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METAPHORS IN THE DISCOURSE OF THE NATIONAL

ABSTRACT

This article provides a general overview of the intersecting fields of metaphor research and research on 'nations' and 'the national', reflecting on the levels at which metaphor is relevant to the study of these concepts. Many case studies concentrating on specific issues, such as EU integration, have demonstrated that metaphors play a role in constructing both national and supranational identities (see e.g., Marks 2004; Hülse 2006; Musolff 2000 etc.). However, a general overview of the levels at which metaphors are relevant to the study of 'the national' is still lacking. This study addresses these levels by focusing on three topics: the banal reference to the nation as a personified individual and its possible implications, the family metaphor as the key metaphor that constitutes the nation and related concepts in public and nationalistic discourse, and the type and role of metaphors in scholarship concerned with nations.

KEYWORDS: *conceptual metaphors, deliberate metaphors, conceptualisation of nations, nationalism*

Metafore v diskurzu o nacionalnem

IZVLEČEK

Članek nudi splošen pregled prekrivajočih se področij raziskovanja metafor ter raziskovanja »nacij« in »nacionalnega«, pri čemer obravnava ravni, na katerih je metafora relevantna za preučevanje teh konceptov. Mnoge študije primerov, ki se osredotočajo na specifična vprašanja, kot je evropska integracija, so pokazale, da metafore igrajo določeno vlogo pri ustvarjanju tako nacionalnih kot nadnacionalnih identitet (glej npr. Marks 2004; Hülse 2006; Musolff 2000 itn.). Vendar pa še vedno manjka splošen pregled ravni, na katerih so metafore relevantne pri preučevanju »nacionalnega«. Pričujoča študija te ravni obravnava tako, da se osredotoča na tri teme: banalno nanašanje na nacijo kot posebljenega individuuma in možne implikacije tega nanašanja, metaforo družine kot ključno metaforo, ki konstituira nacijo, in povezane koncepte v javnem in nacionalističnem diskurzu ter tip in vlogo metafor v znanstvenem raziskovanju nacij.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: *konceptualne metafore, namerne metafore, konceptualizacija nacij, nacionalizem*

1 Introduction

In discussing metaphor in relation to the nation and the national (objects of nationalism's concern), it is important to consider a number of other related concepts (e.g., state, country, and nationalism). In discourse by politicians and in media discourse, as well as in informal discourse (e.g., comments on online newspaper articles), however, borderlines between countries, states, and nations are often fuzzy: proper names such as *Serbia* may refer to a country, state, and nation. Only occasionally is the usage disambiguated by mentioning the words for 'nation', 'country', and 'state' (e.g., *Srbija među pet najstarijih nacija na svetu*¹ 'Serbia among the five oldest nations in the world'). The difference between these concepts is occasionally emphasized; for instance, *Volim zemlju Srbiju, mrzim drzavu Srbiju*² 'I love the country of Serbia, I hate the Serbian state', where the border is drawn between the country (e.g. its landscapes) and the state (e.g. its institutions).

The terms *nation* and *state* are often used interchangeably, not only in public discourse and everyday language, but also in research literature. A discussion of the differences between these concepts is beyond the scope of this paper: I refer to both dictionary and encyclopedia³ definitions, and to research indicating the vague borders between them (e.g. Guibernau 2013; Smith 2014) or their problematic nature (e.g. Tishkov 2000).

Research generally agrees on linking *states* to political entities and a sovereign territory, whereas *nation* is considered a collectivity of people, a community that perceive themselves as members of the same group, whereby the group membership is judged by ethnic, cultural, or linguistic commonality, and the same institutional framework. In the definitions of *nation*, in addition to "objective" criteria (e.g., language, religion, and territory), there are also "subjective" ones; for example, sentiment, will, and perception (see, e.g., Smith 2014). I argue that metaphors are of utmost importance in these subjective criteria: metaphors can contribute to generating or preventing certain sentiments, and they influence will and perception.

In this article, a clear border between states, countries and nations is not important because all three largely relate to the same metaphor system.⁴ However, *nation* is more abstract than the other two, and I argue that it therefore requires a richer metaphorical conceptualization necessary to create a national feeling, and/or convincing a community of membership in a nation. Furthermore, metaphors are needed for maintaining a community's sense of belonging to a nation and the idea of the continuous existence of the nation.

1. Danas (news portal), 19.3.2014.

2. Krstarica (Internet forum), 20. 12. 2010.

3. Merriam-Webster online; nation, state, nationality, and country; Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

4. *Država* 'state', *zemlja* 'country', and *domovina* 'homeland' are much more frequent in South Slavic discourse found online than *nacija* 'nation': compare Google search hits (July 24th, 2015) for *naša nacija* 'our nation' = 11,900, *naša zemlja* 'our country' = 371,000 (the results also include references to 'our Earth'), *naša država* 'our state' = 342,000, *naša domovina* 'our homeland' = 129,000; *naša otadžbina* 'idem' = 5,420. *Naš narod* 'our nation/people' is also very frequent (= 356,000). A discussion of the relation of *narod* - *nacija* (see, e.g., Bringa 2003) cannot be undertaken here.

Metaphors and *nations / the national* can be related to three levels of inquiry. First, there seems to be a metaphorical dimension related to the content of the term *nation* itself, although “metaphorical” may not be the ideal descriptor. Second, scholarship concerned with nations cannot avoid metaphors (which are also common in everyday communication) at the micro-level of expression, or it deliberately uses some specific metaphors (see Section 5). Scholarship operates with metaphors to explain processes and their results, such as nations coming into being and their decline. For example, metaphors motivate expressions such as the *dying out* of a nation, and *nation-destroying* or *nation-killing* in discourse about threatened nations in multinational states (see Tishkov 2000: 631). Third, certain nations or some of their aspects are imagined, conceptualized, and conceived of in metaphors.

Discussing the meanings of nationalism as an ideology, movement, and symbolic language, Smith (2014: vii, 5–6) emphasizes three⁵ as crucial: a language and symbolism of the nation, a social and political movement on behalf of the nation, and a doctrine and/or ideology of the nation. Although acknowledging an overlap of language/discourse with the symbolism of nationalism on the one hand, and their intersection with the ideology on the other (Smith 2014: 7), Smith does not elaborate much on language and discourse. There is much to be done in this field, including systematically examining metaphors. Metaphors—interacting with symbols at various levels—are pervasive in the discourse of the nation, they provide the category of the nation with significance, and I thus claim that they are important tools of nationalism as an ideology, as well as part of the images of the nations by their members and non-members. Nations as “imagined communities” (Anderson 1991) achieve their reality with help of certain metaphors.

Nations rely on a construction of a homogeneity of culture that all people belonging to a national community share. Societies (e.g., various social actors within them) use various kinds of stories to make sense of the national communities’ past and future: the nation is always narrated and sustained through the stories told (Schwarz & West-Pavlov 2007: 179). These stories are discourses that establish, produce, and reproduce national cultures by either questioning them, or, for example, introducing new cultural patterns. The sense of a national culture discursively produced is by no means unitary: parallel and contested versions regularly coexist.

Nations are on the one hand producers of certain discourses but, on the other hand, the nation(al) itself is a product of different discourses, be they influential and related to power or less influential. Nationhood is not given: it has to be constructed in stories and narratives. These stories operate with metaphors when presenting, for instance, a nation as a person. Metaphorical expressions are part of the language of the nations and nationalism, and they are cognitive tools employed in thinking about these phenomena. Metaphors thus contribute to processes termed “nation-building” and “nation-destroying” (these terms and processes and the ideas they refer to are also based on metaphors; see Section 4). Understanding such processes, including the role and potential of metaphors,

5. Two other meanings are: a) formation or growth of nations, and b) a sentiment or consciousness of belonging to the nation.

is of outmost importance because it can aid in understanding the causes of conflicts and attaining conflict resolution.

In what follows, I concentrate on conventional conceptual metaphors—personifications and metonymies—in everyday references to states, countries, and nations in public discourse (Section 2). Section 3 looks at personification and family metaphors, and Section 4 discusses metaphors in the discourse of nationalism scholars. Section 5 provides some concluding thoughts.⁶

Following the assumption that nations, the national, and metaphors all are to some extent discursive phenomena, this overview article emphasizes the understanding of metaphors in cognitive linguistics and the advantages it offers. The examples that illustrate the phenomena addressed in the following sections are from contemporary South Slavic discourse (mainly media discourse) in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian found online in spring/summer 2015.⁷ The individual metaphors provided here solely as an illustration certainly deserve in-depth analysis that is beyond the scope of this article.

2 Conventional metaphors (personifications) and metonymies in references to nations

Distancing themselves from some traditional views, especially those of rhetoricians, who consider metaphor as a language phenomenon whose prominent function is ornamental, or a poetic device, cognitive linguists approach metaphor as a cognitive tool: they claim that people think in metaphors and conceptualize reality via metaphors (see, e.g., Lakoff & Johnson 1980). Metaphors are pervasive in the cognitive system: they are situated first and foremost in people's minds, and this affects language. In cognitive linguistics, metaphors are not merely linguistic phenomena. Metaphorical expressions in language are reflections of cognitive processes. Language expressions are not conceptual metaphors; conceptual metaphors are phenomena of human understanding the world. Nonetheless, language expressions indicate the existence of certain metaphors in the conceptual system. Early cognitive metaphor theory (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) relates many conceptual metaphors (primary metaphors; e.g., MORE IS UP)⁸ to immediate bodily experience.

Metaphorical thinking implies connecting two domains, a source and target domain, via conceptual mappings. The first domain (the source) is usually more concrete than the

6. The discourse samples were all accessed between April and August 2015.

7. Discourse found online is of course heterogeneous as to the genre (e.g., political speeches, literary texts, etc.) and register (e.g., samples found are formal and informal: the first is represented by, e.g., online (print) media, and the second by blogs and forums). The discourse samples quoted in this article are only meant as an illustration of specific metaphors, or an indicator of quantitative tendencies. Google searches provide indications of usage frequency of certain phrases (and metaphors). However, I do not use the results of these searches in any absolute sense, aware of the fact that meanings are context dependent, and that an in-depth analysis of each metaphor requires a systematic approach to the discourse type, nature of sources, context, and authors' intentions.

8. In cognitive linguistics, small capitals are a convention for indicating (conceptual) metaphors and concepts.

second one (the target). As a rule, people tend to conceptualize more abstract or less familiar concepts in terms of more concrete or familiar ones. Therefore, many source domains relate to physical reality (e.g., orientation in space, as with UP and DOWN), and target domains to less concrete and/or less tangible realms (e.g., emotions). For instance, HAPPINESS IS UP is a metaphor linking a concrete spatial domain with a less tangible domain of emotions. The basis of that metaphor is physical experience—when people are happy, their body posture and eyes are directed upwards. This is reflected in some language expressions (e.g., in English: *I'm feeling up today*; see Kövecses 2008). Recent metaphor research pays intense attention to discourse metaphors pointing to the fact that many metaphorical expressions found in discourse do not relate to immediate (bodily) experience as do many primary conceptual metaphors: instead, many metaphors are linked to specific cultural experiences, text, and discourse history (see, e.g., Zinken et al. 2007).

Concepts that need certain other domains to be conceptualized as a meaningful structure are the abstract notion of “nations” and the somewhat less abstract one of “states”: they cannot be seen and touched (setting aside the graphic representation of states on a map, but the representation itself is not the state). Using mappings from less abstract domains makes it possible to conceive of some features of nations and states.

In cognitive linguistics, metonymy is also a cognitive tool that, unlike metaphor, involves only one conceptual domain: “A metonymic mapping occurs within a single domain . . . via metonymy one can refer to one entity in a schema by referring to another entity in the same schema . . . one entity is taken as standing for one other entity in the same schema, or for the schema as a whole” (Lakoff and Turner 1989: 103).

The use of geographical names referring to countries and states is already metonymic because geographical names such as *Serbia* and *Croatia* can be thought of as metonymic designations of areas largely inhabited by Serbs and Croats. The name establishes a spatial and/or temporal link between the territory and the people living there. Furthermore, these names can be used as personifications of the Serbian and Croatian people: this most often implies certain groups of Serbs and Croats.⁹

In early cognitive linguistics, personification (understood in traditional rhetoric as a trope attributing features of humans to inanimate objects) was considered an ontological metaphor “where the physical object is further specified as being a person. This allows us to comprehend a wide variety of experience . . . in terms of human motivations, characteristics, and activities” (Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 33). Later (e.g., Lakoff and Turner 1989), personification was approached as a generalized conceptual metaphor, a cognitive process in which an entity or inanimate phenomenon is anthropomorphized and ascribed human qualities.

In everyday references to countries, states, and nations (be they blended or distinguished), such as: *Srbija se mora probuditi i shvatiti da neće uvijek imati Rusiju*¹⁰ ‘Serbia has to wake up and understand that it will not always have Russia’, one finds expressions

9. References to a whole implying its parts are a whole-to-part metonymy (meronymic metonymy).

10. Tportal (news portal), 17.4.2013.

that reflect conceptual metaphors: Serbia is implicitly ascribed the state of being asleep (because it has to wake up) and is considered capable of understanding. Such references to nations, countries, and states as people are frequent in discourse. Cognitive linguistics relates similar examples to personifications, which are ubiquitous and pervasive conceptual metaphors.

The metaphor THE NATION/STATE IS A PERSON implies that nations/states are grounded in the same moral and political milieu as individual citizens. The nation can be constructed in varying realizations of the human condition that enable one to see many of its different aspects; for example, its inclusive civic conceptions and civic values, such as religious and social tolerance. Societies are inherently bounded, and the distinction between themselves and others is important. The phenomena that make up a nation and make it distinctive (e.g., its institutions and ways of life) are articulated as a person's qualities.

In discourse using personification, a country/state referred to by its name is most frequently a metonymy of a national collective because only part of that collective is responsible for a certain action: in *Hrvatska je izabrala prvu predsjednicu u povijesti*¹¹ 'Croatia elected the first female president in its history' it is only a certain percent of Croatia's citizens that *Croatia* refers to.

Nations can be personified as possessing certain mental dispositions—for example, confidence and pride—and are also attributed mental processes, such as understanding (e.g., *Srbija shvata da postoje uslovi koji treba da se ispune*¹² 'Serbia understands that certain conditions have to be fulfilled').

Personification also makes it possible to ascribe emotions and states to countries: a country suffers, forgives, and sings (e.g., *Srbija u Guči pati, al' peva i prašta* 'Serbia suffers in Guča, but it sings and forgives').¹³ It possesses psychological attributes, such as willpower and confidence (see, e.g., frequent internet examples containing *Srbija/Hrvatska je odlučna...*¹⁴ 'Serbia/Croatia is determined . . .'), but also physical ones (being blind or deaf), as in *oslepljena i gluva Srbija* 'a blind and deaf Serbia'.¹⁵

In language expressions that draw on this conceptual metaphor, a country is characterized as a person with certain characteristics that define the national character in a particular situation. A personified nation exists and acts in different ways. It thinks and says different things. This metaphor is used in media discourse, but also, for instance, in manifestos of political parties, which are another realm of political discourse. Aims underlying the uses of this metaphor in different discourse types are different. In political manifestos, well-defined temporary political aims can motivate (some) uses of this metaphor. It can function as the main (or be among the main) nationalist metaphors of the nation. In different discourse samples, a nation can speak with different, even conflicting, voices.

11. N1 (news portal), 11.1.2015.

12. Radio-televizija Srbije (TV news), 7.10.2011.

13. N1 (news portal), 24.4.2015; Politika online (newspaper), 6.8.2013c.

14. E.g., Politika online (newspaper), 14.6.2013b.

15. Feral (newspaper), 7.5.2008; Danas (newspaper), 27.6.2012.

This metaphor makes it possible to construct a nation as multicultural and democratic, but also as regressive and atavistic.¹⁶

What is the role of conceptual metaphor, particularly personification, and metonymy in discourses of the nation(al)? I refrain from claiming that it necessarily *does* something, but I claim that it is able to produce various effects. The role of these tools in discourse is dependent on the discourse type, the discourse participants, and the immediate and broader discourse context.

Personification that makes it possible to conceive of a country, state, and nation as a personified individual relates to emotions. People develop much stronger emotions—be they positive or negative—towards individuals than towards objects. Personification is a helpful cognitive tool because it enables almost “direct emotional access” to otherwise abstract or diffuse entities. With its aid, discourse participants (including recipients) more easily become emotionally attached to nations, and it is precisely this attachment that creates a nation’s reality. Nations become very “real” when someone decides to defend them or die for them.

Personification and metonymy in discourse go hand in hand. At different levels of discourse, metonymy contributes to generalizing. As a consequence, for instance, one holds a generalized whole responsible (blame or credit) for actions for which only some of its parts are responsible. Metonymy in discourse thus can hide the true responsibility for some actions, as in the article headline “Srbija ne poštuje verske slobode” ‘Serbia does not respect freedom of religion’.¹⁷ In the broader context, one learns that freedom of religion is not sufficiently respected in some Serbian communities in cases of discrimination because of religious beliefs, and also that the government subsidizes the wages of Serbian Orthodox priests abroad, and that non-registered religious communities face some practical problems. These details, however, are not enough to conclude that *Serbia* as a state does not respect freedom of religion. Thus, through metonymic references, similar titles imply responsibility of a whole (an entire state with its institutions) and blur real responsibilities of the parts of that whole.

3 From persons to families: family metaphors and gender

In addition to the anthropomorphized general images of nations, states, and countries discussed, one encounters some more specific metaphors that elaborate in greater or lesser detail the relation of states and their citizens, and nations and their members. Metaphors related to family play an important role in discourse of the nation(al): this can be anticipated because the noun *nation* is etymologically related to Latin *natio* ‘birth’ which already implies a family scenario. Humans belong to larger social groups, and a fundamental social group in society is a family, typically consisting of one or two parents

16. Although the conventionalized metaphor THE NATION IS A PERSON can often be found in political discourse, some researchers challenge the cognitive linguistic view on its pervasiveness and ubiquity (see, e.g., Twardzisz 2013).

17. b92 (news portal), 30.7.2012.

and their children. That source domain provides the target domains with elements and mappings that help create the nation's structure. In the general metaphor THE NATION IS A PERSON, the person is commonly specified as a mother. *Mother*, a relational noun, implies the existence of children—daughters and sons—who are members of the metaphorically conceptualized nation. Furthermore, the metaphor implies certain relations (e.g., biological and emotional). *Country* and *state* are linked to territory, space, and political institutions, whereas *nation* is a more vague and diffuse concept: *mother* is thus a powerful metaphor that plays an important role in imagining the nation, in the sense that it provides the nation with strong emotions (related to belonging, care, non-conditioned love, etc.). This metaphor appeals to the experience and feelings of each individual because each has an experience of having a mother and being a child, which relates to specific experiences with family relations within a nuclear and potentially broader family, be they positive or negative.

For instance, the expression *majka Srbija* 'mother Serbia'¹⁸ is occasionally found in discourse by political actors, soccer fans, and so on, and reflects the conceptualization of Serbia as a mother whose inhabitants are her children. The expression is based on a conceptual metaphor that implies a set of mappings in which attributes, states, and actions pertaining to a mother are mapped onto Serbia. An examination of frequencies of similar references to different South Slavic countries by contrasting different discourse types and usage types (e.g., ironic) can reveal the emotional attitudes of certain groups of discourse participants to their respective countries.

Concrete discourse samples do not necessarily extensively explain the details of individual mappings from the source domain into the target domain: for instance, a discourse sample can operate with the metaphor concentrating on the mother only with no extensive references to children. However, certain elaborations of the family metaphor can be found in discourse. These are dependent on the discourse subtype, and some even seem conventional. For instance, in the article "Vulin: Sinovi Srbije nikada više u rat" (Vulin: Sons of Serbia Never Again into War), sons are explicitly mentioned a few times.¹⁹ *Sinovi*, however, seldom refers to all of the members of a nation: it is a conventional reference to soldiers and warriors restricted to specific discourse types (often by state officials) in South Slavic discourse. *Sinovi Hrvatske* 'Sons of Croatia' is mainly used in contexts with references to the wars of the 1990s in Croatian discourse.²⁰ Occasionally (and much less frequently) the expression *sinovi i kćeri Hrvatske* 'Sons and daughters of Croatia' is used.²¹ (I address gendered aspects of the family and mother metaphor in the discourse of the nation below).

18. Analitika (news portal), 28.1.2014. Politika online (newspaper), 17.5.2013a.

Google search, July 24th, 2014 for *majka Srbija*: 46,800 hits. To compare: *majka Crna Gora* 'Mother Montenegro' = 624; *majka Hrvatska* 'Mother Croatia' = 9,020; *majka Bosna* 'Mother Bosnia' = 8,190; *Majka Bosna i Hercegovina* 'Mother Bosnia and Herzegovina' = 33 hits.

19. Radio-televizija Srbije (TV news), 12.7.2014.

20. See. e.g., *Zadarski list* (newspaper), 25.1.2010.

21. The same applies to Serbian contexts, in which a few attestations of *kćeri Srbije* were found (Google Searches, May 10th, 2015; July 27th, 2015).

THE NATION IS A MOTHER is a specific variant of the general metaphor THE NATION IS A PERSON. That metaphor's source domain relates to scenarios with children as necessary elements in some discourse subtypes, but also to fathers and stepmothers in some others.

Alongside the metaphor THE NATION IS A MOTHER, the metaphor THE NATION IS A STEPMOTHER was frequently noticed in the discourse samples examined: (a) *Do kada će Hrvatska nekima biti majka, a većini maćeha?*²² 'How long will Croatia be a mother to some, and a stepmother to the majority?' (b) *Kad je država deci maćeha?*²³ 'When the state is a stepmother to its children', and (c) *Babo im majka, Bosna maćeha?*²⁴ 'Babo is their mother, Bosnia their stepmother'. In some examples, the stepmother metaphor is elaborated by some other elements from the source domain (e.g., children in (b)). In the scenarios employing *majka* and *maćeha*, the contrast between the two is emphasized (see (a)). As (c) shows, *majka* can be a male (*Babo* 'dad' is a politician's nickname), whereas the country/state is the stepmother.

Another element from the source domain productively mapped on the target domain is the stepchild (*pastorak*, *pastorče*): persons lacking certain rights or care, or groups discriminated against (e.g., disabled persons, refugees, and writers) are occasionally labeled *pastorčad* 'stepchildren'.²⁵ The contexts examined with the keywords *maćeha* and *država* in the same immediate context show that the "stepchildren" of the state (the stepmother) may be institutions, administrative units, individuals (e.g., athletes, etc.) or groups of related individuals. The metaphor's function in these contexts is a critical evaluation of their positions in a society.

Similar discourse spreads negative stereotypes and myths about stepmothers, and positive stereotypes about mothers in juxtaposing (biological) mothers and stepmothers. Representations of unequal treatment and injustices towards some citizens in these discourse samples are related to family scenarios as source domains in which stepmothers treat children unequally. Juxtaposing mothers and stepmothers is led by the "nuclear family ideology," implying that the biological, intact family with two biological parents and their children is the "ideal" family type (Coontz 1992). Stereotyping is particularly prominent in the contexts in which the opposition *majka* - *maćeha* is emphasized by the diminutive *majčica* and attributes specifying the mother as *brižna* 'caring' and *nježna* 'gentle' and the stepmother as *sve zločestija* 'increasingly evil' (e.g., *socijalna država Hrvatska svojim je građanima sve zločestija maćeha, a političkoj eliti brižna i nježna majčica* 'the welfare state of Croatia is an increasingly evil stepmother to its citizens, and a caring, gentle mother to its political elite').²⁶ Stereotyping is, however, not a phenomenon limited to South Slavic media and political discourse: recent research demonstrates that many people in different countries (e.g., Australia; see Planitz & Feeney 2009) view stepfamilies in an oversimplified way.

22. Glas Brotnja (news portal), 15.7.2013; Politika online (newspaper), 4.2.2010a.

23. Opozicionar (Internet portal), 5.3.2015.

24. Slobodna Dalmacija (newspaper), 3.10.2009.

25. Politika online (newspaper), 6.2.2010b; Klix (news portal), 19.12.2008.

26. Poslovni dnevnik (newspaper), 25.4.2010.

The scenarios mentioned do not regularly include the other parent from the family source domain, the father. However, fathers do occur in some other discourse types: “father of the nation” is the title given to certain persons in official state discourse (e.g., in their internet presentations²⁷ and in constitutions;²⁸ the term is even listed in dictionaries²⁹).

Considering a person a “father of the nation” or “founding father” is another instance of mapping family relations onto the political realm of nations. Men referred to by these expressions are those assumed to play an important role in establishing an independent country, setting up the political system, or writing a constitution. This metaphorical title is given, for instance, to Nelson Mandela.³⁰ Two politicians that frequently bear this title in Croatian discourse are Ante Starčević (1823–1896) and Franjo Tuđman (1922–1999), the first a politician and writer whose works are considered to have laid the foundations for Croatian nationalism,³¹ and the second a politician and historian that became Croatia’s first president after its independence from Yugoslavia.

“Founding mother” is not frequently used, but it occasionally appears in public discourse discussing the role of (among other things) women that supported the “founding fathers.” In South Slavic discourse, an equivalent expression (*majka nacije*) frequently refers to folk singers.³² This metaphor and its scope deserve a separate comparative analysis.

Some other terms also indicate the importance of family imagery in conceptualizing nations; for example, references to a language as a mother tongue. Family relations are also implied in the etymology of words that inhabitants of a country use for that country (e.g., *fatherland*, *motherland*, and their equivalents, such as Serbian *otadžbina*).

Language users employ the mother metaphor in specific contexts and with specific purposes: used by politicians, it can be part of attempts to convince and mobilize an audience (e.g., *Hrvatska je država i ona je majka svih svojih građana, ne gospodarica, nego majka u pozitivnom smislu riječi, kojim god oni pismom pisali i koje god nacije bili . . .*³³ ‘Croatia is a state and a mother to all its citizens, not a taskmistress, a mother in the positive sense, no matter which script they use and their nationality . . .’). The coexistence of phrases such as *majka domovina* ‘mother homeland’ and *sinovi, kćeri* ‘sons, daughters’ in the discourse of church officials aims to evoke emotions in the audience and motivate them to future action.

Although this overview cannot delve into the issues of gender and nationalism in detail, a few remarks are in order. Research on gender and nationalism (see, e.g., Eisenstein 2000) has argued that a nation always has “a” gender that is observable in the symbolization and verbalization of the nation. The nation is gendered in expressions with meanings such

27. E.g., information about Bangladesh at its embassy’s page: Embassy of Bangladesh in Washington, DC.

28. E.g., the constitution of Nepal (1959).

29. Merriam Webster online; Macmillan Dictionary online.

30. Independent (newspaper), 6.12.2013.

31. Starčević as “father of the nation” was a subject to de-metaphorization in satirical news discourse. See News-bar (fake news portal), 2015.

32. E.g., Vesti online (news portal), 31.12.2013.

33. 24 sata (news portal), 5.9.2013.

as 'mother homeland', which unambiguously portray the nation as a woman and in which imagined females represent nations. Women metaphorically representing nations are reproducers, nurturers, and caregivers. In their metaphorical/symbolic motherhood, they are the mothers of all children of the nation. The metaphor *THE NATION IS A WOMAN* conceals and reveals, as metaphors always do: it highlights some aspects of womanhood, and it hides some others. Petersen (2000: 70) claims that nationalism reduces women to their motherhood. Indeed, imagining a nation/country as a "female child, a lesbian, a prostitute, or a post-menopausal wise woman generates quite different pictures, which enable quite different understandings of community" (Petersen 2000: 70). However, alternative imaginings are not common in the language of nations and nationalism, although they do occur (at least as possibilities) in informal discourse.³⁴

The widespread conceptualization of nations as women is not free of paradoxes: women can have a central place in imagining the nation, but this does not erase the contradiction of exclusion of women from political spheres (see, e.g., Baron 2005 on Egypt).

The metaphor *THE NATION IS A WOMAN* enables further inferences: the motherland is a woman's body and as such in potential danger of violation by foreign males. Defending a person's honor is mapped onto defending a nation's boundaries against invasion and violation, which requires sacrifice of countless citizens, or warriors (see Petersen 2000: 69; Elshain 1992). The rape of a body is metaphorically mapped onto invasion and violation of a nation. Rape relies on and reproduces the rigid male-female binary; it is a warring strategy, but also a metaphor of national or state humiliation (Pettman 1996: 49; Peterson 2000).

Research shows how certain nations are "feminized" through metaphors of rape and sodomy in times of conflict (see, e.g., Puri 2008: 137): for example, in the discourse by the Bush administration, gendered and sexualized metaphors were used in which Saddam Hussein embodied criminal and out-of-control masculinity in relation to the Kuwaiti nation. The metaphor of rape occasionally occurs outside conflict situations, and outside discourses thematizing foreign invasion: in Croatian and Serbian discourse, it is used with hyperbolic connotations implying misuse and mishandling of countries not only from the outside, but also from the inside, implying a kind of domestic violence.³⁵

4 Metaphors in scholarship on nations and nationalism

The metaphor *THE NATION IS A WOMAN* and the cluster of metaphors related to it (i.e., kinship metaphors) are a feature not only of the public discourse on "nations," but also of the rhetoric of national movements and scholarship dealing with nations and nationalisms. Metaphors are key tools for developing a specific view in scholarly reasoning about what nations are, and they are among the key tools in the mobilizing discourse of national movements. In national movements, nationalists legitimize their political aspirations and

34. b92 (blog), 30.11.2006.

35. E.g., *silovanje domovine* 'rape of the homeland': Politika (news portal), 15.1.2011; *silovanje Srbije* 'rape of Serbia': Online media press (news portal), 6.5.2009.

activities by using the general metaphor of “reawakening”—that is, the metaphor A (FUTURE/POTENTIAL) NATION IS A SLEEPING INDIVIDUAL—while persuading a population that may not have even entertained the idea that they were members of a particular, designated nation (Smith 1998: 147).

Research on nationalism as ideology (e.g., Smith 2014) identifies the metaphors of family and kinship as central to nationalism because, in a nationalistic understanding, the nation draws its boundaries through myths of common ancestry and becomes a “superfamily,” whereby those presently included in the nation are conceived of as brothers and sisters. The family metaphor is thus one of nationalism’s key metaphors. It potentially evokes strong emotions, and intertextually links different domains of public discourse (in which the general public, politicians, and others talk about the nation) with the discourse of nationalism as ideology. Smith (1998: 224) emphasizes that familial metaphors are of great importance in the perennialist approach to nations, which tends to derive modern nations from fundamental ethnic ties, emphasizing in addition the functions of language, as well as myths of origin.

In conceiving of nations and discussing nations and nationalism in research, some strands of discussion operate with some major metaphors. How they use metaphors (or not) thus differentiates scholarly (philosophical, sociological, anthropological, and other) approaches to nations from one another.

The essentialist view, led by the idea that the nation is a divine or natural phenomenon, dominated early understandings of the nation. Whereas the divine view—which is represented by Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) and is an extension of the divine discourse on which medieval monarchy was based—understands the nation as endowed by God, the natural theory (represented by Herder, 1744–1803) conceives of a nation as an organic unit: each branch of its culture is an organic part of a larger unit. This “organicist” discourse is framed by the metaphor THE NATION IS A LIVING ORGANISM (A PLANT / AN ANIMAL), which implies that the natural biological processes of birth, growth, maturity, and decay apply to nations as they apply to living organisms. This view emphasizes ties of blood. In his “sociobiological” view (see Guibernau 2013), Herder combines the organicist metaphor of the nation as a living organism with the metaphor THE NATION IS A FAMILY: “A nation is as natural as a plant, as a family, only with more branches” (Herder, in Guibernau 2013). The nationalist ideology following “organicist metaphors” assumes that “the pattern of life in a society is similar to that of a biological organism” (Berlin 1979: 341), and that the needs of this “organism” determine the supreme goal for all of its members.

The relativist or constructivist view conceives of the nation as a product dependent on and relative to its context and historical circumstances. The nation is a social, cultural, and political construct. This view does not rely on a single metaphor the way the sociobiological view does. Although Benedict Anderson’s (1991) definition of nations does not rely on a specific metaphor, his concept reveals metaphorical thinking and raises some questions: he concentrates on the nation as a social construction defining it as “an imagined political community . . . imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” Anderson (6:1991). His definition utilizes the CONTAINER conceptual metaphor because the nation is imagined as “inherently limited”: conceiving of a nation necessarily implies difference; that is, borders

between that nation and its Others. Anderson (1991: 7) claims that “the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings.” Anderson’s ideas raised an important question asked by gender and nationalism scholars (see, e.g., Racioppi and O’Sullivan 2000): How can women belong to the national community if the “nation” is imagined as a “deep, horizontal comradeship,” a “fraternity” ready to die for?

Some other modern theories about the origin and authenticity of ethno-cultural groups or ethno-nations do not develop their views using any “major metaphors.” However, their views are occasionally interpreted in metaphors by others. One of these is the “primordialist” view, according to which actual ethno-cultural nations existed for a long time during the pre-modern period (Hastings 1997): a popular version of this view is represented by Anthony Smith’s (e.g., 2009) “ethnosymbolism.” Özkirimli (2003) summarizes the ethnosymbolist views with the metaphor *NATIONS ARE ARTICHOKEs*, which goes back to Hoffmann (1966), who discussed the fate of the nation-state in the context of moves towards European integration. Artichokes provide an interesting source domain for nations: they have many layers of leaves and a middle part, a “heart” (which is itself a metaphor). Mapped onto the target domain, this implies that nations have many layers, or less important components (corresponding to leaves). These can be destroyed or abandoned (which corresponds to being “eaten” in the source domain) one by one. However, after these layers have been abandoned (been eaten), the essence of the nation (its heart) remains. The heart of the nation in the ethnosymbolistic view, claims Özkirimli (2003), is the persistence and embeddedness of “the myths, symbols and memories.”

One of the widely used metaphors in discussing nations is nation-building. Nation-building is also a theoretical approach and a leading assumption of some modern nationalism theories. As Kolstø (2000) insightfully observes, the architectural metaphor of “nation-building” implies consciously acting agents such as architects and engineers. The expression relies on the metaphor *NATIONS ARE BUILDINGS*, in which the abstract domain of the nation is related to architecture. Cognitive linguistics has identified many abstract domains that are structured in terms of buildings and houses as concrete domains (see Lakoff & Johnson 1980 on the metaphors *IDEAS ARE BUILDINGS*, *ARGUMENTS ARE BUILDINGS*). In nation-building, the key elements of the source domain are “builders” mapped onto the active agents in the target domain. These agents are, for example, state leaders applying planned strategies in their result-oriented actions (aimed at, e.g., popularizing new state symbols). Other “builders” may be TV personalities and writers. Kolstø (2000) emphasizes that nation-building³⁶ also covers unplanned social change—that aspect of the target domain does not have a corresponding element in the source domain.

Metaphors are not only present at macro-levels of the nation and nationalism theories; they are also pervasive at the micro-level of scholarly discourse. A few phrases from a

36. Interestingly, the same process is labeled “nation-destroying” (see Connor 1972) because many states contain a number of nations and because their successful integration means transferring primary allegiance from these nations to the state.

book dealing with the former Soviet Union (Strayer 1998) already indicate a few conceptual metaphors: “the subsequent emergence of fifteen new independent nations from the ashes of the Soviet Union” (p. 71), *Cracks in the foundation* (chapter title), and “‘imagined communities’—nations with allegedly deep historical roots” (p. 72). These metaphors are: STATE DISSOLUTION IS FIRE, STATE FORMATIONS ARE BUILDINGS, and NATIONS ARE PLANTS.

5 Discussion and concluding remarks

Studying nations and nationalism and performing nations in everyday life relates to employing metaphorical thinking and using metaphorical expressions, two processes that do not necessarily go together. In some situations, metaphorical expressions are carefully chosen as tools in discussing an object of inquiry (across different discourses); in some other situations, conceptual metaphors are a natural way to think about an object, which is reflected in certain metaphorical expressions (at a discourse’s micro-level). These two dimensions seem to at least partly reflect the distinction between *deliberate* metaphors in discourse on the one hand and conceptual metaphors on the other. In discourse analysis, it is crucial to distinguish conventional metaphors (common ways of expressing things) from non-conventional ones, which are produced intentionally to achieve some specific goals (e.g., the family metaphor already discussed). Research on discourse metaphors (e.g., Zinken et al. 2007) emphasizes the specific nature of metaphorical expressions in discourse that do not seem to relate to primary conceptual metaphors based on immediate bodily experience, but instead rely on knowledge of culture, natural or social phenomena, and discourse history. A subtype of discourse metaphors is deliberate metaphors: these are specific metaphors used in various nation-building (or nation-destroying) projects, chosen by social actors led by specific aims that can be difficult to provide unambiguous evidence for.

Some deliberate metaphors are, for example, used to refer to particular nations across different discourses in order to generate positive or negative images of these nations in their population: these images can influence emotions and direct actions. Such metaphors include, for example, *Rainbow Nation* (applied to post-apartheid South Africa; see Bornman 2006) and *tamnica naroda* ‘prison of nations’. Whereas *Rainbow Nation* has positive connotations and in its cultural context plays a unifying role along with the most important national symbols (the flag and anthem; see Bornman 2006), the metaphor *prison of nations*³⁷ (used in very different contexts all over the world) carries a negative meaning suggesting oppression and lack of freedom of the “imprisoned.”

People use metaphors deliberately as part of certain strategies of nation-building and nation-destroying. Politicians, for example, use the metaphor THE NATION IS A BUILDING when positioning themselves and delineating their role and actions in concrete situations.

Metonymy and personification are pervasive in the discourse of the national. These conceptual metaphors in that discourse can be considered instances of banal and “everyday nationalism” (see, e.g., Billig 2006; Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008): they take part in

37. For a detailed study of this metaphor in South Slavic discourse, see Šarić (in preparation).

performing nationalism. Metaphors are a regular part of larger scenarios (e.g., commemorations of a glorious past) of performing nations and nationhood. These scenarios are related to mass displays of emotions, and metaphors are important devices in arousing emotions.

Metaphors may be part of people's way of thinking about the world, especially abstract entities, and one may consider them natural. One should not, however, forget that metaphors always "direct" a certain way of thinking and exclude others. Eubanks (2000) emphasizes that metaphors are adopted as part of "discursive strategies." Conceptual metaphors are frameworks of thought adapted to the needs of language users' arguments in a concrete situation. Metaphors are invoked and harnessed to fit specific purposes of language (and metaphor) users.³⁸

In recent decades, greater attention has been paid to the subjective dimensions of collective identities, such as discourse, memory, symbols, and myth, in studies focusing on (national) identity construction. Metaphor is either an integral part of, or interacts with, all of these dimensions, and investigating metaphor thus expands the understanding of collective identity.

Nations, no matter whether they are considered imagined or real communities, are subject to their members' feelings. The same is true for the related entities: states, countries, and homelands. Among the main means that establish and destroy the emotional attachment and sense of belonging of their members to these communities are symbols, myths, and metaphors. National communities, as Smith (1998: 138) argues, purvey narratives vital to their survival and renewal. Because metaphors are parts of these narratives, and they interact with symbols and myths, they play an essential role in national discourses (e.g., value and memory discourse).

Metaphors first and foremost play a role in giving emotional content to the nation (and in making it an entity worth dying for). They also contribute to portraying and representing the significance and distinctiveness of the nation: Smith (1998: 92) mentions imagery and representation (of which metaphors are an inherent part) as "the directive guidance that the specific ideal of the nation furnishes." As argued by Mach (1993), symbols arouse emotions and direct actions. The same applies to metaphors: it becomes apparent how much they matter when, for example, they start directing destructive actions.

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38. Goatly (2007) and Underhill (2011) point to a close (and sometimes dangerous) link between metaphors and ideology.

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