

FORTRESS EUROPE UNDER SIEGE: THE REPRESENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN MIGRANT CRISIS IN POLITICAL CARTOONS

Integrating the theoretical framework of Critical Metaphor Analysis (Charteris-Black 2004, 2011, 2014; Musolff 2004, 2011, 2016) with research on multimodality from a cognitive viewpoint (Bounegru & Forceville 2011; Forceville 2007, 2009; Forceville & Urios-Aparisi 2009; Pinar Sanz 2015), we explore how the topic of the EU migrant crisis is communicated by means of the FORTRESS EUROPE metaphor in the pictorial and multimodal discourse of political cartoons. The data for the analysis consists of political cartoons gathered from various media available online during 2017, which all portray the EU as a fortress with cemented borders – a secluded space, closely guarded and surrounded by walls and fences. Following the methodology suggested by Bounegru and Forceville (2011), we try to show how the multimodally and a metaphorically constructed image of the EU as a fortress appears to be instrumental in conveying a negative axiological value and “the qualities of systematic Othering” (KhosraviNik 2014: 505), thus helping perceive “Others” as a threatening force against which the EU should be fended off.

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Keywords: Critical Metaphor Analysis, multimodality, political cartoons, migrant crisis, fortress Europe.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is now widely acknowledged that present-day migrations have impacted significantly on public discourses of many countries. From a cognitive linguistic point of view, the topic of the European migrant crisis is a fertile ground for research “due to its rich potential for polemical and emotional language as well as its socio-political and historical significance” (Musolff 2011: 7). There is a great deal of studies which bear witness to “how metaphor is employed persuasively to provide cognitive frames for perspectives on social issues”, such as migration (e.g. Charteris-Black 2006; El Refaie 2001; Gabrielatos & Baker 2008; Hart 2010, 2011a, 2011b; Musolff 2011, 2015; Neagu & Colipcă-Ciobanu 2014; Santa Ana 2002; etc.). Thus, the typical figurative characterisations of migration explored so far are “a natural disaster (hence the pervasive FLOOD imagery), an

invasion of enemies, an epidemic, or the spread of disease-carrying, parasitic organisms” (Musolff 2011: 12; see also Musolff 2016).¹

The focus of our present paper, however, is on the FORTRESS EUROPE metaphor, which is a recurring metaphor activated in times of increased mass population movement. Originally, the FORTRESS EUROPE metaphor was used in media discourse and political rhetoric when the processes of the EU integration and enlargement were initiated.² Thus Chaban, Bain, and Stats (2007: 85-86), analysing the Australasian news media coverage of the 2004 EU enlargement, write that “[t]he images of doors being closed and safeguarded evoked an interpretation of the ‘European building’ in terms of a fortress”. The authors add that the evidence shows that this heavily guarded *fortress* is portrayed as looking for any opportunities to *restrict* access to it. Similarly, Zinken (2007: 17) finds that the metaphor of the *European fortress* “expresses the impossibility for aspiring new members to enter into the European Union” and that this metaphor framed the public discourse on European unification in the 1990s.³

In this paper we explore how this metaphor is used in political cartoons, a prime example of multimodal discourse, and demonstrate how it may be instrumental in depicting the recent European migrant crisis due to its pictorial translatability into the universal language of images (Musolff 1996). Moreover, the FORTRESS EUROPE metaphor has also been proved to be particularly apt for the criticism of the EU migration policy, which is why our main aim is to show how the non-verbally and multimodally constructed image of the EU as a fortress in political cartoons appears to be instrumental in conveying a negative axiological value and “the qualities of systematic Othering” (KhosraviNik 2014: 505), thus helping perceive immigrants as “Others”, or a threatening force against which the EU should be fended off.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Our analysis focuses on the organisation of what Musolff (2006) calls *metaphor scenario*, which draws on Fillmore’s notion of a conceptual “scene” (Fillmore 1975) as well as on Lakoff’s definition of “scenario” as a subtype of

1 Some of these characterisations have also been evidenced in Serbian media discourse on migrants and asylum seekers (see Đurović 2015, Silaški & Đurović 2019).

2 However, the term *fortress Europe* was first used for military propaganda in the Second World War to refer to Continental Europe occupied by Nazi Germany, as opposed to the United Kingdom across the Channel.

3 These findings are also corroborated by similar observations from other studies analysing Serbian media discourse (Silaški, Đurović, & Radić-Bojanić 2009: 133) and the use of the SCHENGEN WALL metaphor, which leads to viewing the EU by Serbian citizens as a *fortress* and an exclusive and impenetrable space.

idealised cognitive models (Lakoff 1987). Metaphor scenarios “constitute an essential feature of metaphor use in public discourse registers” (Musolff 2006: 28) and “help to shape the course of public debates and conceptualizations of political target topics by framing the attitudinal and evaluative preferences in the respective discourse communities” (Musolff 2006: 28). They allow us to search “for recurring argumentative, narrative and stance-taking patterns in corpora of present-day metaphor use” and “to refine our understanding of the metaphors’ degree of entrenchment in their sociocultural setting and the power to ‘frame’ its discourses” (Musolff 2016: 133). By *contextualising* conceptual metaphors, whose cognitive potential can thus be better assessed, metaphor scenarios are of central importance to our analysis of both verbal and multimodal metaphors in media discourse related to the topic of Europe’s migrant crisis.

Following Forceville (2007, 2009) and Forceville and Urios-Aparisi (2009) we also employ the theory of multimodality, which investigates how metaphorical meaning emerges from the interaction between two or more modes, as visual or “non-verbal metaphors often have targets and/or sources that are cued in more than one mode simultaneously” (Forceville 2009: 24). Our analysis of political cartoons pertaining to the European migrant crisis aims to show how the multimodal discourse under consideration functions “argumentatively and rhetorically” (Tseronis & Forceville 2017: 2), i.e. how the various semiotic modes (visual/non-verbal and verbal) combine and “play a role in the procedure of advancing a standpoint and testing its acceptability”, as well as “construct or address specific audience in a certain rhetorical situation” (Tseronis & Forceville 2017: 4-5).

3. POLITICAL CARTOONS

As already said, the analysis of multimodality of metaphors in this paper focuses on the genre of political cartoons. El Refaie (2009b: 184-5) defines a political cartoon as “an illustration, usually in a single panel, published in the editorial or comments pages of a newspaper” which addresses “a current political issue or event, a social trend, or a famous personality, in a way that takes a stand or presents a particular point of view”. On the one hand, political cartoons “tell an imaginary story about a make-believe world”, while on the other, “they refer to real-life events and characters” (El Refaie 2009b: 186). This relationship between the real and the imaginary is metaphorical in nature, “inviting people to map properties from a more tangible area of reality onto one that is more abstract” (El Refaie 2009b: 186). This feature of political cartoon genre makes it prone to the analysis from a cognitive linguistic perspective, because, in order to interpret the intended meaning, the reader needs to be involved in the “metaphorical process of transferring meaning from the make-believe to the real world”

(El Refaie 2009a: 174). In political cartoons this is “conveyed predominantly in the visual mode”, although “most cartoon metaphors also rely to some extent on verbal cues” (El Refaie 2009a: 174), as will also be shown later in our paper.

4. DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

The cartoons used for the analysis were collected online. Namely, having previously explored elsewhere (see Silaški & Đurović 2019) the verbal manifestations of the **FORTRESS EUROPE** metaphor in migrant discourse, our intention was to establish how this metaphor is used for the same purpose in political cartoons, “a very specific genre, with its own history, distinctive styles, conventions and communicative purposes” (El Refai 2009b: 184). In order to collect the data for the analysis, we conducted a Google image search, using “fortress Europe”, “migrant crisis” and “EU” as key words. The search, conducted during 2017, provided us with a total of twelve cartoons, all depicting the migrant crisis. The cartoons were published in diverse media, ranging from well-established daily and weekly newspapers and magazines such as *The Economist*, *El Pais*, *The Baltimore Sun*, *Suddeutsche Zeitung* and *The Japan Times*, to news portals and personal blogs as well as the largest searchable database of political cartoons – www.politicalcartoons.com. It was beyond the scope of this paper to look into the different ideologies underlying the sources of the cartoons selected for the analysis – our only criteria were that the cartoons were metaphorical and that the caption accompanying the cartoon (if any) was in English. The metaphor identification procedure for the data was conducted following the method suggested by Bounegru and Forceville (2011) and their clear criteria for the identification of metaphors in multimodal discourse pertaining to the global financial crisis.

As far as mono- and multimodality of the selected cartoons is concerned, there are only three cartoons which contained only pictorial, i.e. monomodal images of the EU migrant crisis. In all other cartoons, the topic of the European migrant crisis is either verbally anchored, mostly in the accompanying caption, or visually rendered by means of suggestive images or symbols. In addition, two cartoons comprised concurrent verbal and visual manifestations of the migrant crisis as the target domain. Out of a total of twelve collected cartoons, nine will be used here to illustrate our main points.

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Our analysis of the selected political cartoons has shown that the EU migrant crisis is depicted by means of the two prominent metaphor scenarios – the **CONTAINER** and the **MOVEMENT**.

5.1. The CONTAINER scenario

The FORTRESS EUROPE metaphor belongs to the more comprehensive and complex CONTAINER metaphor scenario which, according to Musolff, is based on a firmly established conceptualisation of the nation(state)

as a *container* with distinct *boundaries*, which separate those *on the outside* from those *inside*: immigrants are thus *outsiders* who want to *come/move into the container*. The *container* is often conceptualized as a *building* that has *doors* and other openings that can be *closed, open* or *half-open* (Musolff 2015: 45).

Such a conceptualisation of the state as a CONTAINER, with all its structural elements, allows the depiction of the EU as a house, so we often hear metaphorical expressions such as ‘building the European house’, ‘entering the European house’, ‘being/knocking at the EU door’, ‘queuing in front of the EU house’, ‘being at the EU’s doorstep’, or ‘waiting in the EU anteroom’ (see e.g. Đurović 2013; Schäffner 1996; Silaški & Đurović 2014; Silaški et al. 2009). This structural metaphor, used to construct the identity of the European Union, however, although in use ever since the 1980s, has evolved in discourses and over time, so that the once Common European House has now begun to take another form in metaphorical terms.

In the cartoons from our data collection, resting on both non-verbal and verbo-pictorial instantiations, the EU is conceptualised as a FORTRESS/CASTLE. Thus, the images of a closed door (cartoon No. 1), a raised drawbridge (cartoon No. 2), high, defensive walls, fences, gates and moats (cartoons No. 2 and 3 respectively), which all belong to the pervasive CONTAINER scenario, accompanied with verbal cues ‘Europe’ (cartoon No. 3) or explicit ‘Fortress Europe’ (cartoons No. 4 and No. 5) – contribute to perceiving the EU as a fortress/castle, that is as a space, closely guarded and surrounded by walls and fences viewed as boundaries which separate the interior from the exterior. The EU thus turns into a secluded EU-space, with strict borders between the EU and non-EU space.

The non-EU space is filled with immigrants, pictorially represented as standing in front of the closed door (cartoon No. 1), or around the formidable Europe fortress (cartoon No. 3), or as being allowed to enter the fortress Europe only through a half-open door (cartoon No. 4). This, on the one hand, affords a construal of the EU as a united space protected by fences and barriers which cannot be broken into, and on the other hand, immigrants as belonging to outer EU-space. Cartoon No. 5 particularly attests to this characterization of the EU as a fortress, in which the visual instantiations of the huge fortress wall rimmed with the razor fence are accompanied with verbal renderings – the ironical text *Welcome to Europe! No climbing, no flying, don't use ladders!* written on the board in front of the fortress, and the equally sardonic caption *Europe a fortress?*

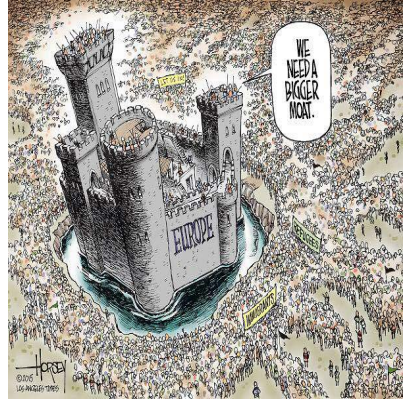
What are you talking about?! Can't you see – the door is wide open! The emotional and cognitive appeals of the **FORTRESS EUROPE** metaphor represented in this cartoon do not only help to exclude outsiders but also to make a sharp distinction between insiders and those on the outside, or between those ‘inside the fortress’ and those ‘outside the fortress’, thus underlining the difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’.



Cartoon No. 1



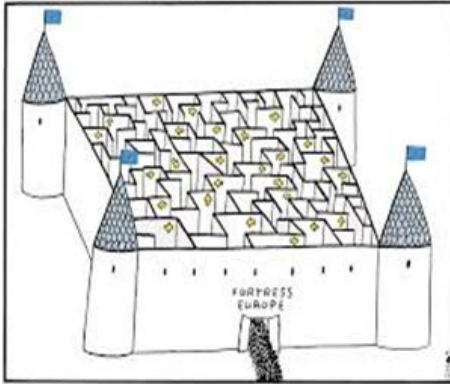
Cartoon No. 2



Cartoon No. 3

Therefore, what are the associated evaluative ‘scenarios’ used in the multimodal discourse of political cartoons used to describe the EU migrant crisis? The image of the fortress or castle is usually equated with security and *for those inside* this confined space offers shelter from dangers and threats coming from the outside. The walls and fences built around the EU by those inside the EU fortress help to create the image of the EU as a jeopardised space which needs to be protected against the disorderly crowd. This is why the **FORTRESS EUROPE** metaphor provides a neat conceptual and ideological pattern for legitimising activities of the EU officials aimed at excluding or casting out immigrants, perceived as aliens.

The logic of the *fortress Europe* seems to be synonymous with providing protection and dispelling fear of immigrants viewed as a threat. Consequently, immigrants have to be prevented from coming closer to the EU so they do not jeopardise the stability of the *EU citadel*. The **FORTRESS EUROPE** metaphor should supposedly signal heightened care for the EU citizens’ protection, which could be efficiently achieved by fencing the EU from the rest of Europe with high walls. This is also viewed as one of the ways to overcome the fear of immigrants, perceived as a danger.



Cartoon No. 4



EUROPE A FORTRESS? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!
CAN'T YOU SEE - THE DOOR IS OPEN WIDE!

Cartoon No. 5

The conceptualisation of the EU as a FORTRESS by those from the inside of the EU introduces another important notion, that of a loss of control. “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’” (Charteris-Black 2006: 576). Thus, the image of the fortress Europe in the cartoon No. 3 besieged by what appears to be an infinite number of people verbally cued as ‘Immigrants’ and ‘Refugees’ is accompanied by a verbal rendering “We need a bigger moat” by those inside the fortress. This is indicative of the restrictive measures that should be adopted to regain control over the uncontrolled immigration. Against the backdrop of the alarming rise in the number of immigrants wanting and waiting to enter the EU, as well as of those who have already stepped ‘behind the fortress gate’, “[t]he concept of a loss of control can be equated to the perforation of a container and penetration of a bounded area” (Charteris-Black 2006: 576). In rhetorical terms, this provokes the fear of an external danger, indicating that the EU needs to more energetically fortify its suprastate against the force coming from the outside and prevent any cracks in the walls surrounding the EU ‘citadel’. This should also highlight positive overtones attributed to the FORTRESS EUROPE metaphor by the EU discourse participants since building walls and gates and digging deeper ditches are perceived as the protection of the EU-as-a-container against the large movements of migrants and the threat of ‘Others’ of any sort.

Concrete walls, barbed-wire fences and moats surrounding container-like structures, instantiated in monomodal and/or multimodal ways, appear to strengthen the perception that they are barriers which should defend the *fortress Europe* from everything viewed as non-European and foreign, therefore hostile.

This in turn reinforces the notions of isolation, alienation, and non-belongingness, also accentuated by verbal renderings in the cartoons No. 5 (*Welcome to Europe! No climbing, no flying, don't use ladders! Europe a fortress? What are you talking about?! Can't you see – the door is wide open!*). Trading on the imposed “OUTSIDER scenario” (Musolff 2010: 160), which stems from the most salient structural elements of the FORTRESS EUROPE metaphor, cartoon creators seem to convey the message that migrants are perceived as belonging to the outer-EU space, whose entering the EU space needs to be made more difficult by imposing various hurdles, literally and metaphorically speaking.

5.2. The MOVEMENT scenario

In addition to the CONTAINER scenario, another scenario, that of MOVEMENT, i.e. the more specific MOVEMENT OF WATER scenario, is also prominent in our data, particularly in the cartoons No. 6, 7, 8 and 9. In cartoons No. 6 and No. 7 the target domain is both verbally and visually rendered by means of a rough sea, waves or tidal waves.⁴ Cartoons No. 8 and 9 hinge only on a pictorial representation of immigrants as a huge rush of water. As depicted in all these four cartoons, immigrants, conceived of as waves or tidal waves, are about to pour or rush into the EU fortress and flood it.

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Cartoon No. 6



Cartoon No. 7

The selected cartoons reveal that the WATER imagery in relation to the EU migrant crisis is overtly or covertly intertwined with the CONTAINER imagery, in

⁴ For the conceptualisation of immigrants as a *tidal wave* or *tsunami*, see Charteris-Black 2006, Hart, 2010, Musolff 2016, Santa Ana 2002, etc.

which a *fortress* or a *castle* are used to depict the EU and activate the EU AS A CONTAINER metaphor, acting as a counter-force with the main idea of protecting the state body. On the other hand, the *tidal wave* imagery activates a NATURAL DISASTER scenario, with the underlying implication of a force beyond control. This gives rise to a negative portrayal of immigrants as a force-exerting entity, whose tendency towards action or motion is viewed as an assault on the EU fortress and its integrity, leading to a bursting point, which should be prevented by the EU entity.



Cartoon No. 8



Cartoon No. 9

The pervasive MOVEMENT OF (LARGE AMOUNTS OF) WATER metaphor, which according to Musolff (2016) fits into the wider conceptual complex of a *mass movement*, as used in cartoons No. 6-9, seems to imply not only the image of the unimpeded force in physical sense, therefore a loss of control over that force, but also the magnitude of that force, conveyed by the image of a large number of immigrants. This magnitude is particularly emphasised by the images of immigrants in the cartoons No. 8 and 9, where they are equated with an immense mass of water. Such framing of migrants as an inanimate phenomenon (water), serves to pinpoint their both de-humanising and de-personalised character. More importantly, though, the cartoons No. 7 and 9, which both contain the images of migrants in boats being rushed to the EU shores, and the cartoons No. 6 and 8, where migrants perceived as waves or a tidal wave threaten to flood and destroy the EU fortress, also serve to reinforce the aspect of ‘securitisation’ of migration. This means understanding migration only as an issue of security for the host country – the EU, and constructing immigrants as an implicit danger to that secu-

urity. Specifically, the image of the EU officials who hurriedly fortify the Schengen wall of the EU fort to fend off the immigrants metaphorically conceived of as huge waves, therefore as a menace to the EU, are accompanied by the verbal renderings “*Manage the waves or see the collapse of our fort!*” – the cartoon No. 6, or “*We’re safe in here.*” in the cartoon No. 9. This seems to not only highlight the aspects of social insecurity, anxiety and fear posed by migrants in the EU member states, but also predispose further restrictive policies of the EU hosts, depicted as the additional fortification of the EU fortress.

6. CONCLUSION

Our aim in this paper was to investigate how the FORTRESS EUROPE metaphor, together with the CONTAINER and the MOVEMENT metaphor scenarios, contribute to the structuring of the concept of the European migrant crisis in the multimodal discourse of political cartoons. Our analysis has shown that the conceptualisation of the EU and its space as a FORTRESS, protected by walls, fences, gates and other elements relating to the CONTAINER scenario, buttresses a positive cognitive construction of the EU’s Self, on the one hand, and a negative cognitive construction of immigrants as the Other, on the other. Either instantiated by persuasive images and symbols or couched in the text, the FORTRESS EUROPE metaphor also underlines other dichotomies, such as ‘Us’ vs. ‘Them’; ‘EU’ vs. ‘immigrants’; ‘security and protection’ vs. ‘danger and threat’, etc., and has proven to be very effective in demarcating the ‘in’ group from the ‘out’ group.

With this scenario-oriented analysis of the FORTRESS EUROPE metaphor in political cartoons we hope to have attested to this metaphor’s communicative multifunctionality and its twofold significance for cognition: “it is both the product of and a means to shape thought, emotion and social perception” (Musolf 2016: 137). We also believe that our analysis of the FORTRESS EUROPE metaphor and the noted implications of such framing of the EU’s migrant crisis may contribute to recognizing the need for the critical interpretation of this metaphor and the biases it carries.

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TVRĐAVA EVROPA POD OPSADOM: PRIKAZ EVROPSKE MIGRANTSKE KRIZE
U POLITIČKIM KARIKATURAMA

Rezime

Objedinjujući teorijski okvir kritičke analize metafora (Charteris-Black 2004, 2011, 2014; Musolff 2004, 2011, 2016) sa teorijom multimodalnosti sa kognitivnog stanovišta (Bounegru & Forceville 2011; Pinar Sanz 2015), u ovom radu se bavimo temom evropske migrantske krize i načinima njenog prenošenja pomoću metafore TVRĐAVA EVROPA u slikovnom i multimodalnom diskursu političkih karikatura. Budući da je izuzetno pogodna za formulisanje kritika upućenih migrantskoj politici Evropske Unije, metafora TVRĐAVA EVROPA, koja počiva na obuhvatnijoj i kompleksnijoj slikovnoj shemi SADRŽATELJA, zajedno sa metaforičkim scenarijem POPLAVE, predstavlja moćno sredstvo za prikaz evropske migrantske krize u političkim karikaturama, i to zahvaljujući svojstvu metafora da govore univerzalnim jezikom slika (Musolff 1996). Analizirane karikature prikupljene su iz različitih medija dostupnih onlajn tokom 2017. godine i sve prikazuju Evropsku Uniju kao tvrđavu sa zacementiranim granicama – kao osamljeno, izdvojeno i pomno čuvano mesto ograđeno zidovima i omeđeno ogradama. Koristeći metodologiju i način identifikacije multimodalnih metafora iz Bunegri i Forsvil (2011), cilj nam je da pokažemo kako metaforički i multimodalno konstruisana slika Evropske Unije kao tvrđave postaje moćan instrument u pokušaju da se prenese negativna aksiološka orijentacija i ideja o odstranjivanju Drugog, čime se Drugi predstavlja kao preteća sila od koje se Evropa mora odbraniti.

Cljučne reči: kritička analiza metafora, multimodalnost, političke karikature, migrantska kriza, tvrđava Evropa.

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