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**MILITARISED, DESTRUCTIVE ELEMENT:
THE IMAGE OF MIGRANTS AND MIGRATION
IN THE POLISH GOVERNMENT'S STATEMENTS
AROUND THE 2021 EVENTS
AT THE POLISH-BELARUSSIAN BORDER.
METAPHOR-LED INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS¹**

A b s t r a c t

This article examines the utterances made by selected representatives of the Polish government with regard to migrants and migration in the context of the events which took place at the Polish-Belarussian border in 2021. Its basic purpose is to reveal the link between the actions undertaken by the authorities and the way officials categorised these events and their participants. The analysis is performed from the interpretive perspective, using the conceptual metaphor theory as a hermeneutical key to reconstruct the actors' points of view. It has revealed that migrations and migrants were categorised through the use of metaphors such as MIGRATION IS WAR and MIGRATION IS A FLOOD. The meanings generated by these metaphors, as well as their entailments, constituted cognitive premises for actions undertaken by Polish authorities in response to the events at the Polish-Belarussian border in 2021. They also determined the catalogue of adequate tools and methods to be applied with regards to the crisis situation at the border.

K e y w o r d s: migrations, migrants, conceptual metaphor, discourse, interpretation.

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INTRODUCTION

In the second half of 2021, Poland experienced increased migration pressure on its border with Belarus. In 2020, the Border Guard Service recorded 227 illegal border crossings or attempted crossings made by non-EU, non-EEA citizens. The following year, that number spiked to as many as 2869, with a great majority (2665, to be exact) occurring between June and December.² Some of these incidents were aggressive in nature. With assistance from Belarussian security and intelligence services, groups of people, mostly from Asia and Africa, were transported to the border areas, where they were effectively trapped. They wandered around the forested area in harsh weather, in many instances without sufficient clothing, access to water, food or shelter. Despite their difficult situation and health conditions, Polish governmental institutions did not initiate any form of aid. To the contrary, they saw these events and individuals as a security risk, and undertook actions in line with that interpretation, increasing the presence of military units and law enforcement forces in the area. Actions undertaken by Polish authorities were accompanied by numerous infringements on human rights, with these developments reported by humanitarian organisations and the Ombudsman's office alike. Victims were subjected to so-called pushbacks and prevented from submitting asylum applications—a fact that amounted to the violation of Poland's international treaty obligations.³ In short, the Polish state opted for a range of repressive measures involving the

² Official statistics of the Border Guard Service, available at: <https://strazgraniczna.pl/pl/granica/statystyki-sg/2206,Statystyki-SG.html>. (Unless otherwise noted at point of citation, all URLs cited in this article were accessible on 4 March 2024.)

³ Witold Klaus, ed., *Poza prawem. Prawna ocena działań Państwa Polskiego w reakcji na kryzys humanitarny na granicy polsko-białoruskiej* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo INP PAN, 2022), https://www.migracje.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/poza_prawem_prawna_ocena_dzialan_panstwa_polskiego_w_reakcji_na_kryzys_humanitarny_na_granicy_polsko-bialoruskiej.pdf; “Die Here or Go to Poland”. Belarus’ and Poland’s Shared Responsibility for Border Abuses’, Human Rights Watch, 2021 https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/11/eca_migrant1121_web_0.pdf; ‘Polska: Cyfrowe śledztwo dowodzi, że Polska naruszyła prawa uchodźców’, Amnesty International, 30 September 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org.pl/sledztwo-dowodzi-ze-polska-naruszyla-prawa-uchodzcow/>; ‘Pushbacki sprzeczne z prawem. Po umorzeniu sprawy z wniosku samych cudzoziemców RPO składa własną skargę do WSA’, Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich, 30 March 2022, <https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/pl/content/rpo-wsa-skarga-po-umorzeniu-pushbacki-sprzeczne-z-prawem>; ‘Pismo Rzecznika Praw Obywatelskich do Prezesa Rady Ministrów’, 20 August 2021, <https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/sites/default/files/Wyst%C4%85pienie%20generalne%20do%20PRM%2020.08.2021.pdf>; ‘Pismo Rzecznika Praw Obywatelskich do Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji’, 4 March 2022, <https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/sites/default/files/2022-03/RPO%20do%20MSWiA%2004.03.2022.pdf>.

use of force, often verging on—or outright—illegal. At the same time, it completely refrained from any form of humanitarian aid, instead trying to actually criminalise it.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

While it is not my intention to question the importance of the security dimension of these events, the actions of the Polish government warrant certain questions. Why did it respond to the inherently complex, multi-dimensional problem of migration by focusing solely on securing the borders, repressive measures involving the armed forces, and legislative changes justifying these moves? Why did it ignore the legal and humanitarian aspect?

From the standpoint of the interpretive approach,⁴ the answer to these questions lies in the actor's subjective perspective, i.e., the main driver of its actions. In such context, there are two key issues to consider: (1) how did the Polish government categorise the events on the Polish-Belarussian border and their participants? (2) how did this categorisation correspond to the actions undertaken in response to the developments along the border?

To address these topics, this article examines the narrative constructed by the representatives of the government around the 2021 events in order to reveal the links between how official statements portrayed the issue and how the government acted on it. The interpretive key is provided by the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)⁵ which allows us to track the framing of the events in question⁶ and how the government's actual actions correspond to the meanings generated by the framing. To that end, the article analyses statements made by Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, Minister of the Interior and Administration Mariusz Kamiński, and Minister of Defence Mariusz Błaszczak. The statements were recorded during the session of the Sejm held on 9 November 2021, focused on

⁴ Mark Bevir and R. A. W. Rhodes, 'Interpretive Political Science', in eadem, eds, *Routledge Handbook of Interpretive Political Science* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. 3–27; Mark Bevir and Jason Blakely, *Interpretive Social Science. An Anti-Naturalist Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁵ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metafory w naszym życiu* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Altheia, 2010).

⁶ In the way proposed by Charles Fillmore: Charles Fillmore, 'Frame and the Semantics of Understanding', *Quadreni di Semantica* 6: 2, 1985, pp. 222–53; idem, 'Frame Semantics', in Dirk Geeraerts, ed., *Cognitive Linguistics: Basic Readings* (London and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2006), pp. 373–400, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110199901.373>.

the government's updates on the situation on the Polish-Belarusian border and Poland's response.⁷

Obviously, these are not the only statements made by government representatives on this issue, presenting their position in the media space and at the forum of state institutions since the beginning of the events under review. The decision to focus on the statements indicated above is due to the fact that the report presented to the Sejm in November summarizes the debate on the issue that took place in the preceding months, combining the assessment and interpretation of events with the justification of the actions taken by authorities. In this sense, it constitutes a clear interpretation of government's perspective, announcing its that had already been materializing in implemented actions.

An issue that needs clarification, before moving on to the analysis proper, is the relation and semantic scope of the terms *refuge* and *migration*. The latter can be understood as 'a form of spatial mobility of people, resulting in a relatively permanent change of their place of residence'.⁸ *Refuge*, or *refugee migration* on the other hand, is one form of migration, specific in terms of the motive for leaving one's place of residence, which is fear for one's own safety.⁹ In this sense, the concept of migration is broader in meaning, and the other is one of its subtypes. However, what is more important for the analysis that follows is not so much the scientific meaning of these terms and their relation to each other, but their meaning in the context of the statements of the selected actors. For the purpose of the analysis is not to establish the conceptual adequacy in describing the analysed events, but to capture their subjective interpretation as revealed in the statements of government representatives. Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki's statement 'they are migrants, they are not refugees'¹⁰ suggests that these concepts are understood in this case in terms of opposition rather than differing in level of generality. The way he introduced them into discourse does not follow the scientific rigour

⁷ 'Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne z 41 posiedzenia Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w dniu 9 listopada 2021', Sejm Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej Kadencja IX, https://orka2.sejm.gov.pl/StenoInter9.nsf/0/E759260C92FA55C5C125878900001D34/%24File/41_a_ksiazka_bis.pdf.

⁸ Marta Anacka and Marek Okólski, 'Migracje: Pojęcia i metody', in Magdalena Lesińska and Marek Okólski, eds, *25 wykładów o migracjach* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2018), s. 17.

⁹ Karolina Łuksiewicz and Witold Klaus, 'Migracje uchodźcze', in Lesińska and Okólski, eds, *25 wykładów o migracjach*, s. 352.

¹⁰ 'Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne z 41 posiedzenia Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej', s. 5.

in description of the phenomenon but reflects rather his construal of the issue. Therefore, in the title, I refer to the notion of migration as broader in meaning, without deciding which specific case of migration we are dealing with in this particular situation and whether the officials use concepts adequately. For it is not my objective to analyse what these events actually were, but how they were interpreted by the Polish authorities in the perspective of the discursive practices adopted.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Applying CMT to the discourse on migration is not a novel idea. According to Elena Semino,¹¹ metaphors putting in-groups in opposition to out-groups and presenting the latter in negative light form a coherent pattern within the anti-migration rhetoric—a line of thought which systematically applies certain framing and labels to dehumanise and objectify migrants by highlighting the alleged negative impact and security risks stemming from migration. To that end, the rhetoric repeatedly employs comparisons to animals, diseases, undesirable character traits, lack of personal hygiene, plagues, criminals, natural disasters such as floods or tsunamis, invasions, weapons and war.¹² However, what I am interested in is not merely

¹¹ Elena Semino, *Metaphor in Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 118–23.

¹² Jonathan Charteris-Black, 'Britain as a Container: Immigration Metaphors in 2005 Election Campaign', *Discourse and Society* 17: 5, 2006, pp. 563–81; Andreas Musolff, 'Dehumanizing Metaphors in UK Immigrants Debates in Press and Online Media', *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict* 3: 1, 2015, pp. 41–56, <https://doi.org/10.1075/bct.93.02mus>; idem, *Political Metaphor Analysis: Discourse and Scenarios* (London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi and Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), pp. 73–92; Fabienne Baider and Monika Kopytowska, 'Conceptualising the Other: Online Discourses on the Current Refugee Crisis in Cyprus and Poland', *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics* 13: 2, 2017, pp. 203–33, <https://doi.org/10.1515/lpp-2017-0011>; Maria Dolores Porto, 'Water Metaphors and Evaluation of Syrian Migration: The "Flow of Refugees" in the Spanish Press', *Metaphor and Symbol* 37: 3, 2022, pp. 252–67, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926488.2021.1973871>; Kinga Kolumban, 'Defending our Borders: Metaphor Scenarios in Hungarian and Romanian Political Discourse on Migration', *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Brasov, Series IV: Philology & Cultural Studies* 16: 1, 2023, pp. 39–68, <https://doi.org/10.31926/but.pcs.2023.65.16.1.3>; Narkiz Moullagaliev and Lyutsiya Khismatullina, 'Metaphors in Media Discourse on Migration', *Journal of History Culture and Art Research* 6: 5, 2017, pp. 131–38; Lev Marder, 'Refugees Are Not Weapons: The "Weapons of Mass Migration", Metaphor and Its Implications', *International Studies Review* 20: 4, 2018, pp. 576–88, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/vix055>; Mersina Mujagić, 'The Migration as an Invasion and the Common European House: Metaphors in Media Discourse', *Exploration in English Language and Linguistics* 10: 1, 2022, pp. 22–50, <https://doi.org/10.2478/exell-2022-0009>; Elisabeth El Rafaie, 'Metaphors We Discriminate by: Naturalized Themes

(or at least not exclusively) the content of metaphors used by the debating parties, but rather the links between the conceptualisation of the subject matter, as revealed through the metaphors, and the political decisions made with regard to it. In this sense, I apply CMT as a means to achieve research objectives formulated, in essence, in line with the interpretive approach. This is because the goal here is to analyse not so much the contents of communication, but rather its practical consequences, i.e., whether or not such contents are reflected in political actions.

Since the theoretical aspects of the approaches used in this research are not essential to the subject of this article, I shall only present them briefly, focusing on those elements that are particularly relevant given the research objectives and questions.¹³ Keeping in mind that the purpose here is to show the links between how the Polish government presented migrants and what actions it took towards the people attempting to cross the Polish-Belarusian border, the choice of the interpretive approach seems natural. This approach focuses on meaning, on discerning the sense that political actors attribute to specific elements of their reality and their own references through action. The goal of the interpretive analysis is to grasp the perspective of the actors, i.e., to reconstruct their subjective point of view and convictions. Beliefs and discourses provide context and make actions taken by the participants of political life comprehensible.¹⁴ Interpretive approaches often begin from the insight that to understand actions, practices, and institutions, we need to grasp the beliefs—the

in Austrian Newspaper Articles about Asylum Seekers', *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 5: 3, 2001, pp. 352–71, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9481.00154>; Gerald V. O'Brien, 'Indigestible Food, Conquering Hordes, and Waste Materials: Metaphors of Immigrants and the Early Immigration Restriction Debate in the United States', *Metaphor and Symbol* 18: 1, 2003, pp. 33–47; Andreas Musolff, 'Migrants' NATION-AS-BODY Metaphors as Expression of Transnational Identities', *Language and Intercultural Communication* 23: 3, 2023, pp. 229–40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2022.2157836>. Naturally the above-mentioned list of sources is not exhaustive. A complete bibliography, let alone even a brief examination of it, would require a separate paper given the plethora of works on the subject, the CMT's complexity and the many perspectives on it.

¹³ A detailed discussion of both these issues, including a look at the methodological foundations of both these theoretical perspectives, can be found in: Maciej Bachryj, 'The Use of Conceptual Metaphor in the Interpretive Analysis of Political Discourse: What Can a Political Scientist Learn from a Cognitive Linguist?', *Politeja* 92: 5, 2024, pp. 119–39, <https://doi.org/10.12797/Politeja.21.2024.92.06>.

¹⁴ Mark Bevir and R. A. W. Rhodes, 'Interpretations and Its Others', *Australian Journal of Political Science* 40: 2, 2005, pp. 170–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10361140500129974>; eidem, 'Defending Interpretation', *European Political Science* 5: 1, 2006, pp. 69–71, <https://doi.org/eps/journal/v5/n1/index.html>; Bevir and Blakely, *Interpretive Social Science*, pp. 19–25.

intentional meaning—of the people involved.¹⁵ This way, interpretive theory claims that meanings are constitutive for actions, i.e., that people act on their beliefs and, therefore, a social scientist should explain people's actions by referring to their beliefs.¹⁶ The interpretive perspective allows us to reveal the conscious-volitional determinants of political decisions and actions by reconstructing the given actor's point of view.

Formulated as part of cognitive linguistics, CMT enables that reconstruction based on a premise that considers language as a component of human cognitive apparatus, and sees our understanding of reality as mediated through language.¹⁷ This idea is the foundation of Lakoff's assertion that linguistic categories are identical in nature to other conceptual categories, and that language uses our general cognitive mechanisms, including categorisation.¹⁸ It is this premise that makes CMT a useful hermeneutical key for the interpretive approach, since CMT allows us to gain insights into how humans organise and attribute meanings to the contents of their cognition. Metaphors revealed through language which make up a major part of our conceptual system, give us a window into person's system, thought process and their understanding of reality.¹⁹ In other words, metaphors organise our thoughts as meaning-making structures. They enable political actors to make sense of the political world, and frame a way of thinking and experiencing reality because 'the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of things in terms of others'.²⁰ The process involves conceptualisation of more abstract phenomena in terms of less abstract, more immediate ones. For instance, we describe non-physical beings or processes as if they had clear physical characteristics (an outline, size, capacity, temperature, etc.), or talk about social categories as if they shared the features of humans or other living organisms and their biological processes. In other words, constructing a metaphor entails the so-called mapping of one experiential (source) domain to another (target

¹⁵ Bevir and Rhodes, 'Interpretive Political Science', p.12.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁷ Dirk Geeraerts and Hubert Cuyckens, 'Introducing Cognitive Linguistics', in *idem*, eds, *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 3–7.

¹⁸ George Lakoff, *Kobiety, ogień i rzeczy niebezpieczne. Co kategorie mówią nam o umyśle* (Cracow: Universitas, 2011), p. 65.

¹⁹ *Idem* and Johnson, *Metafory w naszym życiu*, pp. 29–35.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

domain).²¹ The properties of the source domain, closer to our physical experience, are transferred into the more abstract target domain. As a result, the latter takes on certain structural characteristics of the former, as the knowledge of the two domains is combined. Beliefs regarding specific objects of socio-political reality, on which that actor's actions—according to the interpretive theory—are based on, contain elements that are not inherently connected with the object of cognition, but were rather mapped from another cognitive domain. However, a source domain is never fully mapped to the target domain—the process always entails highlighting some aspects and hiding others.²² Such rhetorical manoeuvres are aimed at affecting the cognitive process of the recipient of communication. This makes a metaphor a highly effective tool of persuasion and framing, and opens up space for conceptual interplay between language and ideology.²³ From such a standpoint, metaphor becomes a significant means of political influence. In his theory Lakoff draws on Fillmore's idea of framing. Both of them share the assumption of existing continuity between language and human experience. The idea of framing, explored and integrated into Lakoff's metaphor theory, allows him to analyse persuasive potential of metaphor by focusing on the ways they shape our thinking and structure knowledge. In the process of metaphorisation, the concept in question is structured by the source domain and, as a result, its meaning is not constituted by the characteristics of the phenomenon it signifies, but by the structural elements of the experiential domain which was mapped on it. In this sense, its meaning is relativised to the conceptual frame (meaning context) in which it is placed, ceasing to be an element of neutral description and becoming an interpretation and carrier of meanings generated by the source experiential domain. It corresponds with Fillmore's definition of frame as

²¹ The experiential (conceptual) domain is a fairly complex area of knowledge which refers to cohesive aspects of experience. Vyvyan Evans, *Leksykon językoznawstwa kognitywnego* (Cracow: Universitas, 2009), p. 23.

²² Lakoff and Johnson, *Metafory w naszym życiu*, p. 37.

²³ Hans-Georg Wolf and Frank Polzenhagen, 'Conceptual Metaphor as Ideological Stylistic Means: An Exemplary Analysis', in René Dirven, Roslyn Frank and Martin Pütz, eds, *Cognitive Models in Language and Thought: Ideology, Metaphors and Meaning* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter Mouton, 2003); Andreas Mussolff, 'Metaphorical Framing in Political Discourse', in Piotr Cap, ed., *Handbook of Political Discourse* (Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd., 2023), pp. 145–63; Andrew Goatly, *The Language of Metaphors* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 161–64; Elena Semino, *Metaphor in Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 30–34; Jonathan Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric. The Persuasive Power of Metaphor* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 35–43.

Any system of concepts related in such a way that to understand any one of them you have to understand the whole structure; when one thing in such a structure is introduced [...] all of the others are automatically made available.²⁴

Using particular experiential domain to understand given phenomenon evokes others elements of that domain which are constitutive to the experience and understanding of the phenomenon.

In this perspective, the key to understanding an actor's actions is the identification of the source domain which gives birth to the images and meanings attributed to the object of cognition which the actor refers to both in the cognitive process and actions. This is because a metaphor is not merely a cognitive representation of reality,²⁵ but may also be a guide for future action.²⁶ In this sense, we can speak of the performative function of metaphors, in that 'they orient their users towards possibilities of action and shape their involvement'.²⁷ Conceptual metaphors are essentially cognitive structures, and as such they involve certain entailments which are then translated into actions, and reflected in socio-cultural practices.²⁸ This corresponds to how the interpretive approach methodologically prioritises an actor's point of view as the main regulator of their behaviour.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

Practical implications of the above-mentioned theoretical premises mean that interpretive analysis with the use of CMT should entail the following steps: (1) identifying metaphors being used; (2) interpreting these metaphors, i.e., identifying source domains and meanings generated in the target domain; (3) analysing metaphors with the view to revealing specific entailments. In the first step, I use a modified version of the MIP/MIPVU procedure.²⁹ In the second step, I apply the

²⁴ Fillmore, 'Frame Semantics', p. 373.

²⁵ Paul Chilton, *Analysing Political Discourse: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 48–52.

²⁶ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metafory w naszym życiu*, p. 211.

²⁷ Małgorzata Fabiszak, *A Conceptual Metaphor Approach to War Discourse and its Implications* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2007), p. 32.

²⁸ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metafory w naszym życiu*, p. 211; Zoltán Kövecses, *Język, umysł, kultura. Praktyczne wprowadzenie* (Cracow: Univeristas, 2011), pp. 213–14.

²⁹ Praggeljaz Group, 'MIP: A Method for Identifying Metaphorically Used Words in Discourse', *Metaphor and Symbol* 22: 1, 2007, pp. 1–39; Gerard J. Steen et al., 'MIPVU: A Manual for Identifying Metaphor-Related Words', in Susan Nacey, Aletta G. Dorst, Tina Krennmayr and W. Gudrun Reijnierse, eds, *Metaphor Identification in Multiple Languages*.

extended CMT proposed by Zoltan Kövaces.³⁰ In the final part, I refer to the concepts of metaphor scenario³¹ and purposeful/ideological metaphor³² which shall be outlined in the following paragraphs.

IDENTIFYING AND INTERPRETING METAPHORS³³

For the purpose of this analysis, the identification of metaphorical expressions was based on the guidelines provided by the MIP/MIPVU procedure, albeit with certain modifications regarding the organisation of source material. The analysis entails confronting the meaning of words as signalled by the context of a given statement with their basic meaning in the language. If a discrepancy is found, a given word is classified as a metaphorical expression. However, this method was not devised with the view to identifying metaphors at the broader level of the discourse.³⁴ MIP/MIPVU focuses on single words and calls for examining every word contained in a given statement, whereas my interest is not so much the metaphor itself, but rather the discourse as a whole, i.e., the language used³⁵ in relation to a given subject, and the links between the language and the political practice: decisions, actions and measures applied towards the issue at hand. This is why MIP/MIPVU's focus on a single word as the unit for analysis is not sufficient. This is because in political rhetoric, metaphor 'typically occurs in phrases, or collocations, rather than separate words, and

MIPVU Around the World (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2019), pp. 23–40; Joanna Marhula and Maciej Rosiński, 'Linguistic Metaphor Identification in Polish' in Nacey, Dorst, Krennmayr and Reijnierse, eds, *Metaphor Identification in Multiple Languages*, pp. 184–202.

³⁰ Zoltán Kövecses, *Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

³¹ Andreas Musolff, *Metaphor and Political Discourse. Analogical Reasoning in Debates about Europe* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 17; idem, *Political Metaphor Analysis*, pp. 26–31.

³² Jonathan Charteris-Black, 'Competition Metaphors and Ideology. Life as a Race', in Ruth Wodak and Benhard Forchtner, eds, *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), pp. 202–03; Jonathan Charteris-Black, *Analysing Political Speeches: Rhetoric, Discourse and Metaphor* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), p. 243.

³³ Steps 1 and 2 are connected in the sense that identifying a metaphor entails deciding whether the primary and contextual meaning of a given expression are identical, or they belong to different conceptual domains. Therefore, identification of a metaphor requires a preliminary interpretation.

³⁴ Marhula and Rosiński, 'Linguistic Metaphor Identification in Polish', p. 194.

³⁵ Chilton, *Analysing Political Discourse*, p. 16; Teun A. van Dijk, *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1998), p. 6; Paul Ricoeur, 'The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text', in: Fred R. Dallmayr and Thomas A. McCarthy, eds, *Understanding the Social Inquiry* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977), p. 317.

for this reason the unit of measurement should be rather phrase than the word'.³⁶ Moreover, 'the linguistic of discourse has different rules than does the linguistic of language [...] If the sign (phonological or lexical) is the basic unit of language, the sentence is the basic unit of discourse'.³⁷ This means the method should be modified so as to allow for a different definition of the unit for analysis, broader than in the original MIP/MIPVU procedure.

Such modification can be justified by accounting for a dual nature of a conceptual metaphor which functions as a mental cognitive structure, but have also its linguistic manifestation. This calls for an important distinction between a metaphor and a linguistic metaphorical expression. While the former (which can also be termed a metaphorical concept) refers to mental processes, the latter describes their linguistic expressions which become part of the discourse³⁸ and are actually available as empirical material for analysis. In a metaphor, conceptual domains are not manifested directly—they are only signalled in the epiphenomenon that is voiced. From this standpoint, it makes sense to define metaphor in relation to linguistic expression, i.e., the language in use. Such approach is evident in Andrew Goatly's proposal which distinguishes objects/concepts from the language used to express them. Goatly bases his definition of metaphor on the unit of discourse. Metaphors 'occur when a unit of discourse is used to refer to an object, concept, process, quality, relationship or world to which it does not conventionally refer or colligates with a unit(s) which it does not conventionally colligate'.³⁹ Since the source and target domains do not manifest directly in a metaphor, but rather in the epiphenomenon, the assumption that metaphors are always represented exclusively in single words is incorrect. This is why, for the purpose of this research, I have opted for a sentence as a basic unit for analysis, and have selected sentences to be examined according to target domains⁴⁰ or, following Goatly's terminology, T-term.

³⁶ Charteris-Black, *Analysing Political Speeches*, p. 219.

³⁷ Ricoeur, 'The Model of the Text', p. 317.

³⁸ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metafory w naszym życiu*, pp. 32–33, Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 4.

³⁹ Goatly, *The Language of Metaphors*, p. 9. The authors specifies three units of discourse that comprise the structure of a linguistic manifestation of a metaphor: vehicle-term (V-term)—the conventional referent of the unit; topic-term (T-term)—the actual unconventional referent; and the ground-term (G-term)—the similarities and/or analogies involved. V-term can be used as a linguistic marker of the source domain, T-term serves the same purpose for target domain, while G-term for the basis of a metaphor (see the structure of a conceptual metaphor as described in Kövecses, *Język, umysł, kultura*, p. 177).

⁴⁰ Charteris-Black, *Analysing Political Speeches*, p. 218.

I have used the online version of the Polish Language Dictionary (pol. *Słownik Języka Polskiego*, or SJP PWN)⁴¹ as a primary point of reference required by the MIP/MIPVU procedure to determine whether a given phrase was used literally or metaphorically. In cases where SJP PWN did not provide unequivocal answer, I have referred to a secondary point of reference: the online Great Dictionary of the Polish Language (pol. *Wielki Słownik Języka Polskiego*, or WSJP)⁴² which includes a thematic categorisation of words, and the National Corpus of the Polish Language (pol. *Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego*, or NKJP)⁴³ which allows thematic classification by searching for predominant collocations.

METAPHOR ANALYSIS

At this stage of analysis, I have used the category of purposeful/ideological metaphor which allows us to explore possible motives that underline the metaphors being used and their rhetorical-persuasive potential by analysing their multiple discursive purposes. Purposeful/ideological metaphors are those that 'influence public events by reinforcing and legitimising the outlooks and beliefs of supporters and by attacking and delegitimising those of opponents'. They become ideological when they 'express a set of beliefs and values that are shared by a particular social group and contribute to a world-view that unites and defines the group'.⁴⁴ Moreover, I have referred to the idea of metaphor scenario which can be understood as a micro-narrative implied by the source domain of a given metaphor.

[It] is a set of assumptions made by competent members of a discourse community about the prototypical elements of a concept, that is, participants, 'dramatic' story lines and default outcomes, as well as ethical evaluations of these elements, which are connected to the social attitudes and emotional stances that are prevalent in the respective discourse community.⁴⁵

The idea is based on Lakoff's concept of script as a kind of an idealised cognitive model (ICM), where ontology is composed of people, items, characteristics, relations and judgements, and described

⁴¹ <https://sjp.pwn.pl/>.

⁴² <https://wsjp.pl/>.

⁴³ <http://www.nkjp.uni.lodz.pl/>, Piotr Pęzik, 'Wyszukiwarka PELCRA dla danych NKJP', in A. Przepiórkowski, M. Bańko, R. L. Górski and B. Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, eds, *Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2012), pp. 253–79.

⁴⁴ Charteris-Black, 'Competition Metaphors and Ideology', p. 202; idem, *Analysing Political Speeches*, pp. 247–62.

⁴⁵ Musolff, *Political Metaphor Analysis*, p. 30.

the initial state of affairs, the course of events, and the final state of affairs.⁴⁶ Scenarios not only dominate in public discourse in terms of their frequency, but also in that they shape the course of public debates and conceptualizations of political topics by framing attitudinal preferences in the discourse community.⁴⁷

DATA ANALYSIS

Since the subject of analysis in this article is the discourse on migration and migrants, the sentences selected for examination are those containing various grammar forms of these two words. The examined text contained 25 metaphorical expressions, of which 20 were based on structural metaphors, while the remaining five on ontological metaphors.⁴⁸ Within the former group, 12 expressions used terms related to war and armed forces, while eight were based on the element of water and its related natural disaster, i.e., flood (see Table 1).

TABLE 1
Source concepts mapped on target domain/T-term
(migration, migrants) in structural metaphors

Source concept	Lexical item	Frequency
WAR	marching (maszerowanie)	4
	storming (szturmowanie)	3
	shield/weapon (tarcza/broń)	3
	fight (walka)	1
	attack (atak)	1
WATER/FLOOD	wave (fala)	7
	stream (strumień)	1

Source: own elaboration.

However, identification of the source domain is not sufficient to fully reveal the metaphors' entailments, i.e., their political and ideological dimensions. This is because the source domain 'does not itself determine or imply an ideological bias'⁴⁹ because, as was

⁴⁶ Lakoff, *Kobiety, ogień i rzeczy niebezpieczne*, pp. 282–83.

⁴⁷ Andreas Musolff, 'Metaphor Scenarios in Public Discourse', *Metaphor and Symbol* 21: 1, 2009, p. 28, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327868ms2101_2.

⁴⁸ For more details on the difference between structural and ontological metaphors see Lakoff and Johnson, *Metafory w naszym życiu*, pp. 55–66, 99–107; Kövecses, *Metaphor*, pp. 37–40.

⁴⁹ Andreas Musolff, 'Ideological Functions of Metaphor: The Conceptual Metaphors of Health and Illness in Public Discourse', in René Dirven, Roslyn Frank and Martin Pütz, eds, *Cognitive Models in Language and Thought: Ideology, Metaphors and Meaning* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter Mouton, 2003), p. 348, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110688306-002>.

already mentioned, metaphorical mapping is a selective process in that a source domain is never fully mapped to the target domain. This particular obstacle can be cleared by the application of extended CMT, with two specific concepts within that idea being of particular importance. The first one is frames—they are less schematic than domains, and elaborate on particular aspects of the domain matrix. The second one is mental spaces which further elaborate generic structures borrowed from frames, but the generic structures are further elaborated by specific information from context. They are the least schematic, highly specific conceptual structures occurring in particular communicative situations.⁵⁰ Together, the two concepts enable a more detailed understanding of cognitive consequences of selective mapping which reduces the richness and complexity of a given domain down to a few specific aspects. They also allow for a more in-depth, precise exploration of the projection patterns between the domains, and a more nuanced interpretation and exposes the meanings of expressions being used. This, in turn, opens up the possibility to analyse metaphorical expressions in terms of their persuasive impact, the ideological underpinnings of content, and its consequences for political practice.

At the outset, I feel compelled to point readers' attention to how Prime Minister Morawiecki categorised the events at the Polish-Belarusian border. This is particularly significant in the context of the MIGRATION IS WAR metaphor. When speaking of the people attempting to cross the border, Morawiecki, in no uncertain terms, said 'they were not refugees – they were migrants'.⁵¹ Although in terms of logic the two categories are not disjunctive—after all, being a refugee is a form of migration—the Prime Minister's words suggest these are two separate phenomena. Such rhetorical move is not incidental and may reflect common understanding of the two concepts, since their dictionary definitions (SJP PWN) are indeed subtly, yet noticeably, different. While being a refugee is described as caused by external (political, religious, or economic) factors, migration means moving in search of better living standards. In the case of the term *refugee*, the dictionary attributes the relocation to external causes in a manner

⁵⁰ Kövecses, *Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory*, pp. 53–54; idem, 'Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory: The Cognition-Context Interface', in Ulrike Schröder, Milene Mendes de Oliveira and Adriana Maria Tenuta, eds, *Metaphorical Conceptualizations. (Inter)Cultural Perspectives* (Berlin and Boston, MA: De Gruyter Mouton, 2022), pp. 28–30, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110688306-002>.

⁵¹ 'Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne z 41 posiedzenia Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w dniu 9 listopada 2021', p. 5.

which suggests that individuals or groups in question have no agency in the process, since they have no influence over those external circumstances. Meanwhile, the definition of migration includes the phrase *in search of* which implies making an effort towards a certain goal. Hence, the decision is attributed internally based on the assumption of one's agency and decision-making autonomy. In this sense, migrants are placed in the role of agents as in a prototypical case of direct causation linked to human activity.⁵² This is particularly important in the case of metaphors that use WAR as their source domain, whereby migrants are pictured as an army—a particular type of group which acts intentionally and according to a specific plan (see Tables 2 and 3).

TABLE 2
WAR metaphor 1: migrants as army

Linguistic expression [METAPHOR]	Marching migrants (migrant columns)/ migrants' march MIGRATION IS WAR		
Example	<i>(...) if it were not for these security measures, migrant columns (...) would already be marching across Poland's borders ...</i> <i>[(...) gdyby nie te zabezpieczenia to dziś kolumny migrantów (...) już maszerowałyby przez granicę Rzeczypospolitej(...)]</i>		
Domain Frame Mental space	Target MIGRATION Migrants Crossing border by migrants	IS/ARE	Source WAR Army Crossing border by army

Source: own elaboration.

TABLE 3
WAR metaphor 2: migrants as army

Linguistic expression [METAPHOR]	Storming migrants / attacking migrants MIGRATION IS WAR		
Example	<i>At our border with Belarus, there are around 2–4 thousand illegal migrants who will seek (...) to storm the border once again.</i> <i>[Przy granicy naszego państwa z Białorusią przebywa ok. 2–4 tys. nielegalnych inigrantów, którzy będą dążyli (...) do kolejnego szturmu].</i>		
Domain Frame Mental space	Target MIGRATION Migrants Migrants actions	IS/ARE	Source WAR Army Military operations

Source: own elaboration.

⁵² Lakoff, *Kobiety, ogień i rzeczy niebezpieczne*, pp. 52–54.

When speaking about migrants and their attempts to cross the border, representatives of the government employ terms related to war and the military. Hence, the migrants' actions are presented as purposeful, organised military operations, as if they were undertaken by hostile armed forces. This excludes the possibility of empathising with the migrants' fate and difficult situation. It also pushes certain aspects, e.g., the causes of their migration, the dangers they face or are trying to flee from, outside the scope of the discourse. By being compared to an army, migrants are defined as an enemy and reduced to the role of soldiers bringing an existential threat to Poland, while other themes are rendered irrelevant.

This conceptual pattern is, broadly speaking, repeated with regard to another metaphor which compares migrants to weapons (see Table 4). The difference here is that migrants are portrayed as items meant to perform a specific functions (weapons). This deprives them of agency and intentionality. The MIGRANTS ARE WEAPONS metaphor is an adaptation of a more general ontological metaphor, PEOPLE ARE PHYSICAL OBJECTS, only moved into the experiential domain of WAR to allow cohesive portrayal of migrants and migration.

TABLE 4
WAR metaphor 3: migrants as weapon

Linguistic expression [METAPHOR]	Migrants used as human shields MIGRATION IS WAR		
Example	<i>(...) migrants were drawn there as human shields (...)</i> <i>[(...) przyciągnięci zostali migranci jako żywe tarcze (...)]</i>		
Domain Frame Mental space	Target MIGRATION Migrants Causing migratory movements	IS/ARE	Source WAR Weapon Using a weapon

Source: own elaboration.

It is worth pointing out that this is not the only ontological metaphor which objectifies migrants. A similar pattern appears in phrases using words such as *to use, move, draw, pack* or *send back* [*używać, przesuwąć, ścigać, pakować, odsyłać*]. Their primary meaning (SJP PWN) refers to various actions related to moving *something* in a certain space (move, draw, send back), placing *something* in a container (pack), or using *something* as a tool. When such terms are applied to migrants, it categorises them as *something* (an item) that can be

spatially manipulated or used as a tool. Hence, it signals lack of agency and instrumentalises migrants, while also presenting a collection of individuals as a homogenous, uniform physical object. This is why such expressions can be considered as examples of the PEOPLE ARE PHYSICAL OBJECTS metaphor, even though in and of themselves, they do not carry the meaning or context inherently linked to the structural metaphor unequivocally linked to the domain of WAR. It is only by putting these expressions in context—i.e., as parts of statements which point to foreign leaders *using* migrants in pursuit of their hostile intentions—that we can link these expressions to the domain of war e.g., ‘Lukashenko is using these people’ [‘Łukaszenka używa tych ludzi’]; ‘they are drawn on his orders to destabilise Poland, violate the cohesion of our state’ [‘są ściągani przez Łukaszenkę, żeby destabilizować Rzeczpospolitą, niszczyć spójność naszego państwa’].⁵³

A similar sense of no agency or decision-making autonomy, typical of physical objects, is also visible in another metaphor, MIGRATION IS A FLOOD (see Table 5), which presents an abstract socio-political phenomenon as similar in its nature to a natural, elemental phenomenon.

TABLE 5
FLOOD metaphor: migration as dangerous, uncontrolled water flow

Linguistic expression [METAPHOR]	Wave of migrants / migration wave [MIGRATION IS FLOOD]		
Example	<i>(...) we will be flooded by a wave of illegal migration (...) / Currently, Poland is defending not only its territory against another wave of illegal immigration.</i> <i>[(...) będziemy zalani falą nielegalnej migracji (...)/ Obecnie Polska broni nie tylko swoje terytorium przed kolejną falą nielegalnej imigracji.]</i>		
Domain Frame Mental space	Target MIGRATION Migratory movements Defense against migration/ Uncontrolled migratory movement	IS/ARE	Source FLOOD Water movements Defense against flooding/ Uncontrolled water flow

Source: own elaboration.

The conceptual dualism between the two above-mentioned metaphors may, on a superficial level, suggest a lack of cohesion. However, considering the ontology of both metaphors, which allows

⁵³ ‘Sprawozdanie Stenograficzne z 41 posiedzenia Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w dniu 9 listopada 2021’, pp. 6–7.

us to classify them as examples of a metaphor scenario, reveals their coherence in aspects other than conceptual. A typical story line, participants and outcomes may look as presented in table 6.

TABLE 6
Metaphor scenario: MIGRATION IS WAR, MIGRATION IS FLOOD

WAR	FLOOD
<p>Sides of an armed conflict</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • undertake actions towards each other • with the purpose of causing bodily and material harm • by use of various means and types of weapons • which ends with a victory of one side and a defeat of the other 	<p>Large amounts of rising water</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • moves in an uncontrolled manner • negatively affecting people and their property • the affected people attempt to stop the water's movement and reduce its negative impact • these efforts are successful or fail

Source: own elaboration.

In both cases, the metaphors in question envision a destructive agent—either hostile armed forces or an elemental force—which generate, in a manner appropriate to their nature, potentially negative consequences. Both events in their prototypical form are potentially very destructive and constitute existential threats. Both can and should be countered in order to protect oneself, one's community and property. Naturally, such countermeasures should be adequate to the nature of the danger: since MIGRATION IS WAR, they need be military, and since MIGRATION IS A FLOOD, they should include physical barriers. This way, we arrive at an image of migration as a dangerous phenomenon. Migrants are people who 'storm the gates', attack, fight; they are a 'wave of water' which reaches our households and threatens to engulf them, and which we should defend against. They are also 'weapons' used in an armed conflict, potentially dangerous items in the hands of our enemies, and as such should be 'packed' and 'sent back'. Hence, migrants are either portrayed as active 'perpetrators of evil', 'agents of destruction', or objectified and reduced to the role of 'weapons' or a 'destructive natural phenomenon'. These metaphors are therefore coherent in that they seek to create a similar sense of existential threat, and evoke emotions appropriate in the face of such a threat.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis presented above has revealed a certain cognitive construct, content and meanings which, in a process of metaphorical imaging, have been embedded into the portrayal of a specific episode of migration. However, from the perspective of the interpretive approach, one interesting question concerns whether and, if so, in what manner, the use of metaphors is followed by specific political actions or, in other words, whether it drives the actors' behaviour. In such context, metaphors presenting migration as WAR or FLOOD are heuristic in the sense that they simplify a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon by reducing it to selected aspects, highlighted by applying particular domain, frame and mental space. These, in turn, evoke specific emotions and assessments, and in doing so, fulfil the predicative purpose which involves evaluations of actors and issues—in this case, a negative assessment of a dangerous phenomenon and a positive assessment of the authorities counteracting it. This way, metaphors arouse positive feelings (empathetic purpose) towards the authorities which present themselves as protecting the society against an existential threat. It can be said that, in general terms, functions performed by the metaphors combine to shape one's evaluative-emotional-cognitive disposition to actions in a particular direction, or one's approval of such actions on the part of the government.

Earlier in this article, I have posited two research questions. With regard to the first one, the analysis indicates that migrants and migration, as presented by the representatives of the government in the context of the 2021 events at the Polish-Belarussian border, was conceptually categorised as a military and natural danger. By portraying these incidents with the use of source domains such as WAR and FLOOD, the government created a conceptual framework that implied negative consequences and, as a result, generated fear. The narrative frames were built not only for the conceptualization but also the assessment of the issue, and the narratives were span out into the discourse community. As instances of scenarios, they carried evaluative bias toward the topic of the debate which was transferred to the community.

With regard to the second research question, the analysis shows that, from the interpretive perspective, such conceptualisation and cognitive picture of the events in question and their participants created a framework dictating the spectrum of supposedly appropriate

actions. Adopting such a conceptual perspective provides a cognitive foundation for subsequent response—a disposition to opt for a certain catalogue of instruments. In this particular instance, such disposition was behaviourally actualised as decisions and actions focused on defence or, more generally, security. In other words, the measures employed by Polish authorities corresponded with the picture created by discursive practices indicated in the analysis. Since MIGRATION IS WAR, the obvious and necessary action should be of military nature. Hence, under Operation ‘Solid Support’, uniformed services in that area were reinforced by personnel from the Territorial Defence Force as well as soldiers from the 11th, 12th, 16th and 18th Mechanized Divisions of the Polish Army.⁵⁴ The area itself was placed in a state of emergency, with the administration additionally changing certain relevant regulations.⁵⁵ Soon afterwards, the government made the decision to construct a physical barrier along that stretch of the border, and adopted a special-purpose act to that effect,⁵⁶ to stop the flow of mass of people, since MIGRATION IS FLOOD. The repressive and forceful measures were directed not only on migrants itself but also on Polish citizens who were trying to help them. The authorities attempted to criminalise the act of rendering aid, with individuals and organisations engaged in it being charged with human trafficking and aiding illegal border crossings.⁵⁷ Focusing on humanitarian aspect of the events seemed at least non-sensical if not explicitly hostile, since in the optics imposed by metaphor choice the migrants were defined as ARMY or WEAPON.

⁵⁴ ‘Silne wsparcie terytorialsów’, Wojska Obrony Terytorialnej, 3 September 2021, [https://media.terytorialsil.wp.mil.pl/informacje/691452/silnewsparcie-terytorialsow](https://media.terytorialsil.wp.mil.pl/informacje/691452/silnewsparcie-terytorialsow;); ‘W obronie polskiej granicy’, Wojsko Polskie, 12 November 2021, <https://www.wojsko-polskie.pl/articles/tym-zyjemy-v/w-obronie-polskiej-granicy/>.

⁵⁵ ‘Rozporządzenie Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej w sprawie stanu wyjątkowego na obszarze części województwa podlaskiego oraz części województwa lubelskiego’, Dz.U.2021, poz. 1612 <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20210001612/O/D20211612.pdf>; ‘Ustawa z dnia 14 października 2021 r. o zmianie ustawy o cudzoziemcach oraz niektórych innych ustaw’, Dz.U.2021, poz. 1918 <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20210001918/T/D20211918L.pdf>; ‘Ustawa z dnia 17 listopada 2021 r. o zmianie ustawy o ochronie granicy państwowej oraz niektórych innych ustaw’, Dz.U.2021, poz. 2191; <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20210002191/T/D20212191L.pdf>.

⁵⁶ ‘Ustawa z dnia 29 października 2021 r. o budowie zabezpieczenia granicy państwowej’, Dz.U. 2021, poz. 1992; <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20210001992/T/D20211992L.pdf>.

⁵⁷ ‘Polska: Okrucieństwo zamiast współczucia na granicy z Białorusią’, Raport Amnesty International Polska, 11 April 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Raport-Amnesty-International-POLSKA-OKRUCIENSTWO-ZAMIAST-WSPOLCZUCIA-NA-GRANICY-Z-BIALORUSIA.pdf>.

The above-mentioned framing strategy based on the metaphors of WAR and FLOOD (1) form cognitive premises for making certain decisions and (2) legitimise these moves, while also mobilising public support for them. This amounts to the exploitation of language's strategic function⁵⁸ with the view to achieving a specific result in the public domain, i.e., the legitimisation of the government's actions as adequate and socially acceptable. The metaphors discussed in this article provide a cognitive-discursive premise for militarisation or, broadly speaking, securitisation of the issue in question. They indicate teleological causality linking the actions undertaken by the Polish government with the content of the construct built around these events through the use of conceptual metaphors inserted into the discourse. It should be remembered that the goal of the interpretive analysis is to grasp the perspective of the actors in order to discern how beliefs and discourses provide cognitive context and make actions taken by the decision-makers comprehensible.⁵⁹ From this standpoint, referring to specific conceptual domain or, more precisely, their aspects (i.e., frames and mental spaces), defines the events in question in a manner which signals the spectrum of rational, acceptable actions that can and should be undertaken in response. In this sense, it also legitimises the policing and military operations implemented by the government. At the same time, it excludes other actions as inadequate given the nature of the problem. This is why the human rights and humanitarian dimensions were entirely absent from the governmental rhetoric, why attempts at rendering aid were delegitimised and criminalised, and why victims or these events as well as those trying to help them were repressed. The conceptual context reconstructed in this article creates the justification of particular kinds of action and makes these actions comprehensible, rational and sensible. In this sense, metaphors serve their performative function, as they shape conscious premises for subsequent actions—an independent variable which the interpretive approach considers crucial for explaining political practices.

⁵⁸ Chilton, *Analysing Political Discourse*, pp. 45–47.

⁵⁹ Bevir and Rhodes, 'Interpretations and Its Others', pp. 170–71; eidem, 'Defending Interpretation', pp. 19–25.

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