

# A GLOBAL WAR AGAINST AVIAN INFLUENZA

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## Abstract

This article offers a cognitive semantic analysis of a few conceptual metaphors as instantiated in the news discourse of the British press, more particularly the crisis that followed the 2005 outbreak of avian influenza. Main attention is given to the use of metaphors which rely on the notions of *war* and *force*. Drawing on the work by Schön and by Lakoff, and following the line of research by some other scholars such as Nerlich, it is claimed that exposure to particular metaphors to describe a complex political reality can affect readers' perceptions and value judgements in accordance with the logic displayed by the metaphors encountered. Finally, the typical action frames evoked by politicians in food scares are analysed.

**Keywords:** *political discourse, avian influenza, generative and conceptual metaphors.*

## 1. Introduction

Avian influenza ("bird flu" or H5N1), an infectious disease of birds caused by type A strains of the influenza virus, was first identified in 1996 in China. Then, the following year, the disease received unprecedented publicity since it was found that, in Hong Kong, avian flu had infected not only chickens but also humans. From that time, the disease, first recorded in 1878 in Italy, has resurfaced once and again mainly in Asia but also in parts of Europe, the Near East and Africa. It is likely that this infection among birds has become endemic in certain areas and that human infections resulting from direct contact with infected poultry and/or wild birds will continue to occur. Thus, the farming industry will still have to get over new health threats as they come up. The British government's response to this new crisis was to implement the tested slaughter policy but also discuss and, in some cases, unlike in the past, start a programme of vaccinating infected animals.

In this paper we argue that the framing of this disease was carried out through mainly one metaphor FIGHTING AN ILLNESS IS A WAR; but also we find the disease characterized as A JOURNEY, quite often, and, later on, as A SUPERNATURAL FORCE and A NATURAL FORCE. The use of the war metaphor might appear at first sight as something which does not merit attention, as other diseases have previously been reported in

the media as equally a war being fought (such as BSE and foot and mouth disease). Anyhow, the interesting and striking difference in our case is that this war being waged against the disease went beyond a single country (Vietnam or Cambodia) to become in the process a global and international war through the use of a new metaphor A GLOBAL NETWORK. In consequence, facing this new outbreak saw the innovative approach of using a joint and coordinated effort across many agencies on an international level (WHO -World Health Organization-, FAO -Food and Agriculture Organization-, OIE -Office International des Epizooties-). Finally the typical two policies activated when facing food scares, slaughter and vaccination, are discussed.

As for the period of research, it covered one of the peaks of the disease from October in 2005 to March in 2006. The reason why this period was chosen was because it was precisely in October 2005 when the disease reached Europe (countries such as Romania, Croatia, Greece, Italy and Austria), which increased tremendously the newsworthiness of the news story.

## **2. Conceptual framework**

Since it has become evident that metaphor can frame our understanding of disease (Rosenberg and Golden 1992), in this study we will draw mainly on the work of the political analyst Donald Schön (1993) on generative metaphors, the study of conceptual metaphors in cognitive linguistics (Lakoff and his associates) and the application of conceptual metaphors to the analysis of some scientific debates using a more cultural and social approach than that proposed by Lakoff (Nerlich, Hamilton and Rowe 2002; Nerlich 2004, 2005).

Schön argued in a paper on social policy that “the essential difficulties in social policy have more to do with problem setting than with problem solving, more to do with ways in which we frame the purposes to be achieved than with the selection of optimal means for achieving them” (1993: 138). This line of thought has been pursued by many other scholars such as Boers (1997) when he says that the problem solving strategies to a given problem will be determined by the logic of the metaphors readers have been exposed to.

An overlapping view of metaphors, that by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), is used in our characterization of the media report of this crisis. This cognitive view of metaphors helps us understand and structure highly abstract concepts in terms of more concrete ones. Metaphors are not only linguistic but cultural and cognitive phenomena; that is to say, they are

materialized in actual utterances by speakers but in fact they are conceptual in nature. Conceptual metaphors such as FIGHTING AN ILLNESS IS A WAR are seen as mappings across two conceptual domains: the conceptual source domain (war), and the conceptual target domain (fighting an illness). Metaphors are not only rhetorical devices but a necessary tool in our daily life to think, talk and reason when it comes to dealing with abstract concepts. This is, then, also true when we talk about politics, because as Edelman (1977) contented at the core of political communication is the ability of the politician to use metaphor persuasively, depending on what is needed at a certain moment.

As mentioned above, Nerlich has applied this cognitive view of metaphor to the analysis of some scientific debates, such as GM food or foot and mouth disease; one of the metaphors most widely discussed on her papers on food and mouth disease is precisely that of FIGHTING A DISEASE IS WAR (2004). For that reason, we follow her example in this article trying to apply her view onto a crisis similar to the one (foot and mouth disease) she analysed.

The hypothesis guiding this paper is that metaphors contributed to the political and cultural understanding of the crisis that followed the 2005 outbreak of avian influenza in the UK, through the use of images such as those of a war or a journey; but, mainly, guided and influenced readers' minds according to the political needs of the moment. In other words, as Cubo de Severino, L., D. Israel and V. Zonana (1988) claimed, metaphors have two very important functions: a) to give a more concrete representation of the situation at hand, making it clearer; and b) to manipulate readers' minds through the inference patterns and value judgements generated by the metaphors being used.

The study will proceed by analysing, from a cognitive perspective, the rhetoric used to report on this socio-economic issue in a major British newspaper *The Times* (a centre-right broadsheet), more particularly its online version *The Times online*. The reason why this paper was selected was because it followed the expansion of avian flu around the globe much more closely than any of the other national newspapers. The articles analysed referred to avian flu in one way or another and appeared in the leader pages of the home news sections, which shows the relevance of the story. The article length varied but on average we came across articles of over 350 words. As for the sources being used, most articles relied heavily on WHO and government sources.

The analysis will be divided into two different stages. In a first stage, which covered the whole period of study (October, 2005, through March, 2006), the metaphor of war was

used with a frequency which ranged on a gradient from very often at the beginning of the period up to a point where it was completely absent by March; the journey metaphor, on the other hand, was equally used all through the period. In a shorter second stage, January through March 2006, four new metaphors emerged with strength: the CONTROL METAPHOR, A VIRUS IS A NATURAL FORCE, A VIRUS IS A SUPERNATURAL FORCE and the GLOBAL NETWORK metaphor, very much in line with the idea that we live in a global village.

### 3. Rhetorical frames used in reporting on avian influenza

Let us start by defining the concept of *frame*. According to Van Dijk (1997: 21):

We propose that frames define units or chunks of concepts which are not essentially, but *typically* related. [...]. Conceptually, there is no immediate or essential relation between the concept of 'table' and the concept of 'cereal', nor between 'soap' and 'water', or between 'waitress' and 'menu'. They are distinct and do not presuppose each other. Yet, they are organized by the frame of 'breakfast', 'washing' and 'restaurant', respectively.

Thus, frames are causal chains that represent frequently repeated actions in such a way that mentioning one of the actions in the chain, for example, ordering a steak, activates the whole frame of being in a restaurant. Other labels which have been proposed to grasp the same concept are those of *script* or *scenario* (Schank and Abelson 1977).

As said above, the analysis will be divided into two different stages corresponding to the use of the different metaphors. The first stage seems to reproduce the typical scenario of similar situations in the past -as an instinctive mechanism being triggered on the part of the different countries- with tested metaphors of WAR and JOURNEY. On the other hand, the second stage represents an attempt to come to terms with the situation using a more reasoned approach. First by the use of the CONTROL METAPHOR and then by convincing readers of the unpredictability of the situation via A VIRUS IS A NATURAL FORCE and A VIRUS IS A SUPERNATURAL FORCE; finally, by asking them to join in this global war, through the image of a GLOBAL NETWORK.

#### 3.1. First stage

The two metaphors most heavily relied on and which will provide the discourse with a highly structured skeleton are the war and journey metaphors.

### *3.1.1. War metaphor*

According to Propp (1968) and Lakoff (1992), one of the most powerful stories in our culture to explain complex political realities revolve around frames (Schön 1993) of war and confrontation. These provide a readily-made construct where we find opponents are the prototypical actors engaged in a struggle or battle and pursuing one objective: winning control over the other. In the case at hand, there is a villain to be fought (the virus or the animal carrying it), a victim (the farming community, and the industry of tourism, also badly affected by the crisis), and a hero (the governmental institutions handling the crisis). This scenario (Lakoff 1992) offers readers a quick and easy way to access and interpret events.

Some of the correspondences between source and target domains are:

#### Typical activities in a war: attacking and defending

The two opponents are governments and the virus. Governments are presented as attacking the enemy, the disease, and defending themselves from the attacks by the enemy.

- (1) A culling plan to combat avian flu. (T 16/Oct/05)
- (2) Britain on the defensive over bird flu plan. (T 20/Feb/06)

#### Strategies conducted in the course of a war

A strategy devised to try to control the course of the war.

- (3) If bird flu does arrive in Britain, the government's strategy is simple: isolate the outbreak site and slaughter all poultry in the immediate vicinity to stop the disease spreading. (T 22/Oct/05)

#### Armed forces

An army of veterinaries was drafted in.

- (4) Dr. Juan Lobroth, senior animal health officer for the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation, said he would like to have at least 20 more Veterinarians to send to Indonesia and Turkey simply to train "brigades of cullers". (T 29/Jan/06)

#### Use of weapons

The use of weapons in this war was both offensive and defensive. Offensive such as the use of vaccines, and defensive such as the closure of the countryside through the establishment of exclusion zones, hoping to stop the advance of the disease.

- (5) Key weapon in battle to stop the H5N1 virus [vaccines]. ( T 23/Feb/06)
- (6) Exclusion zones will be thrown around farms affected by the disease. Under

old rules, only poultry for immediate slaughter could be moved out of these areas. (T 21/Feb/05)

### Shield

The species barrier makes it difficult for infectious diseases to be transmitted from one species to another. Thus, it is a type of protection to try to prevent the disease from jumping from birds to domestic fowl but, mainly, from animals to humans, which would provoke a pandemic, as reflected in the media.

- (7) If and when H5N1 does “go human”, it is likely to spread unstoppably around the world. This “species barrier” must be defended. (T 6/March/06)

### Military activities

The danger of the enemy makes the army (members of the government or involved with the government in one way or another) give all their attention to what is happening around them.

- (8) He [the Chinese Health Minister] announced that President Hu wanted an all-out effort to prevent the spread of the virus. “We cannot let down our guard, we cannot under-estimate the risks of the outbreaks,” he added. (T 22/Oct/05)

This war scenario is justified on the grounds that we are dealing with a very dangerous and violent enemy: AVIAN FLU IS A KILLER. This other metaphor was highly frequent in discussions of the disease where avian flu was continuously labelled as a “deadly virus” which “claims victims” and “kills people”.

- (9) “The deadly H5N1 virus is heading our way. Will we all die? It’s coming closer and it strikes without warning.” (T 16/Oct/05)

Next we are going to analyse the journey metaphor, which fits in very well with the frame of a war as waging a war implies some type of movement.

#### *3.1.2. Journey metaphor*

This metaphor is one of the most pervasive metaphors we use when dealing with abstract concepts such as that of fighting a disease, which is not at all surprising since this metaphor is grounded in everyday physical experience. Moving our body from one place to another is a typical and recurring activity; thus, being a prime example in the domain of physical activity it is also a good candidate for metaphorical mappings in abstract domains. In the case at hand, the disease, as will be seen in the examples, is conceptualized as a physical entity moving

over a path towards a goal: infecting Britain. This is so because, being the data extracted from a British newspaper, the whole situation is being watched and reported from British eyes, so to speak.

We will once again provide some examples within the given correspondences (source and target):

#### An activity is motion over a path

The nature of the path remains implicit and only the movement is referred to.

- (10) Brussels ordered European poultry farmers to move their flocks indoors last night, as part of an emergency package of measures to prevent the potentially lethal bird flu spreading across the continent. (T 15/Oct/05)

#### Difficulties are obstacles

The species barrier is an obstacle along the way to be avoided by the disease. In the case at hand, the way the disease gets over the obstacle is jumping it.

- (11) The disease has already jumped species, leading to three human outbreaks, the most serious of which killed 23 out of 34 people infected in Asia last year. (T 2/Oct/05)

#### Progress

In its travelling the disease is reaching places such as Britain, from where the whole issue is being reported, though other examples mention the Middle East or Africa. One way or another, the disease seems to be moving freely globally.

- (12) All the strains identified have a common origin, a 1996 virus in Guangdong, China. The research suggests that random infections by migrating birds are unavoidable, and that the virus will almost certainly reach Britain in this way. (T 14/Feb/06)

#### Direction of the motion

We see the disease travelling towards the west.

- (13) But European governments are scrambling to halt the westward spread of the virus and are taking their own measures to prevent it crossing the borders from Turkey. (T 11/Jan/06)

#### Ways of moving

The disease can move along the way differently, depending on the purpose. If it wants to move without attracting attention, it will creep; if, on the other hand, something on the way

has to be avoided, it will jump. All this means that the disease is attributed agency, and thus given the capacity to think and act accordingly.

- (14) We must work with her [Mother Nature], not against her, tilling the soil without Chemicals and allowing out chickens to roam free, even as bird flu creeps closer to our door. (T 1/march/06)

### Means of transport

The vehicle used for the motion can be a train, as the example shows.

- (15) “Vaccination does not necessarily stop the disease in its tracks”, said the Environmental Secretary. (T 20/Feb/06)

### *3.2. Second stage*

As a war scenario leads to victory or defeat and no progress in the fight against the disease was being made -in fact the geographical expansion of the virus continued from country to country-, the uncertainty about what to do in the case of a possible pandemic grew. As a consequence, this situation generated a new set of metaphors where war, though still being used, became less visible. Thus, the more energetic discourse of war was replaced by a more moderate and uncertain approach where the new metaphors we come across are: THE CONTROL METAPHOR, A VIRUS IS A NATURAL FORCE, A VIRUS IS A SUPERNATURAL FORCE and THE GLOBAL NETWORK METAPHOR.

In this second stage, January through March 2006, as was said above, we still find examples of the highly structured war and journey metaphors. The interesting difference is that this war is portrayed in a new light as it becomes a global issue, which means that the disease will be fought now on an international basis. The second interesting difference is that two new metaphors, A SUPERNATURAL FORCE and A NATURAL FORCE METAPHORS, are introduced.

#### *3.2.1. Control metaphor*

When coming to terms with the disease, this metaphor calls for a more moderate approach, politically and economically, than the war metaphor. Thus, the avian flu was now reported in the following terms:

- (16) The FAO warned Turkey’s neighbours, including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Syria Georgia, Iraq, and Iran, to put control and surveillance measures in place immediately. (11/Jan/06)
- (17) The research published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* indicates that the virus has been spreading in an uncontrolled fashion in



China for the past decade. (14/Feb/06)

This control effort by government and institutions such as WHO and FAO was typically framed through the container schema (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), where the image of a physical body with its boundaries is imposed onto the disease. In the case at hand, the boundaries of the disease were those of a farm, a town, a region, a country, a continent, etc. Let us see some examples:

- (18) Far more human and animal exposure to the virus will occur if strict containment does not isolate all known and unknown locations where the bird flu virus is currently present. (11/Jan/06)
- (19) The measures were taken to stop the deadly H5N1 virus spreading from wild birds to domesticated birds after it was confirmed that the virus had arrived at the fringes of Europe, with cases in Turkey and a suspected case in Romania (15/Oct/05)

### *3.2.2. Supernatural and natural force metaphors*

The use of these two new metaphors, well illustrated in the work of Nerlich (2004) and Nerlich and Halliday (2007), seems to prove that the disease is getting out of control, after having been running non-stop since the H5N1 was identified in Guangdong (China, 1996), and the government now needs to resort to the use of metaphors which present the issue as something uncontrollable, as the images of a doomsday scenario, tidal waves or fires convey. Thus, the logic behind these images pushes the public to believe that we just have to take it as it comes.

#### A) A VIRUS IS A SUPERNATURAL FORCE

The discourse of the supernatural has always proved to be a very powerful narrative to catch people's attention (important as the journalist wants readers to read the articles s/he has written) and has provided the government with the right framework to ask people to join in as the evil forces will hit everyone and each of us. Therefore, readers, unless they want to question the validity of this discourse, have no other option but to embrace the government's rhetoric and the logic resulting from it.

As can be seen, all the examples appeared in February, March 2006, that is to say, towards the end of this outbreak, when the disease had already been circulating silently and freely all over the world for a long while, particularly from the end of 1996.

To get a flavour of this metaphor, we are going to mention some examples:

- (20) Residents have every reason to believe in a curse. When it was placed under bird flu quarantine last week, the town renowned for its hedonistic nightlife was only just recovering from a bombing by Islamic extremists last July. (T 18/Feb/06)
- (21) It pays to expect the worst. (T 9/Mar/06)
- (22) Bird flu: a Dooms Day Scenario? (T 2 Mar/06)

## B) A VIRUS IS A NATURAL FORCE

The disease is conceptualised as something beyond human control, such as a wave or a tsunami, which means that nothing could have been done in the first place to prevent it; though as one of the examples implies something could be done to minimise the impact once it has happened.

Through the different metaphors discussed, we can see how the handling of the disease by the government is presented sometimes as an issue that the government is controlling and some other times as an issue which is unpredictable and thus difficult to control. That is to say, talking about waging a war against the disease, somehow, presents the government as engaging in a struggle to fight and reduce the enemy devising the most effective strategies and using the right weapons. On the other hand, when the disease is portrayed as a natural force, the only option for the government is to react to the unpredictable whenever it happens; the grip is on the part of the natural force, at least in the first stages. The logic of this metaphor, once again, is that people should pull together to save the nation.

### Tidal wave

- (23) What we do not want is either a New Orleans situation or a tsunami situation -that is you could predict something was going to happen but you don't do anything about it to prepare-. (T 20/Feb/06)

### Fire

- (24) He was one of an army of men in masks and white boiler suits deployed to to disinfect cars and round up birds for destruction as the virus flared across the country. (T 15/January/2006)
- (25) Bird flu sweep Orkney isle as 100 chickens die on remote farm. (T 17/Mar/06)

### Wild beast

- (26) The deadly avian flu strain was closing in on Britain last night after a dead duck was confirmed with the disease in France. (T 18/Feb/06)
- (27) The results have lifted immediate threat of the virus having already crossed the Channel but experts warned that it would be foolish to ignore the growing risk as the disease creeps closer. (T 20/Feb/06)

- (28) The monster at our door. (T 17/Mar/06)

### 3.2.3. *Global network metaphor*

In the report prepared by Scudamore and Harris (2002) from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on the lessons learned from the experience of the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in Great Britain in 2001, the emphasis is placed upon a number of topics, one of them being the engagement with other countries. This is precisely one of the lessons put into practice in this new food scare at the beginning of 2006. Another issue, though this had already been implemented in the outbreak of foot and mouth disease 2001, was the establishment of contingency plans: surveillance zones were introduced imposing movement restrictions.

As a consequence, the main difference between how other diseases have been tackled in the past -with the exception of the 2003 SARS epidemic- and how this new epidemic was dealt with was the search for a global mechanism to stop the spread of the disease, involving as many countries as possible in the process. Let us mention some examples:

- (29) Global network is needed to combat bird flu pandemic. (T 2/Mar/06)
- (30) The risk is global. We need to exercise solidarity. (T 11/Jan/06)
- (31) The news came as a group of American military scientists called for the setting-up of a global network of laboratories...(T 2/Mar/06)
- (32) We need global solidarity against global disease. (T 6/Mar/06)

At this stage, the discourse of the war metaphor does not disappear but rather it fuses with the GLOBAL NETWORK metaphor, and the result is that of FIGHTING AN ILLNESS IS A GLOBAL WAR. Some of the examples we come across are the following:

- (33) Vietnam, Indonesia, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand have been offered millions of pounds to help them to combat avian flu in the attempt to prevent a global flu human pandemic. (T 28/Jan/06)
- (34) Bird flu has killed five young people in Azerbaijan, bringing the global death toll of the H5N1 strain of the virus to 103. (T 25/Mar/06)
- (35) The absence of adequate surveillance in much of Africa, South America and Asia leaves a gap in the world's defences against an influenza pandemic that wealthier countries need to address. (T 2/Mar/06)

This frame of a global network is, thus, deeply embedded in a modern cultural and social narrative of a globalised society, where we all belong to the same global village and are all involved in a fight, global fight, against what is perceived to be the enemy: avian influenza. Familiarity with the semantics of a metaphor is, then, an ingredient that can help enhance the

potentiality of a new metaphor as it taps into the common sense and inference patterns of a given community.

#### 4. Action frames on food scares

Slaughter and vaccination policies are the typical two options discussed by governments when there are outbreaks of health and food scares, as was the case with BSE and foot and mouth disease.

On the one hand, the slaughter policy is the way other governments, and particularly the British government, have responded to other crises in the past. The result has been a failure because as Zwanenberg and Millstone (2003: 27) put it: “they subordinated consumer protection and public health to an economic and political agenda.” Thus, this policy is the natural and traditional option to resort to when a quick response is needed, as has already been tested before so many times, but it implies looking at the past and not engaging with the future.

On the other hand, the vaccination policy is a scientific challenge only to be adopted if new ways to deal with an old disease want to be found. Or as Nerlich put it (2004: 20): “... is an opportunity to search for new (socially and ethically responsible) remedies to an old problem and an opportunity to discuss openly the state of British agriculture and agricultural practices...”. Anyhow, many farmers regarded this policy with suspicion as the whole process of vaccinating animals could have taken at least six months. In spite of the suspicion, this vaccination policy, for the first time, came to play a more important role as it was discussed more frequently and more openly and it gave way to some disagreement even among European members. Some countries were in favour of the vaccination programme whereas some others rejected it.

- (36) European vets today gave approval to controversial applications from France and the Netherlands to vaccinate selected poultry flocks against avian flu, a ruling with profound implications for the rest of the EU. (T 22/Feb/06)
- (37) Britain continues to oppose the vaccination programme on grounds of both cost and effectiveness, as do Germany, Austria, Denmark and Portugal. (T 22/Feb/06)

Despite the discussions running on the issue of vaccination, the slaughter policy was still the preferred option by many countries due to:

- Scientific reasons: there are some problems associated with the use of vaccines as sometimes the virus may be hard to spot and can cause new outbreaks if unvaccinated animals are exposed.

(38) “Vaccinated birds could incubate the disease without showing symptoms, allowing low-level spread among flocks and increasing the likelihood of its mutation into a form transmissible to people.” (T 22/Feb/06)

- Economic reasons: If a vaccine is used then the country will lose its disease-free status. An important element in the government’s opposition to vaccination was a degree of national pride in holding onto the UK’s disease-free status.

(39) Mrs Beckett [The Environmental Secretary] acknowledged that there were also market considerations because using a vaccine effectively costs a country its “disease-free” status, closing down export market. (T 20/Feb/06)

- Practical reasons: there are logistical problems in vaccinating millions of birds.

(40) Each bird must be inoculated manually and it may take three weeks for the bird to develop immunity. (T 20/Feb/06)

This issue of vaccination was precisely one of topics included in the document on the lessons from the experience of the outbreak in Great Britain in 2001 (Scudamore and Harris 2002). After this short discussion, it can be concluded that vaccination gained some territory against slaughter in this outbreak, at least at EU level; although it is expected that in the future it will be given a more important role within the wider international community.

## 5. Conclusion

Diseases also travel. In our era of globalisation, diseases such as avian influenza have become global diseases. Thus, in this new and enlarged scenario, which may be even more enlarged in the future with travel to aerospace, new ways to fight diseases and, even more important from our point of view, new linguistic structures to provide the skeleton to how we think, talk and reason about diseases are needed.

The aim of this paper was to show how the whole issue of the avian influenza crisis was reported in the online version of *The Times*, particularly the period running from October

(2005) to March (2006), by using a number of conceptual metaphors such as FIGHTING AN ILLNESS IS A GLOBAL WAR or A VIRUS IS A NATURAL FORCE and A VIRUS IS A SUPERNATURAL FORCE to give a more concrete picture of this abstract and complicated issue and, in consequence, providing readers with linguistic structures to talk about it; and, secondly, to push readers into a particular frame, with its resulting logic, in such a way that challenging what is presented as fixed and common sense becomes more difficult. Going back to Boers (1997), the strategies used to deal with a situation will, then, be determined by the type of metaphors which have been chosen to report the issue. This means that throughout this paper we intended to show the persuasive use of metaphors in the hands of politicians, who will change or adapt their metaphors to suit their needs and circumstances creating and, then, recreating new scenarios, which shape and then reshape readers' political reality and, based on that, their future decisions and actions.

As for the typical action frames on food scares, in this crisis new steps were given towards adopting a vaccination programme, but still on a country basis. This means that embracing an emergency vaccination programme at EU level as the appropriate tool to respond rapidly and flexibly to future outbreaks still remains a challenge. In other words, it can be said that there is a clear absence of an international regulatory body which goes well beyond the advisory role of institutions such as WHO or FAO. An institution conferred with that power would be an important and advisable step for moments of crisis like the one at stake as the procedure would be well-coordinated from a single source.

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