INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF TECHNOLOGY AND ACADEMIC RESEARCH

ISSN: 2224-6878 | Pakistan Volume 6, No. 6.

IF: 15.9 | 2026 http://waerasia.org/index.php/ijtar

COGNITIVE METAPHORS OF «HOMELAND» IN PRINT MEDIA DISCOURSE: A CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract. This article investigates the cognitive metaphors through which the concept of «homeland» is constructed in print media discourse across different cultural contexts. Drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) as developed by Lakoff and Johnson, and its cross-cultural extension by Kövecses, the study identifies six dominant metaphorical models - HOMELAND IS A MOTHER, HOMELAND IS A SHELTER, HOMELAND IS A LIVING ORGANISM, HOMELAND IS A LOST PARADISE, HOMELAND IS A FORTRESS, and HOMELAND IS SACRED GROUND - and examines how their distribution varies across national newspaper traditions. The analysis shows that metaphorical framing of «homeland» is neither universal nor arbitrary: it is culturally conditioned, historically shaped, and ideologically motivated. Print media both activates and stabilises these cognitive frames, with significant implications for how belonging, duty, and national identity are publicly understood.

Keywords: cognitive metaphor, homeland, print media discourse, cross-cultural linguistics, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, newspaper language, medialinguistics.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language about homeland is rarely literal. Newspapers do not merely state that a territory exists or that people live within its borders; they *construct* the homeland as a nurturing mother, a besieged fortress, a sacred inheritance, or a paradise lost. These constructions are not ornamental flourishes of journalistic style - they are cognitive metaphors in the technical sense established by Lakoff and Johnson: systematic mappings between a concrete *source domain* and an abstract *target domain* that structure how speakers think, reason, and act in relation to a concept.[1]

The concept of «homeland» is particularly rich territory for metaphor research because it is simultaneously geographical, emotional, political, and ideological. Unlike terms such as «state» or «territory» which carry primarily administrative denotations, «homeland» is affectively loaded from the outset. When newspaper language further elaborates this concept through metaphor, it channels that affective load in ideologically specific directions: the metaphor of homeland as *fortress* implies threat and the need for defense; the metaphor of homeland as *mother* implies unconditional love and filial obligation. These implications are not equivalent, and their differential deployment across cultures and newspaper traditions is the central concern of this article.[2]

This article pursues three objectives: to identify the dominant cognitive metaphors of «homeland» in print media discourse; to examine how these metaphors vary across cultural and national newspaper contexts; and to analyse the ideological work performed by each metaphorical model. The study draws on Conceptual Metaphor Theory and its cross-cultural

[1]George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, Metaphors We Live By. University of Chicago Press, 1980. pp. 3–14.

[2]On the ideological loading of homeland vocabulary, see Ruth Wodak et al., The Discursive Construction of National Identity. Edinburgh University Press, 1999. pp. 20–35.

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extensions, applying the analytical framework to illustrative examples drawn from newspaper discourse across different cultural traditions.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Conceptual Metaphor Theory, introduced in Lakoff and Johnson's foundational work, holds that metaphor is not a feature of language but of thought.[3] A conceptual metaphor such as ARGUMENT IS WAR does not merely describe argument in military terms; it structures the entire cognitive domain of argument - we *attack* positions, *defend* claims, and *demolish* opposing views. The metaphor organises what aspects of the concept are highlighted and what aspects are suppressed.

Zoltán Kövecses extended this framework to address cross-cultural variation, demonstrating that while some conceptual metaphors appear to be universal - grounded in shared bodily experience - others are culturally specific, reflecting the particular historical, social, and ideological contexts of a given community.[4] This cross-cultural dimension is essential for media research: what a given national newspaper tradition renders as the *natural* or *obvious* way of speaking about homeland is, in fact, a culturally specific cognitive habit whose origins and implications can be traced.

2.2 Metaphor in media discourse

Jonathan Charteris-Black's corpus approach to metaphor in political and media language shows that metaphors in public discourse are selected not randomly but in accordance with the rhetorical and ideological aims of the text producer.[5] Newspapers, as institutional actors with editorial positions, consistently favour certain metaphorical frames over others, thereby reproducing and legitimating particular world-views. Critical Metaphor Analysis - Charteris-Black's methodology - combines cognitive linguistics with Critical Discourse Analysis to reveal the ideological dimension of metaphor selection.

For the concept of «homeland» this means that the choice between, say, the LIVING ORGANISM metaphor (homeland is healthy or sick, growing or decaying) and the FORTRESS metaphor (homeland is under siege, must be defended) is not a stylistic preference but an ideological act — one that constructs different subject positions for readers and implies different political responses.

2.3 «Homeland» as a cognitive concept

Within cognitive semantics, «homeland» can be analysed as a radial category with a prototype at its core - the intimate, emotionally charged place of origin - and more peripheral extensions that shade into civic, political, and ideological senses.[6] The metaphors activated in

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[3]Lakoff and Johnson. Metaphors We Live By. University of Chicago Press, 1980. p. 5.

[4]Zoltán Kövecses, Metaphor in Culture: Universality and Variation. Cambridge University Press, 2005. pp. 1–22.

[5]Jonathan Charteris-Black, Corpus Approaches to Critical Metaphor Analysis. Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. pp. 34–52.

[6]Eleanor Rosch, "Principles of Categorization," in Cognition and Categorization, ed. Eleanor Rosch and Barbara B. Lloyd. Lawrence Erlbaum, 1978. pp. 27–48; Ronald W. Langacker, Cognitive Grammar: A Basic Introduction. Oxford University Press, 2008. pp. 44–59.

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newspaper discourse selectively foreground different regions of this radial structure: the MOTHER metaphor foregrounds the intimate-emotional core; the FORTRESS metaphor foregrounds the political-defensive periphery. The article will show that this selective foregrounding is systematic and culturally variable.

3. DOMINANT METAPHORICAL MODELS OF «HOMELAND» IN PRINT MEDIA

3.1 HOMELAND IS A MOTHER

Among the most pervasive metaphorical models across newspaper traditions is the construal of homeland as a maternal figure. This metaphor activates a source domain of nurturing, unconditional care, and filial obligation. In newspaper discourse, it typically surfaces in contexts of emigration, loss, or sacrifice: a writer describes those who left as children who «abandoned their mother» or fallen soldiers as those who «gave their lives for the motherland».

The HOMELAND IS A MOTHER metaphor is found across diverse newspaper traditions - from European broadsheets to Central Asian and East Asian press - suggesting proximity to the universal end of Kövecses's universality-specificity cline. Nevertheless, its emotional register varies: in some traditions the maternal homeland is primarily a source of comfort and identity; in others, she is a figure demanding sacrifice and obedience. This variation is ideologically significant.

3.2 HOMELAND IS A SHELTER / HOUSE

The construal of homeland as a dwelling - a house, a shelter, a roof - foregrounds the functions of protection, security, and domesticity. Newspaper texts employing this metaphor tend to appear in contexts of displacement, refugee crises, or debates about immigration: the homeland is the place one longs to return to, the shelter that has been lost, or - from a different political angle - the house that must not be opened indiscriminately to outsiders.[7]

The SHELTER metaphor is notable for its political versatility: it can be deployed both by those arguing for the protection of displaced persons («everyone deserves a homeland to return to») and by those arguing for restrictive national policies («we must protect our home»). The same source domain thus serves opposed ideological ends depending on which aspects of the house schema - hospitality or boundary - are foregrounded.

3.3 HOMELAND IS A LIVING ORGANISM

When newspaper writers describe the homeland as growing, flourishing, falling ill, or recovering, they are activating the LIVING ORGANISM metaphor. This model is particularly prevalent in political and economic commentary, where national development is construed as biological growth and social problems as pathologies requiring treatment.[8]

Cross-culturally, the organic metaphor shows notable variation. In some newspaper traditions - particularly those with strong developmental-nationalist orientations - it is overwhelmingly positive: the homeland grows, blooms, and renews itself. In others, it foregrounds vulnerability: the homeland is fragile, wounded, or in need of healing. The biological

[7]Andreas Musolff, Metaphor and Political Discourse: Analogical Reasoning in Debates about Europe. Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. pp. 67–82.

[8]Kövecses, Metaphor in Culture, pp. 44–61. On organic metaphors in political discourse broadly, see also Charteris-Black, pp. 88–104.

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framing in both cases naturalises what are, in fact, political and social processes, presenting them as organic inevitabilities rather than outcomes of human decisions.

3.4 HOMELAND IS A LOST PARADISE

Diaspora newspapers and emigrant-oriented print media characteristically activate the LOST PARADISE metaphor, construing the homeland as a place of primal wholeness from which the speaker has been separated. The temporal structure of this metaphor is retrospective: the homeland exists fully only in the past, and the present is defined by its absence.[9]

The vocabulary associated with this metaphor - longing, exile, return, memory, roots - is highly emotionally saturated and relatively consistent across cultural traditions, suggesting that the experience of displacement generates a cross-culturally stable metaphorical pattern. What varies is the degree to which mainstream national newspapers (as opposed to diaspora publications) draw on this frame: in some traditions, the LOST PARADISE metaphor enters national press during periods of war or mass displacement; in others, it remains largely confined to minority or emigrant publications.

3.5 HOMELAND IS A FORTRESS

The FORTRESS metaphor construes the homeland as a defended enclosure under actual or potential threat from external forces. It is among the most explicitly political of the metaphorical models identified here, and its distribution in newspaper discourse correlates strongly with periods of heightened geopolitical tension, nationalist mobilisation, or intense debate about borders and immigration.[10]

Cross-culturally, the FORTRESS metaphor shows the clearest ideological asymmetry: it is overwhelmingly associated with conservative and nationalist editorial orientations across national newspaper traditions, while progressive and cosmopolitan-oriented press tends either to avoid it or to deploy it ironically. This asymmetry confirms Charteris-Black's argument that metaphor selection in public discourse is a reliable index of ideological positioning.

3.6 HOMELAND IS SACRED GROUND

The sacralisation of homeland - its construal as holy, consecrated, or spiritually charged territory - appears across newspaper traditions with varying degrees of explicitness. In some cultural contexts, the sacred ground metaphor draws on explicitly religious vocabulary («holy land», «sacred soil»).[11]

This metaphor performs a distinctive ideological function: by placing the homeland in the domain of the sacred, it removes it from the domain of rational political negotiation. What is sacred cannot be sold, surrendered, or compromised - it can only be venerated and defended. The SACRED GROUND metaphor is thus one of the most ideologically absolute of the models identified here, and its appearance in newspaper discourse is a reliable marker of heightened nationalist or religious-nationalist discourse.

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[9]William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies 1.1 1991. pp. 83–99.

[10]Teun A. van Dijk, Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach. Sage, 1998. pp. 117–134.

[11]Nira Yuval-Davis, "Belonging and the Politics of Belonging," Patterns of Prejudice 40.3 2006. pp. 197–214.

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4. CROSS-CULTURAL VARIATION AND DISCUSSION

The six metaphorical models identified above do not distribute evenly across national newspaper traditions. Three patterns of cross-cultural variation emerge from the analysis.

First, the MOTHER and SHELTER metaphors show the broadest cross-cultural reach, appearing consistently across geographically and linguistically diverse newspaper traditions. This relative universality is explicable in Kövecses's terms: both models are grounded in near-universal human experiences - the experience of maternal care and the experience of dwelling - that provide stable cognitive anchors across cultures.[12]

Second, the FORTRESS and SACRED GROUND metaphors show the strongest correlation with specific political and historical contexts. Their prevalence in a given newspaper tradition is conditioned not by universal cognitive experience but by the particular geopolitical situation, religious history, and ideological climate of the society in question. These are the metaphors most susceptible to what Charteris-Black calls «ideological recruitment» - their deployment in service of specific political agendas.

Third, the LOST PARADISE metaphor shows a distinctive sociolinguistic distribution: it is most prominent in publications oriented toward displaced, migrant, or diaspora communities, cutting across national traditions. Its cross-cultural stability suggests that it is less a feature of a particular national newspaper tradition than a cognitive response to the shared experience of displacement and belonging-in-absence.

Taken together, the six models reveal that the concept of «homeland» in print media is not a unified representation but a cognitive field in which multiple, sometimes competing, metaphorical construals are simultaneously available. Newspaper editors and writers select among these construals - often without conscious awareness - in ways that reflect and reproduce the ideological orientations of their publications and the cultural assumptions of their audiences. Media literacy, in this sense, requires the capacity to recognise which metaphorical frame is being activated and what cognitive and ideological implications follow from it.

5. CONCLUSION

This article has mapped six dominant cognitive metaphors of «homeland» in print media discourse - MOTHER, SHELTER, LIVING ORGANISM, LOST PARADISE, FORTRESS, and SACRED GROUND - and examined their cross-cultural distribution and ideological functions. Three principal conclusions emerge.

First, the metaphorical construction of «homeland» in newspaper language is systematic, not incidental. Specific source domains are activated repeatedly and consistently across texts and traditions, forming recognisable cognitive frames that shape public understanding of national belonging.

Second, cross-cultural variation in metaphor selection is real and ideologically significant. While some metaphors - particularly MOTHER and SHELTER - approach cross-cultural universality, others - particularly FORTRESS and SACRED GROUND - are strongly conditioned by specific historical, political, and religious contexts. This variation confirms Kövecses's model of universal and culture-specific conceptual metaphors and extends it to the domain of media discourse.

[12]Kövecses, Metaphor: A Practical Introduction, 2nd ed. Oxford University Press, 2010. pp. 195–212.

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Third, print media plays an active role in stabilising and circulating metaphorical frames for «homeland», thereby contributing to the cognitive environment in which readers form their understandings of national identity, belonging, and political duty. Critical awareness of this metaphorical dimension is essential for both media literacy and sociolinguistic research.

Future research might extend the corpus to digital and social media, where metaphorical frames circulate with greater speed and reach, and to diachronic studies tracking shifts in dominant metaphors across periods of political change.

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