages: a) a gradual increase of a

⁷ Examples from Kovecses (2002, pp. 96-97)

mass in a container b) the reaching of a critical point. These two stages correspond with the increase in pressure and the attempt to keep the anger back. There is then c) the breaking through or overflowing of the container which corresponds with the exploding person. In centre-right-wing reports of immigration the word 'pressure' is the most common but it is only in *far-right* discourse that there is any indication of arriving at stage c) by social explosion in the form of riots. The emotional schema in terms of the gradual increase of pressure within a container underlies right-wing discourse in general, but notions of arrival at a critical or bursting point are restricted to far-right discourse - for example in relation to immigration in other European countries:

Fulminating home truths than nobody else dared utter, Fortuyn swept on to the political stage protesting that Europe's most densely-populated country was *full to bursting point*, and that Muslim immigration... (Daily Mail 11 December, 2004)

In the centre-right discourse the metaphor of a bursting point occurs in relation to particularly confined locations such as prisons and asylum camps, but terms such as 'overflow' and 'burst' are not used in relation to society as a whole.

We noted in section two that there is little evidence of positive evaluation of immigration in the literature; therefore, perhaps surprisingly, there were a few instances in the British right-wing corpus:

Britain is refreshed and renewed *by the influx of new people* from all over the world. Our industries and businesses depend upon skilled labour and expertise which can often be found abroad. (Howard, 19 February, 2004)

When the Government opened the '*floodgates*' to *immigrants* from the 10 new EU countries last year, it was grimly predicted that they would be a grave threat to Britain. Yet, as Ross Clark reports, the effect has been anything but harmful. (News Telegraph, 23 January, 2005)

These instances recognize the positive contribution of immigration as a source of socially useful labour – rather than for any cultural or social contribution that immigrants might make, of which Michael Howard himself is perhaps an example that his Australian campaign manager underestimated.

In this section we have seen that metaphor entailments for which evidence was originally found in relation to personal experience of the body as a container have come to refer to a scenario for a social process and add political legitimacy to those who maintain the boundaries of the container. However, the stages in the scenario that are reached depend on the positioning on a political scale. While right-wing discourse generally exploits the emotional potential of a metaphor schema in which there is a build up of pressure within a container, it is only more extreme right-wing or racist discourse that refers to the concepts of reaching a critical point and indeed bursting, thereby merging our scenario for containers with that for disasters in general. So, while the container metaphor is a general rhetorical legitimization strategy of the right, the emotion schema metaphor is used according to political positioning with the more extreme disaster reflecting the more extreme political position. This demonstrates the importance of understanding the

conceptual level of metaphor in persuasive political communication and its relationship to specific political ideology.

CONCLUSION

This analysis of British right-wing political discourse has revealed that metaphors contribute to the formation of legitimacy in right-wing political communication on immigration through the use of two main categories of metaphor: those related to natural disasters (primarily caused by the movement of water) and those related to containment. These may be conceptually represented as IMMIGRATION IS A NATURAL DISASTER and BRITAIN IS A CONTAINER. Liquid metaphors are common to both categories and evoke deeper cultural and historical experience related to invasion and control over the sea as the cause of earlier national glory. These two types are also related because a 'bounded area' communicates a space that is protected from an outside source of danger. The container metaphor is persuasive in British political communication because it merges *a time concept* with a *spatially* based concept; the conceptual metaphor CONTROL OVER SOCIAL CHANGE IS CONTROL OVER MOVEMENT OF PEOPLES implies that controlling immigration through maintaining the security of borders (a space-based concept) will ensure control over the rate of social change (a time-based concept). This addition of a fourth dimension to container metaphors is potentially attractive to political forces that resist social change and could be taken to symbolize a

general right-wing world view that seeks to evoke historical myths as the basis for resisting social change.

There is also a powerful rhetorical link in the British right-wing corpus between the DISASTER and the CONTAINER concepts in that they are both related to the emotional domain and therefore influence powerful emotions such as fear and the desire for protection. DISASTER metaphors arouse fears of destruction by penetration *from without*, while container metaphors arouse fears of a build up of an unacceptable level of pressure *from within* the container leading to explosion. Penetration of the container is potentially disastrous – just as a leak in a shop can lead to it sinking

However, while both scenarios characterize right-wing political discourse in relation to immigration, there is an important difference between what might be termed ‘racist discourse’ and a right-wing world-view. Racist discourse highlights the individual racial characteristics of immigrants perhaps using concepts such as IMMIGRANTS ARE ANIMALS that has been shown to occur in some political discourse from other political cultures and did not occur in the British right-wing corpus. However, although British right-wing discourse focuses on the process of immigration, there is a racist tendency in far-right metaphors that represent immigration as causing pressure from within leading to *explosion* of the national container because they imply social violence. There is a further difference between far-right discourse that represents *immigration* as a natural disaster and centre-right discourse that represents the *immigration system* as a disaster – although

the latter covertly assumes that immigration is a disaster because otherwise if the system for managing it was not foolproof it would not be such a disaster.

To date, cognitive linguistics has been primarily concerned with universal bodily experience taken out of society; however, it seems that the cognitive heuristics of metaphor are equally active in creating politically influential representations of society and change – that is in social cognition. It would be particularly interesting to compare the findings presented here with those for right-wing representations of immigration in other political cultures (say from the political left, or from other national settings) or with right-wing political discourse from other periods. Such research could explore the extent to which DISASTER and CONTAINER metaphors, and their cognitive and emotional role in legitimacy formation, are limited either to British and/ or right-wing discourse and whether they are stable over time – that is whether the related concepts of disaster and containment occur in disparate political discourse communities.

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