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## Methodological Approaches to Metaphor Identification in Political Media Discourse: A Corpus-Based Perspective

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**Annotation** *Metaphor is an important linguistic tool in political media discourse, as it helps represent political events, social problems and public actors through more concrete domains such as war, journey, disease, natural force or construction (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Semino, 2008). However, metaphor analysis requires a systematic method, because selecting only "interesting" examples may make the research subjective. This article discusses several approaches to metaphor identification from a corpus-based perspective: MIP (Pragglejaz Group, 2007), MIPVU (Steen et al., 2019), Critical Metaphor Analysis (Charteris-Black, 2004) and DMIP (Reijnierse et al., 2018). It argues that these methods can be combined: MIP and MIPVU help identify metaphorical language, DMIP helps distinguish deliberate metaphor, while Critical Metaphor Analysis explains rhetorical and ideological functions. Corpus tools support the process by showing frequency, collocations and repeated patterns, but manual contextual analysis remains necessary. Therefore, the article proposes a combined model that includes corpus search, manual identification, annotation, quantitative comparison and qualitative interpretation.*

**Keywords** *Metaphor identification, political media discourse, corpus-based analysis, MIP, MIPVU, Critical Metaphor Analysis, DMIP*

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## Siyosiy media diskursida metaforani aniqlashning metodologik yondashuvlari: korpusga asoslangan nuqtayi nazar

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**Annotatsiya** *Metafora siyosiy media diskursida muhim lingvistik vositalardan biri hisoblanadi, chunki u siyosiy voqealar, ijtimoiy muammolar va jamoat arboblari urush, yo'l, kasallik, tabiiy kuch yoki qurilish kabi aniqroq sohalar orqali ifodalashga yordam beradi (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Semino, 2008). Biroq metaforalarni tahlil qilish tizimli yondashuvni talab qiladi, chunki faqat "qiziqarli" misollarni tanlash tadqiqotni subyektiv qilib qo'yishi mumkin. Ushbu maqolada metaforani aniqlashga oid bir nechta yondashuvlar korpusga asoslangan tahlil nuqtayi nazaridan ko'rib chiqiladi: MIP (Pragglejaz Group, 2007), MIPVU (Steen et al., 2019), Critical Metaphor Analysis (Charteris-Black, 2004) va DMIP (Reijnierse et al., 2018). Maqolada ushbu usullarni birgalikda qo'llash mumkinligi ta'kidlanadi: MIP va MIPVU metaforik til birliklarini aniqlashga, DMIP ehtimoliy ataylab ishlatilgan metaforalarni ajratishga, Critical Metaphor Analysis esa ularning ritorik va ideologik vazifalarini tushuntirishga yordam beradi. Korpus vositalari chastota, kollokatsiyalar va takrorlanuvchi modellarni ko'rsatish orqali tahlilni qo'llab-quvvatlaydi, biroq qo'lda bajariladigan kontekstual tahlil zarur bo'lib qoladi. Shu sababli maqolada korpus*

*qidiruvi, qo'lda identifikatsiya qilish, annotatsiya, miqdoriy taqqoslash va sifatli talqinni o'z ichiga olgan kombinatsiyalashgan model taklif etiladi.*

**Kalit so'zlar** *Metaforani aniqlash, siyosiy media diskursi, korpusga asoslangan tahlil, MIP, MIPVU, Critical Metaphor Analysis, DMIP*

## Методологические подходы к идентификации метафоры в политическом медиадискурсе: корпусно-ориентированная перспектива

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**Аннотация** *Метафора является важным лингвистическим средством в политическом медиадискурсе, так как она помогает представлять политические события, социальные проблемы и общественных деятелей через более конкретные сферы, такие как война, путь, болезнь, природная сила или строительство (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Semino, 2008). Однако анализ метафор требует системного подхода, поскольку выбор только «интересных» примеров может сделать исследование субъективным. В данной статье рассматриваются несколько подходов к идентификации метафоры с точки зрения корпусного анализа: MIP (Pragglejaz Group, 2007), MIPVU (Steen et al., 2019), критический анализ метафоры (Charteris-Black, 2004) и DMIP (Reijnierse et al., 2018). В статье утверждается, что эти методы могут использоваться в комбинации: MIP и MIPVU помогают выявлять метафорический язык, DMIP позволяет определить потенциально намеренную метафору, а критический анализ метафоры объясняет её риторические и идеологические функции. Корпусные инструменты поддерживают этот процесс, показывая частотность, коллокации и повторяющиеся модели, однако ручной контекстуальный анализ остаётся необходимым. Поэтому в статье предлагается комбинированная модель, включающая корпусный поиск, ручную идентификацию, аннотацию, количественное сравнение и качественную интерпретацию.*

**Ключевые слова** *Идентификация метафоры, политический медиадискурс, корпусный анализ, MIP, MIPVU, критический анализ метафоры, DMIP*

### Introduction

Metaphor has become an important object of study in political discourse analysis because political language rarely describes reality in a completely neutral way. Political events are often explained through familiar and

concrete images, which is consistent with the cognitive view of metaphor as understanding one domain in terms of another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Elections may be presented as *battles*, reforms as roads, corruption as a disease, and social protests as *waves*. These

expressions may look ordinary, especially because they are repeated very often in media language. Still, they are not empty stylistic details. They help readers understand abstract political situations through domains which are easier to imagine (Semino, 2008).

Political media discourse is especially important for metaphor research. Media texts do not only report political events. They also select words, organize meanings and create frames through which the public receives information. A headline such as *the battle for democracy* already gives the reader a specific way to look at politics. It suggests conflict, opponents, struggle and possible victory or defeat. In the same way, when migration is described as a *wave* or *flood*, the focus may move from human experience to uncontrollable movement and *pressure*. Because of this, metaphor can influence how political problems, social actors and possible solutions are understood (Charteris-Black, 2004; Semino, 2008).

However, the study of metaphor in political media discourse has a methodological difficulty. It is not enough to say that some expression "sounds metaphorical". Such an approach may become too subjective. Different researchers may select different examples and then build different interpretations from them. The Pragglejaz Group explains that researchers often differ in their intuitions about what should be treated as a metaphorical word or phrase, and this makes empirical studies harder to compare. This was one of the reasons why *MIP* was proposed as an explicit and flexible method for identifying *metaphorically used words* in real discourse (Pragglejaz Group, 2007).

The problem is even more complicated because many political metaphors are conventional. Words such as *attack*, *defend*, *campaign*, *pressure*, *collapse*, *path* and *growth* may no longer look creative to the reader. They may simply seem like normal political vocabulary. Nevertheless, their meanings often still come from more concrete domains such as

physical conflict, movement, force, destruction or biological development. For this reason, metaphor identification must be systematic. The researcher needs to check how a word is used in context, whether it has a more *basic meaning* in other contexts, and whether the *contextual meaning* can be understood through comparison with that *basic meaning* (Pragglejaz Group, 2007).

The aim of this article is to discuss the main methodological approaches which can be used for identifying and analyzing metaphor in political media discourse. The article pays attention to *MIP*, *MIPVU*, **Critical Metaphor Analysis**, *DMIP* and corpus-based analysis. These approaches answer different questions. *MIP* asks whether a word is metaphorically used. *MIPVU* gives a more detailed system for identifying *metaphor-related words*. **Critical Metaphor Analysis** connects metaphor with ideology, persuasion and power relations. *DMIP* helps to see whether a metaphor is potentially deliberate, that is, whether it is made noticeable as a communicative device. The article argues that the strongest model for political media discourse is not one method alone, but a combination of corpus tools and careful manual interpretation.

### **Metaphor Identification as a Methodological Problem**

Metaphor identification is one of the most difficult stages in metaphor research. At first sight, it may seem easy. A researcher reads a political article, notices expressions such as *economic storm*, *political battle*, *wave of migration* or *path to reform*, and marks them as metaphors. But this is not enough for academic research. If the researcher chooses only those expressions that look interesting or expressive, the analysis becomes impressionistic. It becomes difficult to explain why one expression was selected and another one was ignored.

This difficulty is not only practical. It is also theoretical. Metaphor can appear at different levels of language and thought. A word may be metaphorically used in one

context, but the conceptual metaphor behind it may be broader. For example, in the sentence *the government is fighting inflation*, the word *fighting* can be identified as metaphorically used because it describes economic policy through the domain of physical conflict. At the conceptual level, this may be connected with the mapping ECONOMIC PROBLEMS ARE ENEMIES or ECONOMIC POLICY IS WAR (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). These two levels are related, but they are not the same. If the researcher does not separate linguistic expression from conceptual mapping, the analysis may become too general.

Another problem is that the same lexical unit may be literal in one text and metaphorical in another. The word *battle* can refer to a real military event in a report about war, but it can also refer to competition between political parties in an election article. The word *storm* can describe weather, or it can describe public anger around a political decision. The word *virus* can refer to a biological disease, but it can also be used to describe corruption, extremism or misinformation. Therefore, metaphor identification cannot be based only on a list of words. Context is necessary.

This is where purely automatic search becomes limited. Corpus tools can find all examples of *battle*, *attack*, *wave* or *collapse*, but they cannot always decide whether each use is metaphorical in the given context. A search engine can collect examples. It cannot fully interpret them. For political media discourse this matters a lot, because metaphorical and literal meanings may appear close to each other. A text about war, elections and public policy can use the same word in different ways.

There is also the problem of expectation. If a researcher expects to find war metaphors in political discourse, words connected with conflict may receive more attention than other metaphorical domains. As a result, less obvious metaphors of construction, health, machinery, movement or performance may be missed. This is why metaphor identification should be based on clear criteria, not only on the researcher's

interest (Imani, 2022; Pragglejaz Group, 2007). A systematic procedure does not remove interpretation completely, but it makes the interpretation more controlled.

For this reason, metaphor identification should be understood as a methodological process (Pragglejaz Group, 2007; Steen et al., 2019). It includes reading the whole text, identifying lexical units, checking *contextual meanings*, comparing them with more *basic meanings*, and then deciding whether the meaning can be explained through cross-domain comparison. In a corpus-based study, this process becomes even more important because examples are not only interpreted, but also counted and compared. If the identification criteria are weak, the numbers will also be weak.

### Main methodological approaches

#### MIP and MIPVU

The **Metaphor Identification Procedure**, or *MIP*, is one of the most influential methods for identifying *metaphorically used words* in discourse. It was developed by the Pragglejaz Group in order to reduce the subjectivity of metaphor analysis (Pragglejaz Group, 2007). The aim of *MIP* is not to find beautiful or creative metaphors only. Its aim is to give the researcher a clear procedure for deciding whether a lexical unit is metaphorically used in a particular context.

*MIP* consists of several main steps. First, the researcher reads the whole text in order to understand its general meaning. Second, the researcher determines the lexical units in the text. Third, for each lexical unit, the researcher establishes its *contextual meaning*. Then the researcher checks whether the lexical unit has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts. According to the Pragglejaz Group (2007), *basic meanings* are often more concrete, related to bodily action, more precise, or historically older. However, the *basic meaning* is not necessarily the most frequent meaning (Pragglejaz Group, 2007). Finally, if the *contextual meaning* contrasts with the *basic meaning* but can be understood in comparison

with it, the lexical unit is marked as metaphorical.

For example, in the expression *the opposition attacked the reform*, the word *attacked* does not usually mean physical violence. Its *contextual meaning* is "criticized strongly". Its more *basic meaning* is connected with physical aggression. These meanings are different, but the political meaning can be understood through comparison with the physical meaning. Therefore, *attacked* can be marked as metaphorically used (Pragglejaz Group, 2007). This example may later be connected with a broader conceptual metaphor such as POLITICAL DISAGREEMENT IS CONFLICT. However, *MIP* itself first identifies the metaphorically used word, not the whole conceptual metaphor.

This distinction is important for political media discourse. Political texts contain many conventional metaphorical expressions, and they are easy to overlook. Words such as *pressure*, *collapse*, *growth*, *path*, *defense* and *campaign* may look like ordinary political vocabulary. Still, they often carry metaphorical motivation from *physical force*, movement, biological development or conflict. *MIP* helps the researcher slow down and check the actual use of words in context. It also helps avoid the weak statement "this is metaphorical because I feel so". Academic analysis needs more than that.

*MIPVU* develops this logic further (Steen et al., 2019). It was created by Steen and colleagues as a procedure for identifying *metaphor-related words* in discourse. The *MIPVU* manual explains that the procedure is intended as an autonomous tool for finding *metaphor-related words* in usage, and that these words can be treated as lexical expressions of underlying cross-domain mappings (Steen et al., 2019). It also keeps the word-by-word approach, but gives more detailed categories than *MIP*.

The main difference is that *MIPVU* does not only mark *indirect metaphorical* uses. It also includes *direct metaphor*, *implicit metaphor*,

*metaphor flags* and *new formations* (Steen et al., 2019). *Indirect metaphor* is close to the original *MIP* logic. A word is used indirectly when its *contextual meaning* can be explained through a more *basic meaning* from another domain. For example, *political pressure* can be analyzed through the more basic idea of *physical force*.

Direct metaphor is different. It appears when the *source domain* is introduced more openly as an image or comparison. For example, *the election became a battlefield* directly brings the domain of war into the description of politics. The word *battlefield* does not only express a conventional political meaning. It creates a visible image. This is especially common in headlines and opinion pieces, where political conflict is often dramatized.

Implicit metaphor is more complex. It appears through substitution or ellipsis, when a later word or missing element continues a metaphor already introduced in the text. *MIPVU* also marks *metaphor flags*, such as *like*, *as*, *as if*, *similar*, *compare*, *analogy* and other signals that a cross-domain comparison may be present. The manual also explains that new lexical formations should be analyzed by checking their parts for possible metaphor-related meanings (Steen et al., 2019).

For corpus-based political media analysis, *MIPVU* is especially useful because it provides a more detailed *annotation* system. The researcher can mark whether a metaphor-related word is indirect, direct or implicit, and whether a word functions as a metaphor flag. This makes the data more organized. It also allows comparison between different types of metaphor. For example, conventional *indirect metaphors* may show the normal metaphorical vocabulary of political journalism, while *direct metaphors* may show stronger rhetorical framing.

At the same time, *MIPVU* has limitations. It is more complex than *MIP*, and it takes more time. The researcher must make careful decisions, and different coders may disagree about difficult examples. For a large corpus, full

word-by-word analysis can become very slow. Still, *MIPVU* is valuable because it gives the researcher a more precise way to annotate metaphor-related language. It is not enough for ideological interpretation by itself, but it gives a strong base for later analysis.

#### **Critical Metaphor Analysis and DMIP**

*MIP* and *MIPVU* help the researcher identify metaphorical or *metaphor-related words*. However, political media discourse requires one more step. It is not enough to know that a metaphor exists. The researcher also has to ask what the metaphor does. Does it create fear? Does it make a leader look strong? Does it present a social group as a threat? Does it make a policy seem natural, urgent or heroic? These questions are closer to

#### **Critical Metaphor Analysis.**

**Critical Metaphor Analysis**, usually connected with Charteris-Black (2004), combines cognitive linguistics, pragmatics, corpus linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis. Its purpose is not only to identify metaphors, but also to interpret their ideological and persuasive functions. Yan (2022) explains that Charteris-Black's approach includes three main stages: metaphor identification, metaphor interpretation and metaphor explanation. Through this model, researchers can study metaphor at the textual, discourse and social levels, and they can also discuss the relation between language, thinking and social background.

In political media discourse, this is very important. A metaphor may frame a political issue in a way that is not neutral. For example, if corruption is described as a disease, the political actor who fights corruption may appear as a doctor or healer. If migration is described as a *flood*, migrants may be represented less as people and more as an uncontrollable natural force. If reform is described as a road, then political change becomes a journey with direction, steps and a desired destination. These frames are not innocent (Charteris-Black, 2004). They guide interpretation.

**Critical Metaphor Analysis** is useful because it connects linguistic choices with ideology, evaluation and persuasion. It asks why some *source domains* are chosen and what kind of political meaning they support. Yan's (2022) corpus-based study of government work reports, for example, found major metaphors such as journey, war and building metaphors, and linked them with political functions such as guiding the public, stimulating feelings and creating positive orientation. This shows how metaphor analysis can move from words to political meaning.

However, **Critical Metaphor Analysis** also has a risk. If the identification stage is not systematic, interpretation may become too subjective. A researcher may find only those metaphors which support the expected ideological reading. Therefore, *CMA* becomes stronger when it is combined with *MIP* or *MIPVU* (Imani, 2022; Pragglez Group, 2007; Steen et al., 2019). *MIP* and *MIPVU* help identify *metaphor-related words* more carefully, while *CMA* explains their rhetorical and ideological role. In this sense, they work better together than separately.

*DMIP* adds another useful layer. The **Deliberate Metaphor Identification Procedure** was developed by Reijnierse, Burgers, Krennmayr and Steen (2018) to identify *potentially deliberate metaphor* in language use. The key question is whether the metaphor is only conventional, or whether the *source domain* is made visible as a perspective in communication. The authors explain that the distinction between potentially deliberate and *non-deliberate metaphor* depends on whether the *source domain* functions as a distinct referent in the meaning of the metaphorical utterance (Reijnierse et al., 2018).

This distinction is useful for political media discourse because not all metaphors are equally visible. For example, *the minister attacked the proposal* is metaphorical, but it is also very conventional. The reader may understand it simply as "criticized". The *source domain* of physical *attack* may not be very

active. But if a headline says *Parliament turns into a battlefield*, or if an article compares an election to a *Game of Thrones* plot with corpses, swords and enemies, then the *source domain* becomes much more noticeable. Reijnierse et al. (2018) give a similar example from political journalism, where the Republican race is described through a *Game of Thrones* war scenario; this is contrasted with more conventional political uses such as *attacks*, *battle* and *campaign*.

DMIP is careful in its terminology. It does not claim to know the actual psychological intention of the writer. The researcher cannot directly enter the journalist's mind, so the analysis must rely on textual evidence rather than assumed psychological intention. Instead, DMIP identifies *potentially deliberate metaphor* on the basis of textual evidence (Reijnierse et al., 2018). This is important because media texts may foreground metaphors in headlines, lead paragraphs, comparisons and extended metaphorical scenarios. Such metaphors may have a stronger framing effect than many conventional metaphorical words in the body of the article.

Therefore, DMIP can be used after MIPVU. First, the researcher identifies *metaphor-related words*. Then, the researcher checks whether some of these metaphors are potentially deliberate. Finally, **Critical Metaphor Analysis** can explain why these foregrounded metaphors matter politically. This sequence is useful because it separates different tasks: identification, classification, salience and interpretation.

### **Corpus-Based Perspective and Proposed Model**

A corpus-based perspective is important because it helps the researcher move beyond isolated examples. One strong metaphor in one article can be interesting, but it does not yet prove a larger pattern. A corpus allows the researcher to examine many texts and to see whether certain metaphorical expressions repeat across articles, topics or media sources. In political media discourse, this is necessary

because framing is often produced not by one expression only, but by repeated lexical choices.

Corpus tools can support metaphor research in several ways (Charteris-Black, 2004; Imani, 2022). First, they can show *frequency*. The researcher can see how often words such as *battle*, *attack*, *wave*, *path*, *collapse* or *growth* appear in the corpus. Second, *concordance lines* can show the immediate contexts of these words. For example, the word *battle* may appear in *battle against corruption*, *battle for democracy* or *battle over migration policy*. Third, collocation analysis can show which words regularly occur together. If *wave* frequently occurs with migration, criticism, protests or violence, this may show a pattern where social and political events are represented as natural forces.

However, corpus tools cannot identify metaphor fully automatically. They can collect possible examples, but each example still needs contextual checking. The word *attack* may be literal in a report about military violence and metaphorical in an article about parliamentary debate. The word *virus* may be biological in one article and metaphorical in another. Therefore, a corpus-based approach should not replace manual procedures such as MIP or MIPVU. It should support them.

A possible model for political media discourse can include several stages, combining corpus evidence with *manual identification* and critical interpretation. First, the researcher compiles a corpus of political media texts. The corpus should be clearly described: sources, period, genre, topic, number of texts and approximate number of words. Without this information, the analysis becomes difficult to evaluate. Yan's (2022) study, for instance, clearly describes a small corpus of English government work reports from 2018 to 2022 and gives the total number of tokens. A similar level of transparency is needed in political media research.

Second, the researcher conducts an initial *corpus search*. This may include *frequency lists*,

keyword searches, collocation analysis and *concordance lines*. At this stage, the aim is not to make final claims, but to find candidate metaphorical expressions. For example, the researcher may search for words from common *source domains* such as war, journey, disease, natural force and construction. This step is helpful, but it is not enough.

Third, the researcher checks the candidate examples manually using *MIP* or *MIPVU*. This is where *contextual meaning* and *basic meaning* are compared. If the word is metaphor-related, it can be annotated. The *annotation* may include the lexical unit, *contextual meaning*, *basic meaning*, *source domain*, *target domain* and type of metaphor-related word. If *MIPVU* is used, the researcher can also mark whether the example is indirect, direct, implicit or a metaphor flag.

Fourth, the researcher can use *DMIP* to identify *potentially deliberate metaphors*. This is especially useful for headlines, explicit comparisons and extended metaphorical scenarios. Some metaphors may be conventional and frequent, while others may be less frequent but more communicatively salient. This distinction matters in media discourse. A rare but powerful metaphor in a headline can shape interpretation more strongly than a repeated conventional word in the middle of an article.

Fifth, the researcher interprets the findings through **Critical Metaphor Analysis**. At this stage, numbers and examples are connected with political meaning. The researcher asks which *source domains* dominate, which political actors or problems they describe, and what kind of framing they create. For example, if reforms are repeatedly described through journey metaphors, political change may be represented as movement towards a better future. If migration is repeatedly described through water metaphors, it may be framed as large, uncontrolled and threatening. If corruption is represented as disease, then political action may be framed as treatment or removal.

This model combines quantitative and qualitative analysis, which is important in corpus-based **Critical Metaphor Analysis** (Charteris-Black, 2004; Imani, 2022). Quantitative analysis shows which metaphorical patterns are frequent and how they are distributed. Qualitative analysis explains what these patterns mean in context. Neither part is enough alone. Pure counting can become mechanical, while pure interpretation can become too subjective. In corpus-based metaphor analysis, the useful point is the interaction between numbers and interpretation.

The proposed model can therefore be summarized as follows: corpus compilation, initial search, manual metaphor identification, *annotation*, identification of *potentially deliberate metaphors*, and critical interpretation. This model is not perfect, and it requires time. But it is more reliable than selecting several impressive examples and building the whole argument on them. Political media discourse needs such careful method because it is often ideologically sensitive. Small lexical choices may carry large interpretive effects.

### Conclusion

This article discussed methodological approaches to metaphor identification in political media discourse from a corpus-based perspective. The main argument was that metaphor analysis should not depend only on the researcher's intuition. Political media texts contain many metaphors, but these metaphors are not always obvious. Some are creative and visible, while others are conventional and almost hidden inside normal political vocabulary. Because of this, the researcher needs a systematic method.

*MIP* is useful as a foundational procedure because it gives a clear criterion for metaphorical use: *contextual meaning*, *basic meaning*, contrast and comparison (Pragglejaz Group, 2007). *MIPVU* extends this procedure by identifying *metaphor-related words* in a more detailed way, including indirect, direct and

*implicit metaphor, metaphor flags and new formations* (Steen et al., 2019). **Critical Metaphor Analysis** adds an interpretive level by connecting metaphor with ideology, persuasion and political framing (Charteris-Black, 2004). *DMIP* adds another layer by asking whether some metaphors are potentially deliberate and made visible as communicative devices (Reijnierse et al., 2018).

A corpus-based perspective connects these approaches with empirical data. It helps the researcher observe *frequency, collocations* and repeated metaphorical patterns across many political media texts. At the same time, corpus tools cannot replace manual interpretation. They can find possible examples, but they cannot fully decide how a word

functions in context. For this reason, the strongest model is a combined one: *corpus search, manual identification, annotation, quantitative comparison* and *qualitative interpretation*.

Such a model is especially suitable for political media discourse because media language does not only describe politics. It also frames political reality. Metaphors can make problems look like wars, journeys, diseases, waves or buildings. These images may influence how readers understand responsibility, danger, progress and possible solutions. Therefore, careful metaphor identification is not a small technical issue. It is the basis for understanding how political meaning is constructed in media texts.

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