

The European Refugee Crisis Discourse in the Spanish Press: Mapping Humanization and Dehumanization Frames Through Metaphors

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The European refugee crisis has a central role in media and political narratives about migration these days. By applying critical metaphor analysis, this article explores how the Spanish press framed the crisis using metaphors in 2015, 2016, and 2017. The evolution of the different ways of conceptualizing migrants and European policies shows two metaphorical frames: the dehumanization frame, where refugees are a natural disaster/mass water or objects/goods, and the humanization frame, where migrants are positively framed as travelers, but also negatively, as troublemakers. Spain as a political actor has no agency till 2016 and 2017, when it is portrayed under the living thing source domain, mainly in a negative way. It is concluded the way in which the refugee crisis is framed is in line either with EU relocation or resettlement policies and points out the connection between language and policy.

Keywords: refugee crisis, metaphorical framing, critical metaphor analysis, Europe, Spain, Spanish media, migration

The European migration crisis—the massive number of refugees fleeing from countries in conflict—and the difficulties of politically addressing their entry into the European Union (EU), took on special significance when, in 2015, bodies such as Amnesty International and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) pointed out that displaced-person numbers represented the largest human displacement since World War II (Jones & Teytelboym, 2017, p. 84). The EU Summit in Brussels, in September 2015, put the issue on the political agenda and entailed important changes in asylum policies to deal with the refugee crisis. The main legal measures were a mandatory quota for allocating refugees to each member state. In Spain, the focus of attention was the deadline of September 26, 2017, set for compliance with EU requirements about its quota of refugees. The first wave of refugees arrived in May 2016, but, thus far, Spain has only filled 11% of the quota agreed on with the EU (News Agency, 2017).²

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Spain has not always been a preferred destination for migrants because of the political and economic changes the country has experienced in the last twenty years (Alscher, 2017). The arrival of migrants to Spain was “recent and sudden” (Morales, Pardos-Prado, & Ros, 2015, p. 463) and started to be perceived as a political problem in early 1990s, when the socialist Spanish government “began to close the southern border” (Alscher, 2017, p. 26). The objective of these policies was to stop migrants from arriving in Spain by dinghies or “pateras” from Morocco and sub-Saharan Africa. The measures aiming to control immigration were intensified and reinforced during the periods in which the right-winged Partido Popular was leading the government (1996 to 2004) (see Alscher, 2017, pp. 7–11). These policies were accompanied by a speech based on “the fight against illegal migration” (Rojo & van Dijk, 1997, p. 527). Actually, the former conservative prime minister José Maria Aznar and his administration were the first directly linking immigration to crime—focusing on Moroccan and sub-Saharan immigration rather than Latin American or Eastern European—despite the statistical inconsistencies and the critiques they received (Alscher, 2017; Ullán de la Rosa, 2016). Their political agenda forced most parties to look at immigration as a conflictive issue (Morales et al., 2015). In the years that followed, the governments of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero (2004 to 2011) and Mariano Rajoy (2011 to 2018) made no significant differences when legislating border control, deportations, and organized crime, partly because of the restrictions derived from the economic crisis (del Pino, 2013; Ullán de la Rosa, 2016). By that time, political and media discourses about immigration in Spain were predominantly negative (Cheng, Igartua, Palacios, Acosta, & Palito, 2014; Igartua, Muñiz & Cheng, 2005; Igartua, Muñiz, Otero, Cheng, & Gómez-Isla, 2008), but they weren’t dehumanizing. This was not the case for other European countries, where migrants used to be conceptualized as animals or parasites (Musolff, 2015).

In 2015, the “refugee crisis” brought new political actors and a change in the type of migration coming to Spain. People arriving in the country were no longer “irregular” immigrants, but “refugees” (Arango, Mahía, Moya, & Sánchez-Montijano, 2016, pp. 20–21). Historically, “asylum seekers and refugees [have not been] numerically relevant in Spain” (Morales et al., 2015, p. 465) and, in 2015, the number of refugees assigned to the country within the framework of the EU summit “were relatively modest” (Heath & Richards, 2019, p. 16) compared with Austria or Germany. However, having this traditionally low number of refugees did not imply a negative evaluation of direct experience with asylum seekers, but of the political competence in managing the issue and the role media played when broadcasting the crisis (Heath & Richards, 2019, p. 19). The data gathered by CIS—the Spanish Center for Sociological Research—and the European Social Survey show that the Spanish public opinion negatively evaluated EU refugee policies and the local management of the crisis, but not refugee reception (Arango et al., 2016). These data are in line with what Berry, Garcia-Blanco, and Moore (2016), Goodman, Sirriyeh, and McMahon (2017), and Parker, Naper, and Goodman (2018) noted as different categorization of the migrant depending on his or her status (i.e., economic migrants are a threat whereas refugees need to be helped).

Leaving aside the current context, migratory movements—and especially those considered economic—have been a constant focus of the academic community in terms of the political and media narratives constructed around the phenomenon, with deep implications in the perception of migration and its political consequences (Ebert et al., 2018). Particularly noteworthy are analyses about racism in the construction of political discourse around ethnicity and immigration (Hanson-Easey & Augoustinos, 2010; van Dijk, 1993, 2005), framing of immigrants in the news (Cheng et al., 2014; Greussing & Boomgaarden,

2017; Igartua et al., 2005; Van Gorp, 2005) and on the role of metaphor in political and social discourses about immigrants and refugees (Charteris-Black, 2006; Musolff, 2015, 2017; O'Brien, 2003; Santa Ana, 1999; Semino, 2008; Wodak & Sedlak, 2000). Virtually all authors—whether from the perspective of critical discourse analysis (CDA), interpretive framework theory, or CMA—agree that migration generates numerous conflicting representations in public discourse (Charteris-Black, 2006) and leads to the development of all kinds of arguments and interpretative frameworks and the use of a new lexicon and metaphors. The case that concerns us here is how metaphors constitute key elements in the way the European migration crisis is explained.

As Mio (1997) points out, metaphors act as a bridge between logic and emotions and so appeal to constructions of symbolic meaning that make public debate intelligible. It is therefore important to highlight the responsibility of politicians and the media in the discursive construction of conflicts generated by migratory crises. In the present study, we analyze what these discourses were and how they were rendered visible through metaphorical framing in the Spanish press in three different periods, from 2015 to 2017.

The Role of Metaphors in Migration Discourses

Metaphors are a main element of public discourse. Their power lies in their ability to shape our perception of political issues and influence “how we view or understand political issues by eliminating alternative points of view” (Charteris-Black, 2011, p. 32). Therefore, we may consider that a metaphor acts like a frame, which is a discursive device that “select[s] some aspects of a perceived reality and make[s] them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Framing theory has been prone to undervalue metaphor and has traditionally considered it as a frame device (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). This way, metaphor is thought to be just part of other linguistic and audiovisual mechanisms used for identifying a frame. However, following Burgers, Konijn, and Steen (2016) and Dekavalla and Montagut (2018), we consider that the role of metaphor in public discourse goes beyond this conception. From this perspective, metaphor can be understood as a frame itself in what Burgers and colleagues (2016) define as a “figurative frame.” They argue that figurative language can operate both at a linguistic and a conceptual level, meaning that some metaphors do not act only as frame devices but also as reasoning devices and can develop complex narratives that guide the audience to a particular understanding of reality.

The ability of metaphor for effectively communicating political reasoning, ideology (Charteris-Black, 2006), links with broader narratives available in a society and makes it a central element in the construction of public opinion. According to Burgers and colleagues (2016), figurative frames are more effective narrative constructions when it comes to establishing a read of reality. This occurs with a special intensity when metaphor helps the construction of the political myth, which is “a narrative-based representation of intangible but evocative experiences that are unconsciously linked to emotions such as sadness, happiness or fear” (Charteris-Black, 2009, p. 100). The construction of political myths—as that of the “invasion” about immigration—through metaphors, imply the existence of figurative frames that

link different metaphorical families or source domains to unfold a coherent story of a political issue. Literature points at two main frames for conceptualizing immigration: dehumanization and humanization.

Dehumanization Frame

Several studies analyze the use of metaphor in discourses on migration. Meriting special mention is a study by Charteris-Black (2006) that analyses the metaphors used in political communications about immigration policy in the 2005 UK election campaign. The Conservative Party and the UK's far right used very specific metaphors on immigration to elaborate and legitimize arguments and subsequent political actions. Media discourse reflected two broad metaphorical spheres: "immigration as a natural disaster" and "the UK as a container." These two frames were reflected in the systematic use of metaphors referring to the source domain of water, which activates "both disaster and container scenarios" (Charteris-Black, 2006, p. 569).

Charteris-Black (2006) considers that there is a conceptual link between the disaster and the container scenarios that appeal powerfully to emotions and instincts for defense and protection. A dialectic of external threats is generated by the argument constructed based on those inside the container and those outside (clamoring to enter) or that of a dam threatening to burst. The associated metaphors communicate a political myth of invasion and of a perceived threat to the invaded population. The metaphoric suggestion of a water-related natural disaster to refer to the arrival of immigrants "includes the fact that it can cause lasting damage" (Hart, 2010, p. 153; Semino, 2008). In the face of the threat of harm, expressed in the catastrophic terms of a "flood" (Hart, 2010, p. 153) or "avalanche" (Wodak & Sedlak, 2000, p. 233) and the exclusion or containment of refugees, immigration restriction policies are perceived as both necessary and inevitable. Arcimaviciene and Baglama (2018) argue that metaphors referring to natural phenomena activate "the dehumanization myth" (p. 11), while at the same time legitimize the "myth of moral authority" and "our" political decisions about "them."

A causal narrative is thus constructed on the basis of emotional discourses that appeal to the "common sense" of the ordinary person in the street (Hanson-Easey & Augoustinos, 2010), while, at the same time, indicate political decisions about containment, control, and the dehumanization of immigrants tend to be an inevitable part of a strategy to naturalize public discourse in regard to immigration (Hart, 2010, p. 149). The immigrant conceptualized in terms of a "wave," "flow" or "flood," therefore, is no longer perceived as a subject but as an object devoid of any political dimension, and so the metaphor implies that "immigrants are inanimate and therefore do not have motives, intentions and volition" (Hart, 2010, p. 149).

Van Dijk (2005) suggests that the use of metaphors associated with "waves" and with a water mass or natural disaster is an intrinsic part of a subtly racist discourse that always depicts immigration as a "problem" or "threat" (p. 33). Political action is left in the hands of political and media actors—mainly a white elite—who, in negatively framing and dehumanizing immigrants, disguise the social racism of political decisions in arguments about inevitable causality. The linking of natural disaster scenarios and water and container metaphors automatically "discourages empathy with immigrants by treating them as objects, rather than as the subjects of life stories" (Charteris-Black, 2006, p. 569). The narrative thus "becomes a fertile ground for creating and establishing stereotypical and xenophobic attitudes, as a consequence of which hatred becomes

an acceptable reality" (Arcimaviciene & Baglama, 2018, p. 11). The narrative is further reinforced by extreme dehumanization metaphors; thus, migrants are viewed as diseased (Demata, 2017) or dirty (Baider & Kopytowska, 2017), as animals (O'Brien, 2003), parasites (Musolff, 2015), or even as monsters or zombies (Musolff, 2017). The manifest and openly expressed racism of the far right in Europe and in the USA (Hogan & Haltinner, 2015; Jones & Teytelboym, 2017; Santa Ana, 1999) depicts the immigrant as a subhuman being responsible for disasters and illnesses. Indeed, President Trump's anti-immigration discourse is especially relevant because of such radical dehumanization frames used (Demata, 2017).

Another way to dehumanize the migrant is through the object or commodity source domain (Arcimaviciene & Baglama, 2018). Immigrants are represented in public and institutional discourse as "shipments" and by using the verbs "pack," "process," "take" or "(re)distribute." In this sense, "the use of object metaphors creates an ideological proximity from migrants or 'them,' who are detached both physically and emotionally from 'us'" (Arcimaviciene & Baglama, 2018, p. 7). This implies a narrative that politically delegitimizes the migrant while legitimizing those who make political decisions about them. In fact, when commerce/business source domain metaphors are used to explain complex political processes, a perception of control and efficiency is generated on the part of politicians (Lakoff, 1999). Chilton (1996) also suggests that the use of metaphor to explain complex international policy issues simplifies narratives and establishes the legitimacy of decision makers, but not of those who are the object of those decisions. In this simultaneous process of delegitimizing "them" and legitimizing "us," countries and institutions are living things, whereas migrants are objects (Arcimaviciene & Baglama, 2018, p. 11).

Humanization Frame

Depending on the media frame used for conceptualizing migration issues narratives leading to a positive or negative evaluation are built. For instance, Figenschou and Thorbjørnsrud (2015) have highlighted human interest frames that may offer new perspectives on the issue of migration by telling the stories of individual migrants and by providing a glimpse of the lives and destinies of people. Consequently, the use of a human-interest framework that endows the immigrant with agency (i.e., the immigrant is a subject, not an object) may entail a positive evaluation (Igartua et al., 2005). Within this framework, we can find metaphors referring to journey and family source domains that encourage greater empathy with immigrants (Charteris-Black, 2006, p. 569). In the same vein, conflict/war source domains can be used for legitimizing the political action of countries and institutions when "struggling" against the humanitarian crisis.

However, the conflict frame is also used to portray the refugee crisis negatively (Arcimaviciene & Baglama, 2018). Metaphors that frame migrants arriving in Europe under conflict/war source domains—migrant as an "invader," a "warrior," as someone "assaulting" fences or as part of a "contingent" or a "troop" (Pérez, 2006; van Dijk, 2005)—lead to a negative evaluation, which has been predominant in Mediterranean countries (Carniel, Ortega, & Velázquez, 2018) and Eastern European countries (Heath and Richards, 2019). Political and media discourses foster narratives articulated through conflict/war metaphors to legitimate exclusions or repressive policies against migrants, especially after the terrorist attacks that have taken place during the last few years (Goodman et al., 2017). As a result, migrants are perceived as a threat by the

reception community. Therefore, the use of the humanization frame does not necessarily imply a positive evaluation; in the case of conflict/war, migrants can be presented as “dangerous” subjects who must be controlled. As indicated above, this has occurred in Spain for many years.

What About Spain?

Although international literature about how political and media discourses build migratory phenomena is abundant (Abid, Manan, & Rahman, 2017; Demata, 2017; Ferreira, Flister, & Morosini, 2017; Hanson-Easy & Augoustinos, 2010; Santa Ana, 1999), this is not the case in Spain, possibly because immigration occurred later in Spain or was not detected as a social problem in political and media agendas until the mid-1990s (Alscher, 2017; Igartua et al., 2005; Morales et al., 2015; van Dijk, 2005). Of the few existing works, one of the most widely referenced is the research conducted by Igartua et al. (2005, 2008) and Cheng et al. (2014). Adopting a framing perspective to analyze the Spanish press, the authors have identified common news frames about immigration and its effects, concluding that immigration is negatively viewed and is particularly associated with crime. As for the positive frames detected by Igartua et al. (2005), these include generic “human interest” frames reflecting the personal stories of immigrants that endow them as a group with identity and political action. This “humanization” of the “other”—of the immigrant/refugee—mitigates or undermines the “dehumanization” implied in other discourses and frames through certain metaphors.

Another important contribution to the analysis of discourse about immigration in Spain comes from CDA. Rojo and van Dijk (1997) and van Dijk (2005) have analyzed how Spanish political and media players legitimize dubious actions at the pragmatic, semantic and sociopolitical discursive levels. Spain, unlike other European countries, has no right-wing popular press that articulates openly racist sentiments (Morales et al., 2015; van Dijk, 2005). Even so, there is an evident imbalance between negative and positive evaluations in the media, with negative frames (illegal entry, economic and cultural threat) outweighing positive frames (economic contribution, cultural enrichment).

For instance, Morales et al. (2015), in their analysis on the main campaign topics about immigration between 2000 and 2011, established “instrumental justifications” for “fighting against illegal immigration”—together with a discursive link between illegal immigration and crime—were in the basis of the speech of right-wing political party Partido Popular. They also demonstrated that these features were adopted as a dominant frame by mainstream political and media actors at the expense of “moral principles.” These “instrumentals justifications” were built around the debate of the reform of the main law ruling immigration and around other measures concerning migration policies (Morales et al., 2015, pp. 473–475). Likewise, pictures and press coverage of El Ejido riots in 2000 or of the massive arrival at the Ceuta and Melilla border in 2005 reinforced the perception of the “invasion of the poor” that “fueled the fears of Spanish population” (Alscher, 2017, p. 14). Along these lines, some authors (Aierbe, 2006; Pérez, 2006; van Dijk, 2005) point out the metaphors used by the Spanish press during that period for framing the Ceuta and Melilla case and showed violence or conflict/war source domains that conceptualized immigrants as “medieval warriors” who “assault[ed]” the fences and used “military strategies” were predominant.

Other authors, in their analyses of media perceptions about immigration in Spain (Checa Olmos & Arjona Garrido, 2011; Martínez Lirola, 2010; Nash, 2005; Rodríguez & Mena, 2008), also confirm that the perceived “threat” derives primarily from the media and political discourse independently of factors such as the unemployment rate or the percentage of immigrants in the population as a whole. This only further reinforces how negative news frames determine perceptions of immigration (Igartua et al., 2008). Regarding the word “refugee,” although perceptions tend to be less belligerent than with the word “immigrant,” a somewhat similar narrative—“migration is a problem”—is constructed by the media (Gualda & Rebollo Díaz, 2016; Pătrașcu, 2015).

From the point of view of CMA, we can find few approaches from other areas than media. Castaño, Laso, and Verdaguer (2017) explore “the use that EAL (English Additional Language) law undergraduate students make of metaphorical expressions as well as their awareness of their connotations” (p. 246). They found the use of conceptual metaphors—migration is a natural force, states are containers or immigrants are a threat—are usual in legal language. From a media perspective, our aim is to contribute insights about depictions of refugees in the Spanish national press, focusing either on dehumanization or humanization source domains. This is done by analyzing the metaphors identified, as well as the source domains under which they are placed, and the target domains they refer to, to discover how legitimacy strategies are articulated.

Method

The present research analyses discursive constructions about how European countries manage the Syrian refugee crisis. We pay special attention to the role played by the Spanish government in this conflict. Focusing on the metaphors used in Spanish mainstream press as a means to identify particular political stances (Bickes, Otten, & Weymann, 2014), we use the three-step CMA method developed by Charteris-Black (2004) to identify, interpret, and explain which metaphors were used to frame the refugee crisis in three newspapers: *El País*, *La Vanguardia*, and *El Mundo*.

The nature of metaphor is analogical, which determines its structure and function. Because it involves two different names, one from which we depart so that we can understand the meaning of the other, it has two clear parts. These are the “source domain” and the “target domain,” also known as “vehicle” and “tenor” (Cameron, 1999) or “focus” and “frame” (Black, 1962). Kövecses (2010) defines the first as “the conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain” (p. 4). This other conceptual domain, the target, is, then, “the domain that we try to understand through the use of the source domain” (Kövecses 2010, p. 4). This results in “the adoption of a familiar source or experience to serve as a base analog that is then mapped onto an unfamiliar target analog” (Bougher, 2012, p. 146). Because the act of choosing a source domain highlights some aspects of the target domain and hides others—resulting in a particular view of the issue that is being framed—(Semino, 2008, p. 34), it is paramount to look at the way Spanish mainstream press conceptualizes the Syrian refugee crisis.

Our goal was to detect the main source domains (i.e., natural disaster) used to conceptualize the target domain (i.e., migrants) and to explore the underlying ideological implications this entails. To determine if and how European and Spanish governments shifted their stances over time, we categorized

opinion and information reporting on the crisis in three distinct time periods shaped by three key events, namely, the EU summit in Brussels on September 14–17, 2015; the arrival to Spain of the first quota of refugees on May 24–27, 2016; and, finally, September 25–28, 2017, as the deadline to comply with the EU-designated quota of refugees. Our sample was made up of 101 news stories, which were cut down to 89 after checking that they referred explicitly to the European migration crisis. From this sample, we build up a corpus containing 474 metaphorical expressions, identified considering the following target domains: mainly refugee crisis/exile, refugee camp, migrants, NGOs, policies, EU and Spain, but also mafia, EU countries, among others.

As stated above, we used Charteris-Black's (2004) approach to CMA to detect and analyze the previously mentioned expressions. CMA is applied in three stages to metaphors: identification (A), interpretation (B), and explanation (C). In this research, we focus initially on the first stage and then consider the second and third stages as the results section is developed. We consider that an expression is used metaphorically when it breaks with the isotopy of the text (Greimas, 1983), what Charteris-Black (2011) defines as a "semantic tension." The identification of a metaphorical expression is, therefore, done in the moment in which interpretive coherence is broken; this allows us to question what has led the author of the discourse to use figurative rather than literal language. Tables 1, 2, and 3 show the main source domains identified in the news stories collected and analyzed for each period and provides counts for the metaphorical expressions to highlight frequency.

Table 1. Metaphorical Expressions Classified by SD in News Stories from 2015.

Source domain	La Vanguardia	%	El País	%	El Mundo	%
CONFLICT/CRIME	2	5.2	7	7.6	3	8.3
JOURNEY/WAY/MOVEMENT	7	18.4	11	11.9	2	2.7
CONTAINER	4	10.5	8	8.7	4	11.1
WATER	22	57.9	20	21.7	11	30.5
GAME/SPORTS	2	5.2	7	7.6	1	2.7
MECHANICS/PHYSICS	0	0	1	1	6	16.6
RELIGION/BELIEF	0	0	6	6.5	6	16.6
OTHER	1	2.6	32	34.5	3	8.1
TOTAL	38	100	92	100	36	100

Table 2. Metaphorical Expressions Classified by SD in News Stories from 2016.

Source domain	La Vanguardia	%	El País	%	El Mundo	%
CONFLICT/CRIME	4	6.7	5	15.6	8	13.1
JOURNEY/WAY/MOVEMENT	9	15	9	28.1	13	21.3
CONTAINER	3	5	7	23.3	6	9.8
WATER	9	15	3	9.4	2	3.3
MECHANICS/PHYSICS	6	10	0	0	2	3.3
GAME/SPORTS	2	3.3	2	6.3	4	6.5
LIVING THING	19	31.6	5	15.6	11	18
RELIGION/BELIEF	1	1.6	0	0	3	4.9
OTHER	7	11.5%	1	3.1	9	14.6
TOTAL	60	100	32	100	61	100

The sample was codified by two researchers. To lessen the subjectivity of the classification of metaphors, intercoder reliability was calculated by undertaking an inter-rater agreement test (Krippendorff's alpha) of the 50% of the data set. This resulted in a high score ($\alpha = .8769$), considering an alpha above 0.8 indicates strong inter-coder reliability. The problematic cases were resolved by means of discussion between the two coders.

For the second stage, we used Musolff's (2004) concept of scenario. Scenarios are linked to the fact that a single source domain can include contrastive conceptualizations. Musolff (2004, p. 13) describes a scenario as "an intermediate analytical category between the level of the conceptual domain as a whole and its individual elements." This approach helps us draw the main storyline that guides interpretation by analyzing the conceptual mappings derived from the use of a source to map a target. By developing these mappings, we attempt to provide insights into the narratives derived from the use of the main source domains about migrants, policies, and the role of EU countries and to explain them according to the context, bearing in mind the pragmatic dimension of the discourse.

Table 3. Metaphorical Expressions Classified by SD in News Stories from 2017.

Source domain	La Vanguardia	%	El País	%	El Mundo	%
CONFLICT/CRIME	5	10.8	8	9.7	4	14.2
JOURNEY/WAY/MOVEMENT	12	26	19	23.1	0	0
CONTAINER	2	4.3	3	3.6	10	35.7
WATER	5	10.8	7	8.5	1	3.6
MECHANICS/PHYSICS	1	2.2	6	7.3	0	0
GAME/SPORTS	2	4.3	3	3.6	0	0
ECONOMY/BUSINESS	1	2.2	15	18.3	4	14.3
PHYSICAL OBJECT	5	10.8	5	6	2	7.1
LIVING THING	12	26	11	13.4	4	14.3
OTHER	1	2.2	5	6.5%	3	10.7
TOTAL	46	100	82	100	28	100

Results

From the outset of the crisis, but especially from the EU Summit in Brussels in 2015, news stories on refugees have been featured constantly in the Spanish press. However, news stories on refugees and relocation policies decreased as the measures approved by the EU Summit failed to be implemented. Thus, while we collected 43 news stories on the refugee crisis in 2015, we only collected 27 in 2016 (when the first group of refugees arrived in Spain), and only 19 in 2017 (when the quota deadline expired).

Our analysis of the identified target domains reveals that, in 2015, references to the refugee crisis and to migrants was imperative when making a metaphorical construction on the issue. In 2016 and 2017, however, although migrants were still targeted, they were done so in a context of migratory policies about EU countries including, of course, Spain.

As the refugee crisis evolved, the water/container source domains were maintained, referring to the interaction between EU policies and the arrival of refugees. However, new source domains appeared that helped to generate a more complex narrative, featuring further political actors and actions differing from those of "containment" and "border control"—for instance, commerce/business. Based on current literature, we propose a metaphorical map shaped by two main superordinate frames (Figure 1): (a)

“dehumanization frame,” defined as the set of source domains and associated metaphors that imply a dehumanization of the migrant in a narrative of political delegitimization; and (b) “humanization frame,” defined as the set of source domains and associated metaphors that endow the migrant with political action, although not always, as we will see, in a positive or legitimizing narrative.

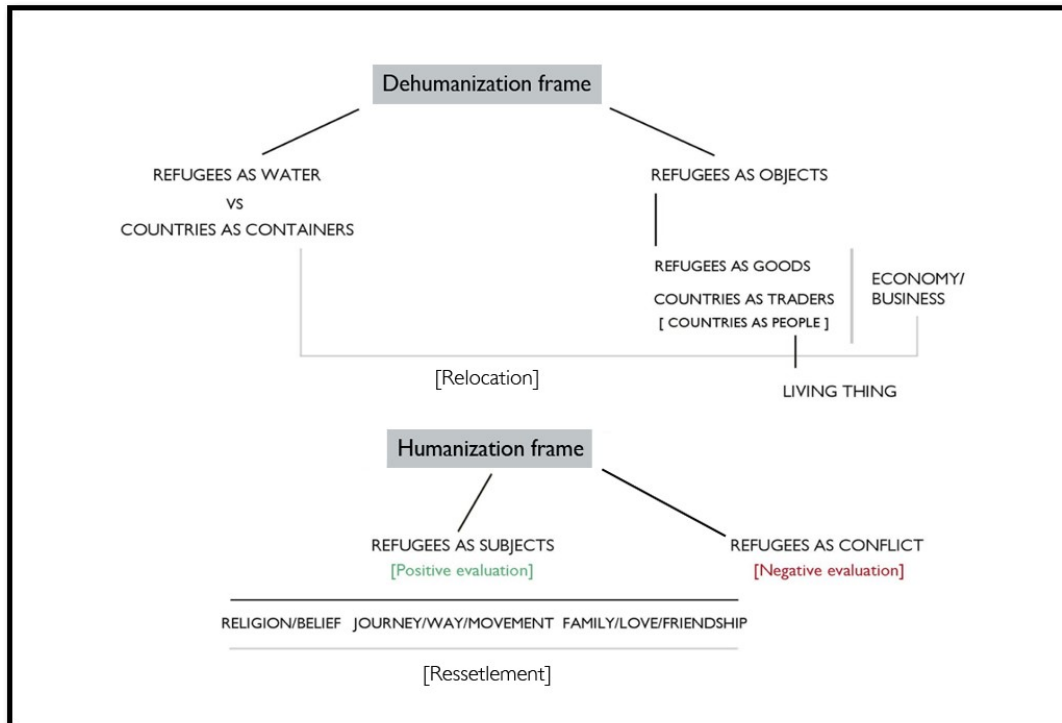


Figure 1. Map of dehumanization and humanization metaphors.

Dehumanization Metaphors

The water/container source domain mainly refers to the migrants and the political actions of both the EU and its member states. In 2015, refugees are the main target domain, and in 30.5% of cases the most commonly used metaphors are related to water or water mass. The second-most important source domain is container (11%), referring mainly to political measures adopted or to be adopted by the EU and its member states. The dehumanizing narrative is reinforced by the metaphorical binomial that associates the migrant with water, and most especially a water mass, and the need for containment to avoid harm. Here, we encounter metaphors such as “avalanche,” “tsunami,” and “deluge”:

Example 1: (The EU) is trying to limit the current flow toward Germany (López, 2015, *La Vanguardia*, p. 5).

Example 2: On last Sunday alone, 16,600 people entered Austria and, unable to continue to Germany, the flood threatened to create a bottleneck of unpredictable humanitarian consequences (Sánchez, 2015, *El Mundo*, p. 29).

Example 3: Austria's decision to use the army to try to manage the deluge after temporary suspension of rail communications with Germany (Editorial Office, 2015, *El País*, p. 12).

In 2016 and 2017, while the water/container source domain continued to be widely used in the Spanish press, new metaphors also appeared. EU institutions and countries took political action beyond the initial "containment" of the "deluge" but were conceptualized according to the living thing source domain (i.e., they were personified). In contrast, and most especially in 2017, migrants experienced the reverse: they were conceptualized as objects or goods when linked to the commerce/business source domains.

Example 4: The initial goals were adjusted downward in the face of the lack of political commitment or effective ways to distribute the numbers agreed . . . (Abellán, 2017, *El País*, p. 8).

Example 5: Europe has only met 25% of the agreed quotas (*El Mundo*, 2017, p. 3).

The personification of countries and institutions as traders and the transformation of the refugee crisis into a matter of "quotas," "deals," and "incentives" accentuates the perception of the migrant as an object or commodity. Lakoff (1999) and, more recently, Arcimaviciene and Baglama (2018) indicate this dehumanization and delegitimization of the migrant fuels the legitimization of a metaphorical narrative in international politics that connotes control and efficiency. The Spanish press echoes this discursive strategy of considering migrants as objects. In this sense, *La Vanguardia* (Marchena, Domingo, 2016, p. 36) referred to the complaints of various NGOs about the concept of "quotas" and the policies it legitimized.

Humanization Metaphors

We can distinguish two predominant source domains that conceptualize migrants/refugees as subjects: journey and conflict/crime. Journey metaphors generate greater empathy toward migrants, whereas conflict/crime metaphors frame them negatively. The use of the following journey metaphors entails a positive evaluation of refugees or, at least, promotes empathy toward migrants' drama:

Example 6: This is the dreadful exodus of a crowd swept away from their land (Cervera, 2015, *La Vanguardia*, p. 3).

Example 7: The journey of Osama and his children, an odyssey with a happy ending. (Mucha, 2015, *El Mundo*, p. 41).

Knowledge of the biblical book of Exodus, as well as Homer's *Odyssey*, lets the reader understand that Syrian refugees are setting out on a long and difficult way that they have been forced to go down. Nevertheless, the metaphor of the journey can also have negative connotations, depending on the context

in which it is inserted. In the following example, the words “impotent” and “unstoppable” suggest that the arrival to the Promised Land is done in an uncontrolled way, making Italy a victim of this situation and drawing a different scenario:

Example 8: Italy impotent in the face of an unstoppable exodus to its shores (Val, 2016, *La Vanguardia*, p. 8).

Note, however, that the constancy of the journey source domain in 2016 and 2017 (21% to 25%, depending on the newspaper analyzed) is not exclusively because of migrant-related metaphors; but it is applied especially to politicians and even the policies of EU countries and institutions that are conceptualized as living things and not as complex political structures. Countries are anthropomorphic entities, involving the use of our experience and knowledge of human beings to define this source domain (Semino, 2008, p. 101).

In fact, the use of the journey source domain is revealed as a general humanization or legitimization device by and of the institutions in the sample.

Example 9: Our neighbor [Morocco] thus takes on a policing role in impeding the passage of sub-Saharan and Syrians (San Martín, 2016, *El Mundo*, p. 27).

Example 10: And Europe ends up taking a step backward in one of its greatest achievements, the free movement of people (Navarro, 2017, *La Vanguardia* p. 2).

Example 11: Brussels understood it was time to take a step forward in the conviction that those who were landing (Abellan, 2017, *El País*, p. 8).

Spain doesn't appear as a political actor in 2015, but in 2016 and 2017, it starts being targeted as a living thing as well, frequently for portraying a negative evaluation of the Spanish asylum policies.

Example 12: Faced with this Spanish and European dragging of feet (Luna, 2016, *La Vanguardia*, p. 24).

Example 13: A[n] NGO denounced the lack of sensitivity in Spain and the EU in general (Marchena, 2017, *La Vanguardia*, p. 36).

According to Chilton (1996), the personification of politically abstract entities like countries and institutions—which can thus “move” or “behave” in a certain way—may provide a better understanding of international politics. But it also generates an imbalance when this personification is combined with an objectification of the migrant. This kind of dual metaphorical linkage between the living thing and the physical object source domains, as indicated by Arcimaviciene and Baglama (2018), delegitimizes “them” while legitimizing “us” and decisions taken by “us” about “them” (p. 11).

This is accentuated by the appearance of another source domain, especially in 2017, namely the conflict/crime source domain, referring to migrants as the target domain. In this case, the migrant is targeted as a subject but in negative terms. The use of war metaphors referring to migrants is constant, most especially in 2016, as also is the use of metaphors referring to countries that “tackle,” “grapple with” or “battle against” the migration crisis. According to Gualda and Rebollo Díaz (2016) and Pătrașcu (2015), this reflects the migrant as a political actor whose purpose is to generate conflict.

Example 14: Most of the refugees forming part of the first contingent / The advance party of 586 asylum seekers (Bengoa, 2016, *El País* p. 23).

Example 15: Among Swedes and Finns a message is gaining ground against immigrants endangering the welfare state (Valero, 2016, *El Mundo*, p. 22).

Even so, the only time a direct relationship features between migrant and crime in the Spanish press is when it echoes statements by German parties of the far right during Germany’s presidential elections in 2017: “Germany has become a safe haven for criminals and terrorists around the world” and “Islam endangers peace in Germany” (Alexander Gauland, leader of the Alternative for Germany, quoted in Valero, 2017, *El Mundo*, p. 20). Hence, the way the Spanish press portrayed the refugee crisis in 2015–2017 was noticeably different from the ‘90’s discourse, which rested on the conflict/crime frame.

As can be seen, metaphors linked to the “humanization frame” do not necessarily result in a positive vision of the migrant, whose agency may pose a threat if associated with source domains linked to conflict/crime. In this case, EU countries are portrayed as living things “fighting” against a threat—the whole implications of the refugee crisis—where migrants are targeted as part of an army (i.e., contingent). The implicit violent component underlying this narrative feeds the “invasion” myth (Charteris-Black, 2006), and connects with a well-studied metaphor network that relies on the “us/them” or “in/out” dichotomy.

Discussion and Conclusions

When the European migration crisis came into the political and media agenda in 2015, it was conceptualized mostly through the source domains of natural disaster/water and container in the Spanish press. The metaphors underlying these source domains helped some EU actors justify the adoption of contention measures as the only political reaction possible to face the “avalanche,” “flood,” “tide,” or “tsunami” of refugees. On the one hand, the use of these two source domains sets the dehumanization of the immigrant by appealing to several aspects linked to the myth of invasion (Charteris-Black, 2006). Despite that they do not necessarily imply violence, to consider that refugees are a natural disaster entails a feeling of imminent danger for the population that is inside a country (or inside a wider community such as the EU) understood as a container that needs to be preserved from that disaster. That refugees have no agency and that they are considered an uncontrolled natural element is also useful for establishing a moral position that can be accepted by institutional and political actors. By using this frame, they do not set an open racist or xenophobic speech but rather a kind of political correctness barrier that helps them argue political action based on contention, the closing of frontiers, the calling into question of Schengen space,

the justification the presence of refugee camps, and so on. The analyzed sample demonstrates that the Spanish press replicates the narratives under which institutional sources frame the migratory crisis.

In 2016 and 2017, when the first refugees arrived at different EU countries as a result of the "relocation" program launched by the EU Commission, new actors and source domains appeared. On the one hand, we saw how the governments of the different countries became living things that "stood their ground," "remained firm," or "were lazy." As soon as governments and institutions began to be conceptualized as living things, their political strategies were described under the journey source domain. This way, countries "moved forward," or "went backward." On the other hand, refugees were portrayed under a dehumanization frame. However, although the source domains water/container still appear, there are new metaphors like "quota," "volume," and "load" that need to be "delivered" or goods that "generate economic incentives" in host countries that transform migrants into objects. In the same way that Arcimaviciene and Baglama (2018) discuss, we argue addressing the refugee crisis by using the source domain of commerce/business entails us thinking of migrants as goods and is one of the narratives linked to the dehumanization frame that has obvious political implications.

Using the metaphor "politics is business" can generate a discourse based on efficiency ahead of public opinion; but, in practice, this results in a management that implies a dehumanization of politics. As a matter of fact, discursively transforming migrants into objects is linked to the conception of the EU's "Relocation Policy" (European Commission, 2017).³ This reactive policy planned to relocate refugees in host countries using a fixed-quota scheme. According to the definition provided by the MacMillan Dictionary, to relocate is "to move to a different place, or to make someone or something do this." This definition contrasts with the 2017 resettlement policies adopted by the EU. The definition of resettle considers that "if people resettle somewhere, or if a government or other authority resettles them, they go to live in a different region or country." The latter is a policy clearly designed in a proactive manner that places people at its center, while the former can refer to move "someone" (but also "something") from one place to another, entailing a more ambiguous understanding and, therefore, opening the door to depersonalizing refugees and conceiving them as objects when used. Despite being the main frame in the analyzed sample, dehumanization strategies and relocation policies were not understood in terms of efficiency but considered a failure because host countries barely achieved the agreed quota. Results have shown that, in the case of Spain, for instance, there was a negative evaluation of the Spanish government's action, which was widely shared by the three analyzed newspapers. Hence, in 2016, Spain's attitude before the refugee crisis was labeled as "lazy," "cynical," and "stolid." Beyond the replication of institutional sources, the 2016 (and 2017) data set displays a greater presence of opinion articles, allowing journalists and experts to build a more critical discourse on the issue.

Similar to the lazy attitude attributed to the Spanish government, the press did not put on the frontline the debate around the migratory crisis, which received low attention according to the number of pieces published in the three analyzed events. Institutional collapse because of the economic crisis during Mariano Rajoy's government and the subsequent internal conflicts the administration faced between 2011 and 2017 displaced the focus to national issues. The coverage of the refugee crisis took an external look

and mainly considered institutional sources. Only a few asylum seekers were given voice as information sources in the news items analyzed (just 5%). As stated previously, the role of Spain and the Spanish government was testimonial. The situation could change provided the increasing media visibility gained by extreme-right party VOX and its electoral results in the elections that have taken place in 2019. Like other far-right movements in Europe, VOX is setting the issue of immigration in the agenda, which is forcing other political parties to take it into account. Former institutional discourses on "fighting against illegal immigration" could return considering that assimilating (illegal) immigration to refugees is already a strategy used in other countries for preventing asylum policies to be supported by public opinion (Goodman et al., 2017).

By the end of 2017, a change was noted in EU policies, and "Resettlement" displaced "Relocation." Resettlement policies are to be understood as a strategy for increasing legal pathways to Europe for those in need of international protection is a key part of the EU's work (European Commission, 2018). These policies aimed to provide refugees with legal "paths" for arriving to Europe from Turkey and to other cooperative countries inside and outside the EU to avoid the action of mafias and the "uncontrolled" arrival of migrants. Bearing this in mind, the use of the journey source domain (as well as family/love) for framing refugees would imply the humanization of the migrant when placing him or her at the center of the political action and giving him or her the possibility to take a higher degree of decision making about his or her future. Despite that conflict/crime metaphors increased in 2017, it would be advisable for media practitioners (in Spain) to use metaphors that build a positive humanization frame and to downplay negative humanization and dehumanization frames. This way, they would avert the legitimation of exclusions and the implementation of repressive policies.

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