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FRAMING ISSUES IN THE SPECIALISED DISCOURSE OF DIPLOMACY. A QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE APPROACH

1. Introduction: Locating the Research

The rapid development of independent states in the last years of the twentieth century allowed many countries to become part of the international system of states bringing about changes to the profile of the diplomatic community (Oglesby 2016). In this complex international community, countries have to manage relations with one another in such a way as to safeguard their interests as sovereign states, yet, also share goals with the others. These issues are more prominent for a country, such as the UK in its post-Brexit era, that finds itself in the position of (re)negotiating its role with respect to the European Union (EU), of managing trade access and of maintaining, at the same time, its integrity as a country. The resource available to achieve these objectives is called diplomacy. Thus, far from becoming irrelevant as the outcome of technological progress, which affords instantaneous global communication, diplomacy is critical to the construction of the positive image of the country itself in an age when, due to globalization, national borders are at stake. “This empowerment of diplomacy,” as observed by Cooper et al (2013, 22), has triggered fundamental modifications to the actors, tools and context of transactions and these changes are due to “the realization that emerging transnational challenges in many areas can only be dealt through collective action.”

Questions such as terrorism, immigration, climate change, human rights and security are the major issues on the political and diplomatic agenda. These disputes and their solutions imply the construction of complex ideological and axiological discursive positions, which stem from a net of emotional and moral evaluations, often intermingled with logical observations (Spinzi 2016). In other words, all dealings and negotiations, whether promoting values or selling products, are a way of fostering the positive profile of a country, and strategic communication is an indispensable tool in that direction (Leonard, 2009).¹ This means that, in diplomacy, language choices, which bear significant communicative intent, are regularly made to incite the audience “to achieve a commonality of purpose” (Burhanudeen 2005, 37) through the enactment of specific linguistic frames.

This study explores the specialized ‘territory’ of diplomacy and, more particularly, it reports results on the cognitive frames used by British foreign ministers to pursue their ideological design. The main hypothesis in this work is that the semantic domains that are considered as source domains for metaphors represent cognitive guides for policy makers and are tools for making the world. To this end, this work adopts both a cognitive and discourse-based perspective on the language of diplomacy in order to uncover the frames chosen by diplomats to negotiate solidarity with their audience and, in so doing, ‘naturalize’ a number of ideological positions. More particularly, I shall focus on those semantic frames which prove to be statistically “salient” and on “framing” seen as the vital function of metaphor (Semino, Demjén and Demmen 2016, 1). Thus, quantitative methods developed in corpus linguistics will be used to support qualitative methods of the critical reading of larger bodies of diplomatically pertinent texts.

This paper is structured as follows: first, the main features of the specialized discourse of diplomatic language are illustrated in order to distinguish it from the broader field of political discourse; second, the theoretical

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¹ Mark Leonard, November 9, 2009 “Diplomacy by Other Means,” FP. Available at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/11/09/diplomacy-by-other-means/>. Last Visited January 19, 2017.



foundations of 'frames' are discussed together with a rundown of the methodology and materials. Section 4 introduces the analysis and reports the findings, and the closing remarks in Section 5 reflect on the usefulness of the model to reveal frames functional to fostering ideologies.

2. The main traits of diplomacy

Recent research in the field of Language for Specific Purposes has slightly altered the traditional paradigm of specialized communication as being impersonal, objective and neutral (Gotti 2007) by focusing on more complex strategies of implicit and explicit communication (Garzone and Sarangi 2007, 23). The use of hedges in scientific discourse (Garzone 2004), as well as tactics of appraisal (Martin 2000; Spinzi 2016), for expressing the addresser's attitude towards what is being debated are subtle language devices which construct a specialized communication that is less neutral. For instance, by drawing upon the Appraisal Theory (Martin 2000) previous research (Spinzi 2016) on the communicative strategies used in the discourse of security has shown that foreign ministers tend to evaluate security on the scale of "significance" and on that of "negative composition" in order to describe security as a fundamental but still endangered entity. In this way, people unconsciously perceive security as a threatened object upon which to work. Persuasion, implicit discursive devices (e.g. metaphors, analogies) and a "non-abrasive manner" of communication (Oglesby 2016, 243) seem to be at work in the language of diplomacy.

In the context of this study, we embrace a broader definition of diplomacy as the expression of the foreign policy of a country, in our case Britain, disregarding the distinction made by scholars in the field of international relations between diplomacy and foreign policy, a distinction mainly based on the roles of diplomats as civil servants and ministers as policy makers (Cooper, Heine and Thakur, 2013). Thus, diplomacy here includes foreign policy and what is relevant to this study is that British foreign ministers, in running diplomatic affairs on behalf of their government, represent the UK overseas and oversee relations with the world at large. In so doing, these speakers try to manage information persuasively and to shape their country's image positively, whether it be to a home or foreign audience (Spinzi 2016). Strictly connected to the notion of diplomacy is, indeed, that of national reputation or branding, namely the others' opinion of a nation's culture, policy and conduct, which is also part of a nation's "soft power" (Nye 2004). Based on the skill of convincing people to perceive things in the way desired, the language of diplomacy blends logic and science and resorts to "a non-abrasive manner of communicating that lubricates, rounds-off the sharp edges, and creates the space for saving face and creating possibility" (Oglesby 2016, 243). Metaphor is one of the devices available to diplomats to hide and reveal, to explain and to persuade. Hence, the discovery of the semantic frames chosen in diplomacy constitute our approach to sense-making and thus to uncovering the way in which speakers construct their own worldview.

3. Methods and Materials

3.1 Theoretical background

Frames have been pervasively used as analytical tools across many disciplines from psychology and sociology (Goffman 1974; 1981) to artificial intelligence (Minsky 1975) and to discourse studies (Musolff 2006; Hart 2017). This interdisciplinary relevance explains the different approaches and definitions of frames provided in literature, above all in the wake of Lakoff's work on cognitive categories in 1987. Lakoffian categories, known as *Idealized Cognitive Models* (Lakoff 1987, 68), are crucial to understanding our experience of the world, which is shaped by our senses. These mental structures are similar to Fillmore's concept of frames (1985), namely those conceptual categories which reproduce particular areas of knowledge and experience guiding the interpretation of specific aspects of ongoing events. If frames provide language users with tools to understand and represent the world around us, then they make complex phenomena more intelligible. To put it differently, language users retrieve these frames from their mind and use them as tools to understand the meaning of a linguistic unit.

Entman (1993, 52), more specifically, noted that frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments and suggest remedies. In his words, "frames highlight some bits of information about an item that is the subject of a communication, thereby elevating them in salience." And "salience," in this context, means "making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences" (Entman 1993, 53).



With corpus linguistics techniques saliency is made visible via keywords analysis whereas a simple word list only provides frequency.

It is by now a commonly accepted idea that certain keywords, clusters and phrases play a key role in conveying particular social, cultural meanings and unearthing values associated with specific institutions (Groom 2010; De Candia, Spinzi and Venuti 2013). Keywords, in particular, are not always conceptual indicators of themes but they may at times be useful pointers “to the most frequent metadiscursive phraseology” in a text (Bondi 2010, 7). This implies that keywords may be taken as diagnostic tools for detecting specific discourse framings of subjects of public interest. However, although keywords can contribute much to identifying broad topical areas in discourse, nevertheless they do not, by themselves, uncover the frames that shape texts. To do this, we need to follow a procedure similar to the one devised by Philip (2012), who describes a methodology for locating metaphorical lexical items in a specialized corpus.

Since the advent of computer-assisted keyword analysis, a frequently applied keywords approach has been that of investigating exclusively content words that float up to the top of the keyword list. A reasonable justification for this traditional approach is that these words have the highest *keyness* scores and are, thus, considered to be more outstanding than others, when compared with a reference corpus. A few keywords analysts (Gledhill 2000; Groom 2010), instead, have embraced the reverse strategy, namely, they have taken into account only structure or empty words, rather than content words, showing that these often-neglected words are indicators of style (Scott and Tribble 2006). Apart from this top-slicing approach, whether content keywords are investigated or not, it has also been noticed that what is not crucial to the main topic of discourse should stand in contrast to it (Philip 2010, 192).

In discourse, frames are triggered by implicit or explicit allusions to the main frame or aspects of it. They function as elements of coherence of a text and assure the comprehension and representation of the ongoing events by alluding to a conceptual domain. In Musolff’s (2006, 28), based-discourse approach the notion of “scenario” accommodates the connection between this conceptual side of the metaphor and its usage patterns in a specific context. Scenario is described as:

a set of assumptions made by competent members of a discourse community about “typical” aspects of a source-situation, for example, its participants and their roles, the “dramatic” storylines and outcomes, and conventional evaluations of whether they count as successful or unsuccessful, normal or abnormal, permissible or illegitimate, etc.

Metaphors are thus relevant framing tools in that they help define how social events are debated, structured, understood and reacted to emotionally. Semino (2008, 100), for example, notes that the “war frame” is frequently activated in discourses which encompass “difficulties, danger, effort and uncertain outcomes.” Equally, the same cognitive frame seems to characterize the discourse of immigration in the press, where the cognitive scaffolding of war is evoked by lexical items such as *invasion*, *army*, *front line* and so on (Hart 2010). Framing issues according to some dominant conceptual schemas gives rise to evaluative effects and emotional reactions. Studies that are concerned with these implications are usually discourse-based and accept the view of framing as a tool which explains the connection between choices of metaphors and people’s evaluations on specific topics in specialized contexts. These aspects together with agency and (dis)empowerment are considered by Semino, Demjén and Demmen (2016) in their integrated approach to the study of metaphor and framing from three interconnected perspectives: cognitive, discourse-based and practice-based. These scholars have highlighted that the combination of these three levels of analysis account for a more inclusive description of metaphors as a cognitive and discourse phenomenon.

3.2 Data

Materials used in this paper were collected from the official website of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office,² where Foreign Ministers’ speeches and press conferences are available for inspection. Their publication on the website together with pictures and video of the speeches implies that the texts are addressed both to experts in the political field and to the lay person. The data was downloaded over a twenty-year period (July

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office>. Last Visited September 17, 2017.



1997 - September 2017) and was to be used for a study of the main discursive strategies used by British Foreign Ministers when elucidating their choices in diplomacy (Spinzi 2016). The data was stored as seven separate sub-corpora corresponding to the Foreign Ministers from Blair's administration to Theresa May's government. Table 1 shows details of the diplomatic corpus called *DiCo*.

Foreign Minister	Years	PM	Political Party	N. of words
Robin Cook	1997-2001	Tony Blair 1997-2007	Labour	141,453
Jack Straw	2001-2006		Labour	310,732
Margaret Beckett	2006-2007		Labour	100,765
David Miliband	2007-2010	Gordon Brown (2007-2010)	Labour	103,764
William Hague	2010-2014	Cameron- Clegg Cameron II (2010-2016)	Conservative	77,898
Philip Hammond	2014-2016		Conservative	55,427
Boris Johnson	(2016-)	Theresa May (2016-)	Conservative	34,063
Total number of running words			720,337	

Table 1. Diplomatic Corpus containing speeches from British Foreign Ministers

In such a specialized corpus, a number of topics is discussed. On the basis of the keyword analysis (see next section) these topics may be categorized as follows: national and international security, the EU issue, climate change, human rights and terrorism.

3.3 Method

The method adopted for the analysis draws upon Philip's premise (see section 3.1) that less frequent content keywords may be investigated as pointers to metaphorical constructions. In Philip's words:

Once the keywords have been identified (and grouped together, if appropriate), the attention shifts to the LFCWs [Low-frequency content words]. Within the LFCWs there will be lexis that is congruous with the keywords, and other lexis that is incongruous. The congruous lexis should be grouped together with the keywords, as it represents alternative wordings referring to the same domain. The incongruous lexis then has to be sorted and grouped by lemma, then by semantic or lexical set (or both). (2012, 96)

The first step of the analysis I extracted keywords in order to identify the most frequent semantic domains through the selection of meta-discursive lexical items. In this step of the analysis, I identified some incongruous lexis with respect to the most frequent keywords, after which I decided to group together the words considered incongruous, namely those words different from the keywords that one expects to find in a specialized corpus. In other words, the appropriate lexis was grouped together with the keywords, as it represents alternative wordings of the same domain, and incongruous lexis was grouped separately. Then, the data (i.e. *build* and *building*) were concordanced in order to see to what extent they act as effective clues to the frames activated by the semantic domain of architecture where the lemma *build* was placed. In other words, I looked for repeated events around *build* and *building*, namely their collocational patternings which signal that the meaning expressed is quite conventionalized. On the contrary, the absence of repeated behaviour of a word suggests that the word in question does not convey an established meaning in that discourse. This leads us – as noticed



by Philip (2010) – to consider those words as potential loci for metaphorical constructions. At this stage, the analysis became more corpus-assisted since the core of the text-based investigation lies in the study of larger textual units, in order to gain insights into further metaphorical developments also thanks to the occurrence of other lexical items (e.g. *foundations*, *pillars*, *door* and so on) from the same semantic domain.

4. Analysis and findings

To begin with, DiCo, as representative of the language of Foreign Ministers, was referenced against the BNC³ as a sample of general language. The software used for the extraction of the keywords was WordSmith Tools 5.0 (Scott 2008), where the default cut-off limit is 500 keywords. As Table 2 shows, the first fifty keywords of the corpus relative to the BNC, when ordered according to keyness, are those related to the main topics debated in foreign policy. These topics may be assembled under the following topical categories: security, European Union, environmental issues, human rights and terrorism.

N	Key word	Freq.	%	RC. Freq.	RC. %	Keyness	P value
1	WE	13,824	1.48	300,833	0.30	21,669.29	0.0000000000
2	OUR	7,605	0.82	93,455	0.09	18,986.66	0.0000000000
3	EU	1,967	0.21	44		17,987.65	0.0000000000
4	GLOBAL	1,772	0.19	3,527		9,896.85	0.0000000000
5	INTERNATIONAL	2,694	0.29	22,026	0.02	8,600.66	0.0000000000
6	SECURITY	2,274	0.24	13,713	0.01	8,462.05	0.0000000000
7	EUROPE	2,323	0.25	16,908	0.02	7,884.54	0.0000000000
8	FOREIGN	2,077	0.22	16,065	0.02	6,829.71	0.0000000000
9	WORLD	3,323	0.36	53,806	0.05	6,754.71	0.0000000000
10	EUROPEAN	2,148	0.23	20,245	0.02	6,328.06	0.0000000000
11	CLIMATE	1,171	0.13	2,782		6,206.93	0.0000000000
12	COUNTRIES	1,849	0.20	16,575	0.02	5,606.77	0.0000000000
13	BRITAIN	1,952	0.21	19,935	0.02	5,480.60	0.0000000000
14	UK	1,801	0.19	16,534	0.02	5,386.98	0.0000000000
15	RIGHTS	1,539	0.16	12,845	0.01	4,856.64	0.0000000000
16	UN	1,039	0.11	4,802		4,343.99	0.0000000000
17	IRAQ	833	0.09	2,675		3,999.70	0.0000000000
18	TERRORISM	580	0.06	690		3,689.50	0.0000000000
19	WILL	5,708	0.61	251,179	0.25	3,367.18	0.0000000000
20	AFGHANISTAN	517	0.06	613		3,291.18	0.0000000000
21	HUMAN	1,412	0.15	19,275	0.02	3,267.79	0.0000000000
22	NATIONS	793	0.09	4,115		3,156.57	0.0000000000
23	BRITISH	1,799	0.19	35,530	0.04	3,078.68	0.0000000000
24	PROSPERITY	539	0.06	1,112		2,979.01	0.0000000000
25	CHALLENGES	541	0.06	1,261		2,883.99	0.0000000000
26	FCO	302	0.03	7		2,759.31	0.0000000000
27	TODAY	1,384	0.15	23,003	0.02	2,752.07	0.0000000000
28	GLOBALISATION	311	0.03	24		2,737.95	0.0000000000
29	CHINA	753	0.08	4,912		2,698.13	0.0000000000
30	DEMOCRACY	714	0.08	4,173		2,694.72	0.0000000000
31	PEACE	903	0.10	8,707		2,623.79	0.0000000000
32	STATES	1,201	0.13	17,873	0.02	2,606.41	0.0000000000
33	UNION	1,172	0.13	17,000	0.02	2,593.35	0.0000000000
34	COMMONWEALTH	538	0.06	1,750		2,571.46	0.0000000000
35	CONFLICT	735	0.08	5,864		2,376.41	0.0000000000
36	ENLARGEMENT	339	0.04	290		2,309.55	0.0000000000
37	ECONOMIC	1,231	0.13	23,376	0.02	2,182.95	0.0000000000
38	GOVERNMENT	1,903	0.20	56,343	0.06	2,096.69	0.0000000000
39	CHANGE	1,360	0.15	31,544	0.03	1,987.00	0.0000000000
40	US	2,255	0.24	80,226	0.08	1,920.00	0.0000000000
41	THAT	14,508	1.56	1,052,259	1.06	1,905.70	0.0000000000
42	IRAN	434	0.05	1,776		1,905.06	0.0000000000
43	ENERGY	849	0.09	12,098	0.01	1,903.53	0.0000000000
44	DIPLOMACY	326	0.03	559		1,896.28	0.0000000000
45	NATO	392	0.04	1,305		1,858.26	0.0000000000
46	TRADE	1,040	0.11	19,818	0.02	1,838.32	0.0000000000
47	AND	31,551	3.38	2,624,341	2.64	1,829.77	0.0000000000
48	AFRICA	673	0.07	7,295		1,820.09	0.0000000000
49	COUNTRY	1,224	0.13	27,959	0.03	1,816.79	0.0000000000
50	UNITED	1,010	0.11	19,030	0.02	1,803.49	0.0000000000

³ The BNC wordlist is available at <http://www.lexically.net/downloads/version4/downloading%20BNC.htm>. Last Visited September 17, 2017.



Table 2. Keywords in DiCo referenced against BNC

This selective procedure between these two groups (i.e. congruous vs. incongruous) was permitted by the common collocations in this type of discourse revealed by the cluster list⁴ such as *the European Union, the international community, the Middle East, UN security council, rule of law, the global challenge, the global economy, security and peace*, and so on.

Since a word may be potentially a member of two or more domains, broadly-defined semantic domains were preferred. An example of words which may be included in more than one domain is given by “framework,” which fits into both architecture and the legal domain. The reading of concordances uncovers the semantic groupings words are related to. Needless to say, alongside the semantic groups identified, there will be terms that do not seem to fit anywhere in particular. The list of the semantic groups is reported in Table 3.

Broad semantic fields	Examples from the keywords list
Architecture	<i>build; foundation; stone; framework; barrier; cornerstone; base; walls</i>
Relation/connection	<i>ties; neighbours; cooperation; coalition; engagement, alliance</i>
Insularity	<i>borders; island; barrier</i>
Relevance	<i>crucial; important; outstanding; key; essential; vital; fundamental; imperative; focus</i>
Communication/negotiation	<i>debate; dialogue; consensus; strategy;</i>
Negotiation	<i>debate; dialogue; consensus; strategy; roadmap</i>
Problem solving	<i>decisions; initiative; action</i>
War	<i>conflict; war; attacks; coalition; risks; defence; arms; insurgency; violence; victims; alliance; allies; military; torture</i>
Confusion and suffering	<i>crisis; challenge; atrocity; concern; violence</i>
Law and business	<i>framework; treaty; partnership</i>
Size and scale	<i>power; force; influence; leading; leadership</i>
Perception	<i>vision; transparency</i>
Sports	<i>champion; leader</i>
Miscellaneous	<i>commitment; role; interest; assistance; respect; transition; term; support</i>

Table 3. Broad semantic domains extracted from incongruous keywords

The concordancing analysis started from the lemma *build* because it was the first incongruous keyword (ranking 67) with the wordform *building*, which appeared at the bottom of the keywords list, ranking 468. The choice to investigate the lemma *build* was made after reading concordances of those lexical items considered “inappropriate” but with a higher keyness value with respect to *build*. This is the case for example of *conflict* (ranking 36) which was disregarded in that its concordance analysis uncovered a literal meaning of the lemma, as shown in the following citation: “But today, the main security threat, from terrorism and conflict, comes not from conflict between states, but within states”.

The study of the expanded concordances of *build* revealed the presence of a literal meaning in three instances out of 516 citations (e.g. *build schools and hospitals*). In the other 513 concordances, the verb seems to be consciously used to give life to metaphorical interpretations. In most cases (75%), the metaphorical

⁴ The cluster list automatically computed uncovers patterns of repeated phraseology in a corpus (WordSmith Tools 2008).



constructions represent naturalised lexical collocations in general language (e.g. *build consensus*; *build future*) or conventional patternings in the language of diplomacy (e.g. *build partnership*; *build security, stability, prosperity, peace*). The strong attraction between *build* and *peace*, as well as collocations like *build/prosperity* and *build/security* suggest that these entities are objects that develop through a process of deliberate construction. These collocations feature prominently this discourse; they are conventionalised metaphors, as exemplified by the positive metaphor *peace-building*, where vocation, art and life stand at the crossroads (for full details, see Lederach 2005). It is worth highlighting here that metaphors of this type are part of the domain-specific vocabulary of diplomacy and thus “used and interpreted in the form that is conventionalized for that discourse” (Philip 2012, 88).

Building as a source domain is quite common in people’s everyday life since – as Goatly notes (2007, 190) – “the prototypically stable man-made structures are buildings.” Embracing a ‘scenario’ perspective (Musolff 2004), buildings have foundations, pillars, walls, doors, building blocks and agents who plan and build. The conceptual metaphors that can be abstracted from the data are “relationships are buildings” and “nations are buildings.” In 67% of the cases the following citations are instantiations of the former type of metaphor in the discourse of EU:

[Ex. 1] The foundation of our friendship is a shared history. (Cook 1998)

[Ex. 2] Our FP rests on two pillars: our relationship with the US and our membership of the EU. (Straw 2003)

[Ex. 3] Now is the time to build a new and productive relationship, based on friendship and free trade, and a new European partnership where we continue to develop our work on things that matter to all of us in Europe. (Johnson 2016)

Relationships are usually seen as physical or emotional connections in language, whereas in the examples above, the frame of building support structure is mapped onto the frame of dependence relations; the frame of the building remaining erect is mapped onto the frame of functional persistence of the relationships. The underlying concept is, therefore, that of construction and duration. This semantic frame is employed when talking about the relationship with other countries, above all for economic purposes; this connection between states requires time and energy, besides conscious planning. The extension of the metaphor to the more emotional type of relationship, that is friendship, presents the link between the countries as a stronger bond (i.e. building a friendship is as difficult as building a house). Like buildings, friendship can be stable or unstable but a stable friendship is better because it leads to many advantages. The use of this conceptual metaphor in diplomacy entails a shift in roles and relations from a discourse-based perspective. In the post-Brexit policy, Europeans are *neighbours* because geopolitical borders have changed, are *best friends* after the separation, and *old friends* (i.e. the countries from the Anglosphere: USA, Canada, New Zealand) are those that share history, kinship and common interests. Indeed, in an article published on the BBC News website soon after the referendum we read “We will need to re-examine the kind of society we are and the kind of relationships we want in the world.”⁵

The conceptualisation of nations in terms of buildings is extremely frequent in political discourse. Musolff (2004, 127) has noticed that this metaphor, when referred to Europe, implies “a collaborative way of living together for the European nations.” Understandably, in the discourse of diplomacy, Europe is a *house* (ex. 5), and in some cases *home* or better *family home* (ex. 4), but never a *fortress*. The five occurrences of the strong metaphor of *fortress* were found in a context of criticism of the metaphor itself as conveying negative connotations related to closure to immigration.

[Ex. 4] First to ensure that we design not a fortress Europe protecting the richer societies of Western Europe, but an open Europe which also provides the family home for the new democracies of the post-Communist world. (Cook 2000; European Union)

[Ex. 5] The rest of the world will not wait for the EU to get its own house in order. (Hammond 2015)

⁵ Brexit: ‘An unprecedented geopolitical shift’ 25 June 2016. Available at www.bbc.co.uk/news/amp/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36625209.



[Ex. 6] The EU and NATO are together the building blocks for a wider Europe (Cook 1998)

[Ex. 7] The nation state remains the building block of the international system. The nation state remains an absolutely fundamental building block of people's identity. (Miliband 2008)

[Ex. 8] If we can work together to establish the pillars of European security I have set out this evening, I am confident that we can make this aspiration a reality. Our aim must be to build lasting safety and prosperity by building firm foundations in society. (Straw 2004)

As a *home*, Europe is reinforced by its *building blocks*, namely reliable international institutions such as NATO or the nation state, seen as an explicit recognition of the identity of every member of the union.

Not only is Europe a building, but every nation-state is also a building with its strong or shaky foundations. What is interesting about the occurrences of this conceptual metaphor in the corpus is that it permeates the speeches of the first four Labour ministers. A reasonable explanation may be due to the Labour Party members' conviction of their contribution to the economic prosperity (ex. 8) of the British country as a pivot of stability.

Interestingly, in the post-Brexit era, the UK is no longer one of the *building blocks* of Europe but it is a *flying buttress* that supports the EU project from outside, as we can read in the following example:

[Ex. 9] We work on security with our European friends – and as I have said before, our role is to be a flying buttress, supportive of the EU project, but outside the main body of the church.

Now is the time to build a new and productive relationship, based on friendship and free trade, and a new European partnership where we continue to develop our work on things that matter to all of us in Europe. (Johnson 2016)

A buttress is a huge structure built against a wall to support the height of a building. It implies a non-temporary architectural device that begins as a support to building a new position (that of the UK) on an existing foundation. The metaphor sounds ambiguous: it highlights the stability given by the flying buttress and it hides instability if Britain does not become an integral part of the new structure, namely the new Europe.

Examples 10 and 11 instantiate the same conceptual metaphor of "nations are buildings," the nation is Britain, or better a "Global Britain," that is a European state which would like to be in control of its own destiny in an age of internationalism.

[Ex. 10] We do not want to cling to a Little England. We want to build a Global Britain. (Cook 2001)

[Ex. 11] At the heart of our vision for Britain is a belief that we can design a new modern Britain, a Britain that recognises its history but has the vigour and energy of a young, can-do society. (Cook 1999)

Another metaphor which pertains to the same semantic domain of architecture is provided by the collocate *bridge*, which construes connecting metaphors, used to express one of the objectives in diplomacy, namely creating and improving relationships between countries.

[Ex. 12] Globalisation requires us to build bridges, to bring down barriers, to achieve recognition with all the countries in the world. (Cook 2000, European Union discourse)

[Ex. 13] Britain has a long tradition of building bridges between cultures. (Cook 1997, European Union discourse)

[Ex. 14] One strength that Britain brings to the task of bridge-building is that modern Britain is a multi-faith, multi-cultural society. (Cook 2000, European Union discourse)

[Ex. 15] I also emphasised the need for a long-term political solution that builds bridges between the different religious communities. (Hague 2011, Middle East discourse)

By foregrounding the image of the *bridge*, the above examples conceptualise the meaning of linking supposedly distinct ethnic groups. Despite its geographical features, the image of Britain that emerges is that of a nation able to span and link otherwise foreign cultures. Bridge-building is a common metaphor in the



rhetoric of diplomacy used to refer to the bridging of differences, or to the reconciliation of both global and local divergences (Coward 2009, 32). Apart from the sole citation found in Hague's sub-corpus with reference to the Middle East and different religions (ex. 15), the metaphor of bridge-building features more particularly in Cook's sub-corpus. No instance of *building bridge* was found in the following FMs' speeches.

Cook's need to resort to the conventional bridge-building metaphor was due to his foreign policy of promoting the European Union project and to his wish to win over the euro sceptics among both politicians and citizens. Another reason is that the necessity for *bridge building* seems to result from the "ever-diminishing ability of different communities to live independently or in isolation because of the forces of globalization" (Cox 2007, 32). Connected to the latter reason is the use of *drawbridge* in Boris Johnson's speech delivered on December 2, 2016. Here, Johnson argues that Britain, as a non-European member, can play a global role in preventing a retreat of democracy, "where the strong are free to devour the weak."

[Ex. 16] But not a nation hauling up the drawbridge or slamming the door. A nation that is now on its mettle. A nation that refuses to be defined by this decision. (Post-Brexit EU-UK relations)

In example 16, the minister claims that after people's voting to leave the EU, Britain has the opportunity to launch a new forward-looking approach for its foreign policy. He explains that for the UK Brexit does not mean *hauling up a bridge* or detaching itself from the international community. In other words, the unusual collocation (*pull up the drawbridge* is the unmarked phrase) implies that the Brexit vote does not mean that the UK is becoming isolationist, or *slamming the door* to Europe, but only that the UK is regaining control of its democratic institutions. The phrase *hauling up the drawbridge* is the effect of the so called "bordering discourse" related to illegal immigration (see Scott 2015).

The same negative connotation is conveyed by the metaphor *slamming the door*. The only occurrence of *slam* as a collocate of *door* was found in Boris Johnson's corpus, where his deliberate use of the verb uncovers his effort to promote his positive view on legal migration and democracy. On the contrary, former ministers resort to a more 'diplomatic' use of *doors* as symbolizing any opening to a new structure, to a new world, to a new scenery, as in the example which follows:

[Ex. 17] The strategic case for enlarging to the current candidate countries and for keeping the door open to other EU neighbours remains as powerful as ever. (Beckett 2007)

[Ex. 18] Now we have a chance to make that Europe whole again. The Iron Curtain has gone. We must not tolerate it being replaced by a curtain of gold brocade separating the wealthy rich countries of the present European Union from poorer countries beyond the borders of the present European Union. We have to open our doors and embrace those new democracies, not just as an act of economic reality, but also as a matter of principle so that we can build one common house and enjoy freedom, justice and shared values within Europe. (Cook 2000)

In example 18, while the concept of Europe is explained by Cook, a novel metaphor is construed (*a curtain of gold brocade*) which follows the political, military and ideological barrier erected by the Soviet Union after the WWII to avoid open contact with non-communist countries. Although curtains are decorative elements in a house, they constitute a sub-domain of architecture.

5. Discussion and concluding remarks

The aim of this paper was to investigate the semantic frames used by foreign ministers to scaffold their choices in diplomacy and discuss the solutions of the issues on the international agenda. The computational approach was embraced to discern systematic broad semantic frames in the wider discourse of diplomacy. The architecture domain was discovered to be the most salient in this specialised corpus when referenced against English as general language. Cognitive and discourse-based approaches were then applied for discussing the findings around the meta-discursive words *build* and *building*. Two main conceptual metaphors were extracted from the semantic domain of architecture, namely "relationships are buildings" and "nations are buildings," which make the discourse of diplomacy metaphorically conventionalised.



Results have shown that the architecture “scenario,” operationalised into concrete symbols and tangible images (*doors, pillars, foundations*) is *functional* to the specialised discourse of diplomacy. In this scenario doors and doorways for example stand for both an entrance and an exit, and have, therefore, been connected with passageways. In diplomacy, doors symbolize beginnings and transitions but above all good opportunities. In the case of Cook’s corpus, the instances of this metaphorical expression stand for joining the euro. The *open door* is used to show the opportunities offered by being a member of the EU, above all at the economic level. In the case of Beckett’s corpus, the door of the building/Europe is open to non-Europeans. The metaphor may be glossed as “open doors provide opportunities” and closed doors are missed opportunities.

At the level of language, novelty occurs when words are used metaphorically in ways which differ from their conventional applications, sometimes as substitutions for part of the wording of a pre-existent linguistic metaphor (Kövecses 2005, 52).

Given all the linguistic examples, the mappings that constitute the architecture metaphor are complex and interrelated and its implications may be captured at the level of the architecture “scenario.” From the broader conceptual metaphor, different specific scenarios emerge such as “doors opened or closed,” (or variation of the same pattern, e.g. *close/slam the door; pull up bridge/haul up the drawbridge*), or “iron curtains/curtains of gold brocade are barriers.” In the design of a huge building, Britain may decide to be a flying buttress or a building-block. By resorting to it, diplomats make discourse simpler but at the same time they trigger evaluative and emotional responses. Let us think about the lack of connections, for example “bridges,” which activates a negative emotional reaction: the departure from the EU, intended as a bridge that collapses, may be seen as a situation to be feared for all the consequences above all at the economic level of life.

Since the architectural scenario is pervasive in the corpus and it is operationalised into more conventional, rather than novel metaphorical patterns, ministers rely on it to express their stance on the issues debated, in particular EU-UK relationships. In their conventionality, these conceptualisations “operate in silence, yet they help to shape the opinion of millions” (Philip 2010,190).

Further developments of this research might look at the interpretation of the effects of these language choices on public opinion.

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