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Abstract: This study examines the communication of conceptual metaphors in contemporary narratives of British politics, and specifically, the competitive communication of a Commonwealth ‘family of nations’ metaphor in the context of ongoing Brexit debates. This line of inquiry has been pursued through an analysis of parliamentary speeches made in the House of Commons and the House of Lords in the period from 23 June 2015 (1 year before the EU Referendum) through October 2018, facilitated by the use of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software. Although multiple ‘family of nations’ metaphors were identified, British parliamentarians made more references to the Commonwealth as a family unit than other multi-national groupings, and two prominent variants of this family metaphor have been defined. Speakers competed for control over the meaning of the base metaphor, with mainly English Conservative speakers communicating a positive aspirational variant (framing the Commonwealth as a historically-rooted, harmonious and prosperous alternative to the EU), while speakers from the other main parties communicated a competing critical judgmental variant (framing the Commonwealth as discriminatory, unequal and failing to defend shared human rights principles). It is argued that this metaphor, and particularly its positive aspirational variant, contributes to a broader communicative effort to encourage the imagination of a transnational and global British orientation and identity outside Europe.

Keywords: Britain; politics; Brexit; Commonwealth family; metaphor; digital humanities

Dueling Commonwealth family of nations metaphors and Britain's post-Brexit global identity

On 17 January 2017, in what has become known as her 'Global Britain' speech, British Prime Minister Theresa May outlined her government's goals in Brexit negotiations with the European Union (EU). She presented a deeply internationalist vision of the UK's future, one which she said aligns more with the country's history as well as the natural instincts of its people. Britain's future, in this vision, would mark a stark contrast with (and repudiation of) the UK's brief interregnum as a member of the European Economic Community (EEC) and the EU. Any trials and tribulations Britain would face in the process of leaving the EU would be worth it if it resulted in the recovery of the country's proper global roles, influence and identity (May 2017; see also Johnson 2016 and Wolf 2017).

In the weeks and months that followed, English Conservative MPs and Peers actively promoted the 'Global Britain' vision. References to the country's imperial and post-imperial past, as well as historical and contemporary intra-Commonwealth relations, were made in the promotion of a transnational identity linking Britain and the British people to a wider collectivity of countries and peoples beyond Europe. This study examines how the metaphorical relation of the Commonwealth as a 'family of nations' by British parliamentarians has played a crucial role in this process, facilitating the imagination of alternate and historically-rooted ways of belonging in the world post-Brexit. The decision to focus on conceptual metaphors is because of the significant functions they have in political communication due to their sense-making, emotional, and by extension, persuasive qualities. The metaphorical relation of the Commonwealth with a family unit increased dramatically following the 'Leave' campaign victory in the 23 June 2016

EU Referendum, and particularly in the weeks following May's January 2017 'Global Britain' speech. Therefore, one conclusion drawn from the research conducted for this study is that a relationship exists between the dramatic increase in references to the Commonwealth as a 'family of nations', the sense of crisis surrounding Brexit, and the UK government's simultaneous effort to promote the idea of a global orientation and identity for Britain following the country's departure from the EU.

Although multiple 'family of nations' metaphors were found and quantified in the time period under study, British parliamentarians made more references to the Commonwealth as a family unit than any other multi-national grouping. Two prominent Commonwealth 'family of nations' (CW-FON) metaphor variants have been identified, interpreted and analysed: a positive aspirational variant communicated by mainly English Conservative speakers (framing the Commonwealth as a historically-rooted, harmonious and prosperous alternative to the EU), and; a critical judgmental variant communicated mainly by Liberal Democrat and Labour Party speakers (framing the Commonwealth as discriminatory, unequal and failing to defend shared human rights principles). In the process of communicating these conflicting variants, members of opposing political parties engaged in a competition or struggle for control over the meaning of the base CW-FON metaphor. One of the main purposes of this study is thus to illustrate how the ambiguous (Bailis 2008) and malleable nature of metaphor enables opponents to 'follow up', 'counter' and denounce (Musolff 2017) each other's influential metaphorical slogans in the context of political dialogues, including parliamentary debates.

The focus of this research is influenced by the premise that the study of metaphorical slogans, and struggles over their meaning and sentiment involving opponents engaged in a

Brexit-related political dialogue, can lead to insights into the language and arguments driving Eurosceptic thought in contemporary Britain. Within the context of broader debates over UK-EU relations and the May government's 'Global Britain' vision, it will be shown that the aspirational CW-FON metaphor variant has served a specific function – namely, it contributes to the communication of a positive narrative of Brexit and its implications for the UK and the international community. From the perspective of the communicators of this variant, leaving the EU should not be viewed as a mistake or ushering in a period of crisis and decline, but rather as an opportunity for the UK to return to where it properly belongs, out in the world among its closest 'kith and kin'. The communication of this CW-FON metaphor variant provides positive meaning and reassurance about the possible destabilising effects of Brexit and the prospect of a more global and prosperous future outside of the EU.

The conclusions drawn from the qualitative thematic interpretation of the data set (parliamentary speeches delivered between 23 June 2015 and 31 October 2018) have been supported and extended by quantifying differences among communicators of the two CW-FON metaphor variants, as well as the linguistic and historical characteristics of their speeches. In order to facilitate both qualitative and quantitative methods in this project, the data set was imported into the 'computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software' (CAQDAS) programme NVivo 12. This made it possible to explore relationships between the characteristics of the speakers and the content of their speeches, as well as to conduct queries on the data set that led to the identification of distinctive characteristics of the speeches in each CW-FON metaphor variant group that would have been much more time-consuming (and less accurate) than if more traditional non-digital methods had been applied.

Beyond identifying variations in the Commonwealth family metaphor using a more traditional close-reading approach (though also supported by the CAQDAS software), it has been possible to subject the data set to word frequency queries, the results of which show that the speeches of the communicators in the two CW-FON metaphor variant groups are characterized by very different language – language which in both cases clearly reflects the variants’ thematic structures as initially interpreted. Furthermore, it will be shown that speakers in the two variant groups use references to historical events, persons, phenomena, recollections, etc., in distinctive ways, with the main distinction being the tendency to make references to either the recent or distant past in articulations of the Commonwealth family. Using this approach has made it possible to show that the positive aspirational variant is more ‘historical’ in nature, and particularly when it comes to references to Britain’s imperial and Commonwealth past, than its more critical judgmental counterpart.

Theory and Literature Review

Conceptual metaphor

Scholars in the cognitive sciences and linguistics have studied conceptual metaphors as figures of speech that change the way we think about objects, ideas and experience. In their influential study *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) describe the essence of metaphor as ‘understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another’ (5), while Black (1977) describes metaphorical statements as ‘perversely asserting something to be what it is plainly known not to be’ (434). Others make direct links between the verbal and cognitive aspects of metaphor, including Semino (2008), who defines it as a ‘phenomenon whereby we talk, and potentially, think about something in terms of something else’ (1).

Metaphors have become the focus of an increasing amount of scholarly work across academic disciplines because they are regarded as ‘pervasive in everyday life’ (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), not only in the language we use, but also in our thoughts and actions (3). The metaphorical relation of the unfamiliar with the familiar, for example, can lead one to come to know the unknown, reconcile with the new and strange, understand the unclear, and make the remote more cognitively accessible (Edelman 1971, 67). In this sense, metaphor has been described as ‘central to reason’ and one of crucial mechanisms influencing how we ‘construct categories to make sense of experience’ (Lakoff 1987, xi-xii) in their ability to make complex and abstract topics more easily comprehensible to wider audiences (Semino 2008, 9; Charteris-Black 2011, 33). In this sense, metaphors are figures of speech that simplify and give meaning to bewildering observations and experiences. As Murray Edelman observed in his influential study *Politics as Symbolic Action* (1971): ‘People who are anxious and confused are eager to be supplied with an organized political order – including simple explanations of the threats they fear – and with reassurance that the threats are being countered’ (65). Metaphors provide these simple explanations and the reassurance that comes with them.

Metaphor and Political Communication

Scholars of politics are interested in metaphors because of the crucial role they play in political communication. Charteris-Black (2011) views the use of metaphor as essential to ‘telling the right story’, something political actors need to do in order to be successful (23). Success in politics depends on an individual’s rhetorical skills, and these in turn depend on the skilful use of metaphor (33). Therefore, he argues, analysing commonly-utilized metaphors can provide important insights into the mechanisms of political communication. Metaphor is utilized

differently by political actors, for example, both in constructions of negative representations of problematic issues as well as in positive representations of ‘future scenarios that are construed as solutions to problems’ (32). In this sense, metaphors ‘can be used to frame political arguments and ... create scenarios that suggest particular conclusions’ (Charteris-Black 2009, 142).

Edelman (1971) similarly views political metaphor as ‘vividly, potently, and pervasively’ evoking ‘changed worlds in which the remedies for anxieties are clearly perceived and self-serving courses of action are sanctified’ (71).

One of the main political functions of metaphor relates to persuasion (Ahrens and Lee 2009, 62). The skilful use of metaphor facilitates the ability to persuade, or to influence ‘a change in a given attitude’ (O’Donnell and Kable 1982, 9; see also Jowett and O’Donnell 2012, 32) by transforming the meaning of an unfamiliar subject or object to something that is familiar and known (Charteris-Black 2011, 35-36). People are naturally attracted by narratives which remind them of familiar objects, situations or feelings, which explains the effectiveness of figuratively equating two or more seemingly different objects, situations or feelings (Brysk et al. 2002, 272).

Scholars have further argued that metaphors contribute to political persuasion because they are usually selected for their ‘emotional resonance’ (O’Shaughnessy and O’Shaughnessy 2003, 169). By altering the meaning of a word or phrase metaphors ‘evoke emotional responses’ which contribute to the persuasive power of the narratives in which they are embedded (Charteris-Black 2011, 31; see also Charteris-Black 2009, 141-42 and Povozaev 2013, 44). Paris (2002) sees metaphor as effective when it transforms a subject’s meaning into something closer to an audience’s lived experience (428) – for example, relating the United Kingdom to a

close and caring family unit is arguably more likely to trigger an emotional response than describing it as it is more formally known (a political and constitutional union of distinct national groups). Furthermore, Charteris-Black (2011) argues that the use of conceptual metaphors is a central rhetorical strategy of political communicators as they are a type of thought that deals with emotions like fear and anxiety which an effective narrative aims to alleviate or manipulate (23).

Metaphor in political science

Scholars of national and international politics have examined metaphor from a wide range of perspectives. An early example is Murray Edelman's work on 'symbolic politics' in which he approached metaphors as rhetorical tools that contribute to the shaping of support and opposition in the realm of political decision-making and public opinion. For Edelman, political metaphors 'create and filter out values premises' in politics, for example, by highlighting the advantages of a particular policy direction while diminishing or cloaking potential disadvantages (Edelman 1971, 68-70). In this sense, metaphor has been approached by political scientists as an important mode of 'argument construction' and therefore central to the 'theory and practice of politics' (Chilton 1996, 40, 13).

Numerous scholars have variously examined the role of metaphorical language and reasoning in the context of domestic and international conflict. For example, in an influential study Chilton (1996) showed how metaphor-infused discourses contributed to the beginning and resolution of the post-1945 East-West cold war confrontation. Shimko (1994) has examined the role of metaphorical thinking and language in foreign policy decision-making processes, including in the outbreak of conflict, while Paris (2002) has studied the competitive use of analogical and metaphorical reasoning in political debates over the 1990s Kosovo conflict.

International Relations scholars have applied constructivist approaches to the study of metaphor, arguing that their association of the unknown with the known helps ‘create reality’, including in terms of identity and concept formation (Chilton 1996; Hülse 2006; Hülse and Spencer 2008; Milliken 1999). Hülse (2006), for example, who argues that metaphors provide ‘a means of imagining and by the same token constructing social reality’ (396), examines how metaphors of EU enlargement (including its relation to a family reunion) contribute to the construction of a European identity. Taken a step further, if it is accepted that metaphor can help shape social reality, including in the realm of collective identity, they can also potentially ‘condition the possibilities for political action’ (404). It is these characteristics and functions of metaphor – including their sense-making and persuasive functions, as well as the role they can play in the formation of collective identities and in motivating action – which inform the following examination of the historical and contemporary communication of family metaphors to describe the nature of the UK’s relationship with its former colonies in the Commonwealth.

The Empire-Commonwealth Family: A Historical Identity

George Lakoff (1996) has argued that the moral priorities of Americans are to a large degree framed by family metaphors. As a crucial concept in political discourse (153-56), the ‘Nation is a Family’ metaphor encourages individuals and social groups to reason about the nation, as well as requirements for membership of the nation and relations with outsiders, ‘on the basis of what we know about a family’ (154-55). Family-based metaphors can evoke feelings of security and belonging and can trigger an impulse to protect those closest to us. Our earliest memories are often of family experiences and we turn to our families in times of need or crisis. Families connect our pasts, presents and futures, and as a consequence scholars have argued that an

effectively-communicated family metaphor can play a role in the formation of collective identities (Brysk et al. 2002, 273).

While the ‘Nation as a Family’ metaphor has been studied in different national contexts (Lakoff 1996; Hayden 2003; Garcia 2015), this study examines how the concept of the family has been used to alter the meaning of the multi-national Commonwealth in pre- and post-Brexit referendum political discourse. Family metaphors have long been used as a way of depicting the historical Mother Country’s relationship with its colonies, as well as later post-colonial relations between the UK and other Commonwealth member states. W. David McIntyre claims that the first references to the British Empire as a family of nations appear as early as the 1860s (McIntyre 1998, 6; cited in Brysk et al. 2002, 294). In the late Victorian era, unrest and agitation for greater autonomy in various British colonies, the shift towards a multipolar power constellation in international relations with rise of competitors to British global hegemony, growing indifference about the Empire in Britain, along with other factors, stoked fears and anxieties among many in the political and intellectual elite about the future of British power (Bell 2007, 32-33, 181-182; Boehmer 2005, xix-xx). Some began to advocate for a deepening of the political, economic, military, social and cultural ties of Empire – ‘a reinvigorated global Anglo-Saxon community’ (Bell 2007, 182) – which became popularly known as ‘Greater Britain’ (see Dilke 1869; Freeman 1886; Seeley 1914). The narratives surrounding ‘Greater Britain’ promoted a trans-continental collective identity linking the people of Britain with their ‘kith and kin’ in the so-called settler colonies, which would (its advocates hoped) play a role in maintaining the UK’s position of power in the international system.

In his highly influential book *The Expansion of England* (first published in 1883), J.R. Seeley (1914) contributed to the rhetorical construction of ‘Greater Britain’ with references to

imperial relations in familial terms and the British Empire specifically as a ‘family ... of thriving colonies’ scattered widely over distant seas (296-297). References to the empire as a family unit also reflected the tendency to view the relationship between Britain and its colonies in hierarchical and generational terms. For example, in anticipation of the 1907 Imperial Conference one House of Lords peer noted the importance of these ‘Imperial family gatherings’ where ‘the motherland and her offspring States’ come together to discuss affairs of the empire. Although they meet on equal grounds as the ‘parental autocracy disappears with the nursery’ at these events – in recognition that the ‘offspring States are now rising nationalities full of ambitions and hopes and growing power’ – the familial connection remained as ‘they are as devoted as ever to the land from which they sprang...’ (HL Deb 1905).

The inter-war years (1919-39) were rife with ‘empire as family’ references as the Conservative-led British state engaged in a cultural campaign – in response to fears and anxieties triggered by economic crisis and threats to Britain’s control over its overseas interests – which according to Chan (2013) aimed to change the connotation of empire to one that suggested ‘a cooperative familial relationship between metropole and colony, rather than one of exploitation’ (106). Through initiatives like the British Empire Exhibition (1924-25) and organizations like the Empire Marketing Board (EMB), the British state actively promoted ‘the Empire Family’ as part of a broader effort to portray relations between the Mother Country and its colonies in ways it hoped would stimulate trade and other intra-Empire economic exchanges (Chan 2013; Clendinning 2012). In essence these state-sponsored cultural initiatives comprised part of a mass marketing campaign linked to broader inter-war political and economic policies deemed necessary for the country’s recovery from the devastating effects of the Great War (1914-18).

The British Empire Exhibition of 1924-25, or the Wembley Exhibition as it was popularly referred to, was one of the greatest in a long line of extravagant exhibitions in British history. It was organised at a time when the British Empire was at its zenith geographically (covering more than 25% of the earth's total land surface) and in terms of the number of human beings who fell under some form of British rule (also roughly 25% of the world total); however, these great dimensions masked the Mother Country's substantial weaknesses as the effects (in human, material and economic terms) of the Great War had been devastating (Clarke 1996, 81-110; Pugh 2017, 208-228, 233-241). Holding the exhibition at this time, and at great cost to the British State, has thus been interpreted as 'a celebration of imperial achievement' and 'an exercise in reassurance', but also importantly as 'a gigantic advertisement for the Empire' (Judd 1996, 275). This final aspect influenced how the Empire was branded at Wembley, and one of the most explicit and persistent themes in the mass marketing campaign was the metaphorical relation of the Empire as a family. Visitors to the exhibition, who numbered over 25 million in the two years it was open (Judd 1996, 274), were encouraged to think of the Empire as one big cooperative (and harmonious) family unit, which when collaborating effectively had in the past and could in the future accomplish great things, including most critically for Britain at the time, prosperity.

Beyond having 'reciprocal wants and aspirations' as King George V described in his speech opening the exhibition (Judd 1996, 276), the promotional materials produced for the Exhibition spoke concretely of the Empire as a mutually-dependent, mutually-beneficial and collaborative family unit. The exhibition's 'Handbook of General Information' stated, for example, that although the 'Daughter-states have grown into sister-nations' (a reference to the settler Dominion colonies) the different parts of the Empire 'have become increasingly

interdependent' (British Empire Exhibition 1924). According to its official guide the Exhibition's fundamental purpose was a 'serious' one, and specifically:

to stimulate trade, to strengthen the bonds that bind the Mother Country to her Sister States and Daughter Nations, to bring all into closer touch the one with the other, to enable all who owe allegiance to the British flag to meet on common ground, and to learn to know each other. It is a Family Party, to which every part of the Empire is invited, and at which every part of the Empire is represented (Lawrence 1924, 13)

This representation of the exhibition as a 'Family Party' appears in other promotional documents, including a brochure credited to Edward VIII, the Prince of Wales. In a section entitled 'The Empire Family Party' it states that the exhibition 'will have a special appeal to the members of the great family of the British Empire' and that each member of the 'Empire Family is striving to outstrip the others, to make its display more brilliant, a better proof of successful organization and of cleverly applied energy' (Prince of Wales 1924, 10-12). Despite this 'spirit of friendly emulation' he stressed that the exhibition's central message would be 'to emphasise the unity of the Empire' (12). The 'Family Party' would also serve as recognition of the civilizing role the Empire continued to serve. As host of the event, 'The Mother Country will see to it that the representatives of her children nations, and those nations which accept her tutelage in learning the arts of civilized life, are treated with the warm and gracious hospitality due to guests' (14). In these respects, the Empire was, similar to a family, portrayed as a site of socialization in which Britain was responsible for raising its dependents and transforming them into competent mature societies able to cope in the modern age.

Beginning already before the Great War and continuing into the 1920s, British trade with the Empire had been expanding dramatically. By 1924, Britain enjoyed a positive balance of £262 million with the Empire, and between 1925 and 1929, 37.2% of all Britain's exports and

32.9% of its imports went to and came from its colonies and Dominions (Judd 1996, 281). It seems, therefore, that the Wembley Exhibition of 1925-1925 reflected an existing trend and ‘arguably enhanced it’ (281). It was in this context that the Empire Marketing Board (EMB) was established in 1926 as a governmental instrument with the sole purpose of promoting inter-imperial trade through mass advertisement and promotional campaigns. The EMB’s establishment thus both reflected an existing trend (increasing inter-imperial trade) and was symptomatic of the hopes of pressure groups interested in the transformation of the Empire-Commonwealth into a more exclusive and protectionist trading bloc (281; see also Constantine 1986 and Grieveson 2010).

The EMB was established by the Conservative Party in the mid-1920s and reflected the realization within that party that Britain’s economic recovery and future prosperity, as well as the protection of its overseas possessions from rising competitive nation-states, relied heavily on inter-imperial trade (Grieveson 2010). The organization engaged in a wide range of advertising and promotional activities, including a mass poster campaign, the organization of Empire food and produce fairs and festivals, public lectures, including over the increasingly influential ‘wireless’, and the production of documentary films. The EMB’s ‘film unit’, which was headed by Colonial Secretary Leo Amery, produced many films, including for example, *Conquest* (1928), *Drifters* (1929), *One Family* (1930), *Windmills in Barbados* (1933) and *Song of Ceylon* (1934), which served as advertisements for specific Empire products but importantly also the idea of the Empire itself.

Chan (2013) has argued that the films were symptomatic of the EMB’s goal to change the connotation of the Empire in the minds of the British people, from one that suggested oppression

and exploitation to one in which the Mother Country and its colonies belonged in a mutually-beneficial ‘cooperative familial relationship’ (106). Ideally the Board’s work would contribute to the construction of a ‘Commonwealth family’ identity which would play a role in strengthening the economic bonds of the British Empire (106). The idea of the Empire as a mutually-dependent familial relationship featured explicitly and often in EMB campaigns. One of the very popular EMB posters from 1927, for example, includes the text: ‘A Merry Christmas to Us All. The Empire is One Large Family’, while the narrator in the 1934 film ‘Empire Trade’ describes the Empire as ‘a great family linked together in a blood brotherhood of loyalty and service’ (cited in Chan 2013, 107). Other slogans such as ‘Keep Trade in the Family’ and ‘Remember the Empire, Filled with Your Cousins’ also contributed to a vision of the Empire as a collaborative and prosperous, rather than exploitative, form of familial relationship.

Today, the family metaphor continues to be utilized in articulations of relations between the UK and its former colonies. The 53-member strong Commonwealth of Nations – an intergovernmental organization comprised almost exclusively of former British colonies – formally describes its values, ambitions, activities, and the nature of ties between member states, in strongly familial terms. On its official website the organization describes itself as ‘a family of nations and peoples’ (The Commonwealth 2018) and on its YouTube channel the Commonwealth Secretariat includes an informational video titled ‘The Commonwealth Family’ which describes the organization as a family with deep historical roots:

A family has a unique bond. It provides us with a link to our past, our present, and our future. A family helps define us, it gives us strength and support, and it changes with every generation. ... Today, for a third of the world’s population, their family is the Commonwealth (The Commonwealth, Youtube channel, 2018).

However, only relatively few studies have examined the Commonwealth as a family of nations metaphor (see Brysk et al. 2002 and Namusoke 2016), and no in-depth scholarly attention has been given to an analysis of the metaphorical relation of the Commonwealth to the concept of the family, or how it has been used as a rhetorical tool in political communication within the context of British political, including Brexit-related, debates.

Method and Process

This study focusses on the competitive communication of ‘family of nations’ conceptual metaphors in British parliamentary debates, and more specifically the cross-party utilization of the CW-FON metaphor and its contested meaning. The results of the study are outlined below, beginning with a description of the two main variants of the CW-FON metaphor (positive aspirational and critical judgemental) identified in the qualitative analysis of the data set, with a particular focus on how the aspirational variant supports the imagination of a new (rooted in old) global orientation and identity for Britain. Second, in the process of comparing and contrasting the two CW-FON metaphor variants it will be shown how these figures of speech are appropriated and have their meanings altered in the course of oratorical competitions like parliamentary debates.

This line of inquiry has been pursued through an analysis of parliamentary speeches, made in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, in the period from 23 June 2015 (exactly one year before the EU Referendum) through October 2018. The official UK parliamentary record service (Hansard Online) was rigorously searched resulting in the identification of 95 CW-FON references made by 45 individual MPs and Peers (see appendix). The following inquiry key words and terms were used: ‘Commonwealth family’,

‘Commonwealth’ and ‘family’, and ‘family of nations’. While searching for CW-FON metaphor references, the ‘family of nations’ keyword search returned numerous other FON references, including in relation to the UK, the EU, NATO, the UN, and the broad international community. Alongside the database created for CW-FON metaphor references, databases listing these other multi-national metaphorical references were also created and expanded using the following key words and terms: ‘United Kingdom family’, ‘UK family’, ‘British family’, ‘European family’, ‘European Union family’, and ‘EU family’. In total, 256 FON metaphor references were found.

Once identified, all speeches containing CW-FON references were uploaded into the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) NVivo 12, which was used to support both the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data. The individual speeches were coded for explicit references to the Commonwealth as a family of nations. The coding process was then complemented with an additional layer of coding, with each CW-FON reference being coded as either ‘positive’ (aspirational) or ‘critical’ (judgmental) in sentiment. This then allowed for a range of queries to be performed with the goal of searching for statistical relationships in the data set, and in particular the extent to which the political affiliation of speakers determined the frequency of the metaphor’s use, and importantly, whether any relationship existed between the political affiliation of speakers and the use of either of the two CW-FON metaphor variants. Finally, the speeches containing the aspirational and judgmental CW-FON metaphor variants were grouped together and subjected to word frequency queries to determine if the language used by the speakers in each group differed, and a final layer of coding was applied for references to events, people, phenomena and recollections from the ‘recent’ (post-1973) and ‘distant’ (pre-1973) past to determine if speakers in the two competing variant groups utilized history in observably different ways.

Summary of Results

As mentioned earlier, in the course of searching for CW-FON references, numerous other FON metaphors were identified which were uttered by speakers belonging to all of the major political parties represented in the UK Parliament as well as crossbencher, non-affiliated and Lords Spiritual members and peers. In addition to the Commonwealth, the UK, the EU, NATO, the UN, and the broad international community were referred to by speakers as families of nations. In total, 256 FON metaphor references were identified, the most common being references to the Commonwealth (95 utterances or 37% of the total), the UK (91 utterances or 35% of the total) and the EU (52 utterances or 20% of the total) as metaphorical families.

As Table 1 shows, FON references do not appear to be randomly or evenly-distributed between political parties. Rather, there is a relationship between political party membership and the specific FON metaphor uttered. Conservative speakers were most likely to make CW-FON (59 utterances or 62%) and UK-FON (37 utterances or 41%) references, while Labour speakers made the most EU-FON references (21 utterances or 40%). Interestingly, Scottish nationalists made the second most references (35 utterances or 38%) to the UK as a family of nations, only two fewer than Conservative speakers in the period under study (see discussion below). While Conservative speakers made the vast majority of CW-FON references (followed by Liberal Democrat [10 utterances or 10%] and non-affiliated [10 utterances or 10%] speakers) and the

most UK-FON references, Conservatives only referred to the EU as a family of nations 11 times (21%).

Insert Table 1 – Family of nations references in the UK Parliament (23 June 2015-10 October 2018)

The competitive use of metaphor

One explanation for the high number of UK-FON references made by Scottish nationalist speakers is that metaphors do not remain unaltered and consistent in their original meaning after they have been introduced into a political debate. Rather, political opponents often co-opt, reinterpret and recommunicate each other's influential metaphorical slogans. Lakoff (1996) has shown that the same metaphor can be used 'with different – almost opposite – priorities' (11-12), and according to Charteris-Black (2011), political actors often intentionally alter the original meaning of an opponent's metaphor in a battle for advantage in political communication contexts (28). Edelman (1971) has similarly argued that political opponents often rally around competing metaphorical definitions which plays out as a competition or struggle for control over a metaphor's meaning (72). Metaphors are ambiguous (Bailin 2008) and therefore malleable figures of speech, the meaning and/or sentiment of which speakers can bend into shapes that most effectively serve their specific political purposes. As Musolff (2017) has shown in his study of the 'discourse career' of a *Britain at the heart of Europe* metaphorical slogan, political opponents often 'follow up' ('communicative reactions to preceding utterances') and 'counter' each other's metaphors in ironic and sarcastic ways with the intent of 'denouncing the preceding version and/or deriving a new contrarian conclusion from it' (95). Musolff (2011) has also

argued that metaphor ‘can serve opposing argumentative purposes depending on ideological choices’ (198).

These linguistic phenomena can be illustrated with a brief presentation of the Conservative vs. Scottish nationalist use of the UK-FON metaphor. In the lead-up to the Scottish independence referendum held on 18 September 2014, Conservative Party members, including Prime Minister David Cameron, repeatedly referred to the UK as a ‘family of nations’ in emotional appeals encouraging the Scottish people to vote against independence. In a speech in early 2014, for example, Cameron declared that ‘if this family of nations broke up, something very powerful and precious would go out forever’ (Cameron 2014). Later, in his so-called ‘no going back’ speech, this time in Aberdeen, Scotland, and only 2 days before the independence referendum, the prime minister pleaded with Scots to remain part of the UK family of nations. Leaving the UK, he declared, would leave millions of people across England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and also Scotland, ‘heartbroken’. ‘We are a family’, he declared, and ‘a family is not a compromise, or a second best.’ On the contrary, the UK family is ‘a magical identity that makes us more together than we can ever be apart so please – do not break this family apart.’ He concluded by tying the destinies of individual families with the outcome of the referendum: ‘Don’t turn your backs on what is the best family of nations in the world and the best hope for your family in the world’ (Dearden 2014; Dominiczak and Johnson 2014).

In the months before and after the Brexit referendum, in which the Scots voted to remain in the EU but a majority of British (led by English) voters voted to leave, Scottish nationalist parliamentarians had not forgotten the rhetorical strategy adopted by Conservatives in the earlier Scottish independence debate. Rather they co-opted the UK-FON metaphor to express their

opposition to Brexit by depicting the UK familial relationship as hierarchical and abusive. During a debate on the May government's Brexit plan, for example, SNP MP Angus Brendan MacNeil lamented that the effects of Brexit would be harmful to Scotland and that the views of Scots needed to be considered in the process of leaving the EU. 'We were told this is a family of nations', he declared, 'and as such we would expect a member of that family to be respected – as, indeed, the EU respects its members'. (HC Debates, 6 December 2016). The lack of respect was reflected in the fact that Scotland was being forced to leave the EU against the will of its people. As Peter Wishart (SNP MP) remarked, if the UK was in fact a 'family of nations' as Conservatives had claimed, 'one nation of this Union cannot determine the membership rights of every other nation...' (HC Debates, 17 December 2015).

Duelling Commonwealth family metaphor variants

The following analysis of competing variants of a CW-FON metaphor provides a contemporary Brexit-related case study illustrating how political actors 'follow up', 'counter' and denounce (Musolff 2017) each other's influential metaphorical slogans. Specifically, it provides observations on how the concept of the family offers very malleable metaphorical possibilities for actors engaged in political dialogue, enabling them to paint multiple and competing rhetorical pictures of the Commonwealth and relations between its members – one which signifies close and mutually-beneficial familial ties, and another of a hierarchical and abusive family structure.

In the period under study (23 June 2015 to 31 October 2018), British MPs and Peers made a total of 95 CW-FON references; however, as Chart 1 illustrates, there was a dramatic spike in references in the period following Theresa May's so-called 'Global Britain' speech of 17 January 2017 until the end of March 2017. In this roughly two-and-a-half month period,

parliamentarians made a total of 33 CW-FON references, representing 35% of the total over the entire period. Of those 33 references, Conservative speakers made 18 references (or 55%), while Liberal Democrat speakers made 9 (27%), crossbenchers 3 (9%), non-affiliates 2 (6%), and 1 (3%) by a Democratic Unionist speaker. Furthermore, 30 of the 33 CW-FON references in January-March 2017 were made in the course of two days of debates on the topics of intra-Commonwealth relations and trade in the House of Commons (on 22 February) and the House of Lords (on 16 March), in both cases initiated by Conservative Party members. These factors strongly suggest a connection between the increased reference to the Commonwealth as a family unit on the one hand, and the UK government's simultaneous effort to promote the idea of 'Global Britain' as an alternative to its more historically recent European orientation and identity on the other. In other words, this study provides evidence of the purposeful political communication of metaphor.

Insert Chart 1 – Commonwealth Family of Nations (CW-FON) references (23 June 2015-31 October 2018)

Similar to the UK-FON case described above, a struggle for control over the metaphorical meaning of the CW-FON characterised its usage in the period under study. In the process of close reading the speeches in which CW-FON references are made, two distinct variants have been identified. The first, labelled the aspirational variant and communicated mainly by English Conservative speakers, frames the Commonwealth family as a historically-rooted, harmonious and prosperous alternative to the EU. Speakers communicating this variant portrayed the Commonwealth as a cooperative, efficient and prosperous family whose members share a common history, culture, and values, from which are derived common competencies that if harnessed can result in the expansion of intra-Commonwealth trade, which is described as

crucial for Britain's economic prosperity outside the EU. Furthermore, those who communicated this variant were more likely to describe intra-Commonwealth relations as mutually-beneficial for all members who because of their historical links enjoy advantages when trading together compared with trading with non-Commonwealth countries.

Insert Table 2 – Variants of the CW-FON metaphor (23 June 2015-31 October 2018)

Several themes were identified in the interpretative analysis of the aspirational CW-FON variant. Explicit comparisons of the Commonwealth to a family unit include references to the 'Commonwealth Family' and the Commonwealth as a 'family of nations', but also to specific positions within families, including speakers referring to themselves as Commonwealth 'children' (Lord Popat, 16 March 2017) and 'daughter[s]' (Baroness Uddin, 16 March 2017), and another's reference to 'our Commonwealth brothers and sisters' (Jim Shannon, 22 February 2017). Other speakers stressed the 'unique' (Baroness Anelay, 16 March 2017) and 'extraordinary' (Jake Berry, 22 February 2017) nature of the Commonwealth Family, which contributes to the communication of an image of closeness between the organization's members and difference from outsiders. In this sense, the Conservative Lord Popat, for example, commented on the comparative closeness of relationships between Commonwealth members (and in the process arguably placing greater importance on UK-Commonwealth relations than UK-European relations). Quoting Lord Howell (Conservative) he declared: "Europe is our region, America our ally, and the Commonwealth our family" (Lord Popat, 16 March 2017). Commonwealth countries share a 'natural bond' which according to another speaker distinguishes them from other countries and which 'should be strongly explored ...' (Jim Shannon, 22 February 2017).

Another characteristic of family life – that members come to each other’s assistance in times of need and crisis – was articulated by speakers who communicated the aspirational CW-FON metaphor variant. Immediately following his reference to the Commonwealth as a ‘unique family of nations’, for example, MP Jake Berry (22 February 2017) argued that history provided the key to Britain’s post-Brexit future when he stated:

... it is at the time of our greatest national need that these countries have stood shoulder to shoulder with Britain. They have stood by us when, as a nation, we have faced our darkest hours. Commonwealth soldiers have left home to fight and die alongside British troops on far-flung battlefields ... They have not forgotten our bond of shared culture and history that binds the Commonwealth together. It is now time for Britain to remember its old alliances. We must celebrate the Commonwealth and all it represents.

Although he admits that the UK had neglecting its Commonwealth partners in recent decades, the implication is that the country needs (and can even expect) its old friends in the Commonwealth to come to its aid in the current Brexit-induced crisis.

Families are often very diverse in composition and in the beliefs, values and behaviours of their members, but they can also develop similar characteristics as a result of years of members living in close quarters and having shared experiences. Speakers communicating the aspirational variant of the CW-FON metaphor tended to base their descriptions of the Commonwealth family along the lines of the latter, more homogenizing understanding, of the effect of family life. In this view, the Commonwealth family is composed of members who are similar in important respects (including, for example, in language, political and legal systems, shared history, values and culture, etc.) and these similarities have important implications for the future of intra-Commonwealth relations and the UK’s shift to a more global orientation.

The Commonwealth's strength, according to the Conservative Baroness Anelay (16 March 2017), derives from what the member countries share, similarities which she argued are further enhanced by 'the strong common instincts' of its members:

As a well-established *family* of co-operating nations, with these combined strengths and shared values, the Commonwealth could, and indeed should, play a greater role on the world stage.

As a consequence of the apparent binding tendencies inherent in relations between its members, some speakers referred to what can be described as a Commonwealth family trade advantage. Numerous speakers referenced the findings of a 2015 report published by the Commonwealth Secretariat which claims that when Commonwealth countries trade with each other that trade is on average 19% more profitable compared with similar transactions between Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth countries (Commonwealth Secretariat). According to one speaker, the profits derived from keeping trade in the family resulted from member states' 'common legal systems, language and culture' (Jake Berry, 22 February 2017) and according to another represent 'a huge advantage ... that we should all seek to exploit more effectively' (Baroness Anelay, 16 March 2017). The Commonwealth family trade advantage should, according to Lord Popat (16 March 2017), be utilized to reform the Commonwealth 'around a trade agenda' as a means of evening Britain's trade deficit and to help 'spread prosperity'.

The potential economic benefits to be gained from the perceived homogeneity of the Commonwealth family, including the trade advantages that family membership entails, led speakers who communicated the aspirational variant to advocate the need, as a family would, to foster or support the development of the economic potential of Commonwealth members. Anticipating the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) held in London, Baroness Anelay (16 March 2017), in her role as Minister of State for Foreign and

Commonwealth Affairs, emphasized the UK government's commitment to work with other Commonwealth members countries 'to ensure we show a Commonwealth that is forward-looking, revitalised and relevant to the new generations that have grown up since its formation – a Commonwealth that can play an essential role in resolving some of the world's greatest challenges and can build inclusive prosperity for all.' The UK government, at the ministerial level and in diplomatic relations with member countries would, according to Anelay, work 'to ensure that this unique family of nations fulfils its undoubted potential.' In this sense, the Commonwealth is portrayed as a multi-generational cooperative family unit with enormous potential, which given adequate focus and resources, could bring positive economic benefits to all its members.

When it came to the potential beneficiaries of increased intra-Commonwealth trade, speakers emphasised the importance of optics and particularly that the UK's renewed interest in the organization's members and their economic development not be interpreted as a return to exploitative practices critics in the context of Brexit debates have described as 'Empire 2.0' (Olusogo 2017). Baroness Mobarik (16 March 2017), for example, made this point clear when she stated that the government was considering options for 'building inclusive prosperity across our family of nations'. Taking inspiration from Britain's role as a founding member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, Lord Popat (16 March 2017) proposed the establishment of an investment bank which could finance economic development projects across the Commonwealth:

... there is a huge appetite for new infrastructure investment. New roads, rail and energy projects are all essential to economic development. A Commonwealth bank would be great way of demonstrating our commitment to our family, showing the Britain is still an outward-looking nation. It would help all its members, particularly the poorest.

Others stressed the positive side-effects of a more direct UK role in the economic development of the Commonwealth's least developed countries. While pointing out the significant regional importance of Nigeria in sub-Saharan Africa, MP John Howell (22 February 2017) advocated for more UK focus on and support to the Commonwealth's African member states: 'Anything we can do to help Nigeria to develop will bring stability to that part of the world. We need to show that we are doing that, as a good member of the Commonwealth family. It is an important part of the message we want to give.' The stress on an inclusive and mutually-beneficial tone was arguably motivated by anticipated (and understandable) critical responses to moves for a more active UK role in Commonwealth affairs.

The preceding thematic outline of the aspirational CW-FON variant suggests that its speaker's contribute to a positive narrative about the UK's past and future relationship with Commonwealth members, and particularly the role that the Commonwealth can play in the UK government's determination to achieve a more global orientation and identity for Britain. The UK's imperial past has produced a range of legacies and competences that link the country and its people with countries and peoples in its former colonies in the Commonwealth, contributing to a sense of shared identity and belonging that sets Britain and the British apart from Europe. Furthermore, in locating Britain and the British in the wider world outside Europe, the narrative associated with the aspirational CW-FON variant suggests that the country and its peoples' economic needs will be better served in a growing and dynamic Commonwealth. In these respects, the relation of the Commonwealth with a family unit serves to clarify the abstract idea of the organization and its relationship to Britain and its future global interests.

The critical judgmental variant of the CW-FON metaphor, on the other hand, was communicated largely by Liberal Democrat and Labour speakers (11 of 22 or 50% of the total references in the period under study). While the aspirational variant promotes reviving Britain's historical ties and cooperation with other Commonwealth members and the importance of doing so as the UK leaves the EU, the critical judgmental variant portrays the Commonwealth as a dysfunctional family characterized by inequality and discrimination. Speakers communicating this variant describe a Commonwealth that has let its members down in the past, often as a consequence of British actions in the colonial and post-colonial past, and expressed a determination that policies to promote increasing intra-Commonwealth trade and deepening economic ties not come at the expense of human rights in member states.

Although the Commonwealth had achieved 'considerable achievements' in its history, including for example the Declaration of Commonwealth Principles (1971) and the Harare Declaration (1991), Baroness D'Souza (16 March 2017) pointed to 'continued challenges within the family of nations, including discontent between the developed and developing nations, small states and large states, [and] tiger economies and fragile ones', as well as new challenges related to radicalism, migration and trade, which she feared the Commonwealth was not well-equipped to act upon. In fact, despite the range of rights-related agreements Commonwealth countries had mutually-agreed upon, she lamented that there had been a 'failure' to implement the 'principles that underlie membership.' The Liberal Democrat peer Lord Purvis (16 March 2017) similarly critiqued the Commonwealth and its members' lack of commitment to shared principles in what can be interpreted as a direct challenge (see underlined) to the communicators of more positive and benign visions of the Commonwealth family:

The diversity of the Commonwealth being one of its strengths does not mean that there are universal standards on human rights. ... Within the family of nations, as we have been referring to it, there requires to be much greater dialogue and open exchanges on addressing issues where we would like to see development.

Others sought to establish a conditional relationship between rights and trade, stressing that the UK's priority in its relations with Commonwealth countries should be diminishing inequalities and discrimination and that these goals should not be 'secondary to a trading bloc' (Lord Scriven, 16 March 2017). Others still focussed on more possible concrete consequences of Commonwealth countries not living up to mutually-committed principles such as equality and anti-discrimination, including that their economic growth will be stifled. A pre-condition for economic development across the Commonwealth, Lord Collins (2 November 2017) argued, was that democratic and human rights would need to be 'fully enshrined' in the 'family of nations'.

In the process of communicating a dysfunctional image of the Commonwealth family, Liberal Democrat and Labour Party speakers focussed on the mistreatment of three social groups in particular: women, members of the LGBTI community, and UK pensioners living abroad in the other Commonwealth countries. In the first case, despite efforts to empower women through the commissioning of studies and holding workshops and meetings (including the Commonwealth Women Leaders' Summit held in London in July 2016), numerous speakers criticised the limited levels of female influence in political, economic and social contexts in member countries. Despite the Commonwealth Charter's declaration that 'gender equality and women's empowerment are essential components of human development and basic human rights' and that the advancement of women's and girl's rights and access to education 'are critical preconditions for effective and sustainable development', Commonwealth efforts in these areas were according to Baroness Uddin (16 March 2017) 'moving at a snail's pace'. As a self-

described ‘daughter of the Commonwealth’, she feared that these failures would have negative consequences for ‘lasting peace and prosperity in the world’.

Several speakers criticised discrimination against members of the LGBTI community in many Commonwealth countries, resulting from legal restrictions against consensual same-sex acts in most cases instituted by British colonial administrations. Lord Purvis (16 March 2017), for example, described the fact that 90% of the Commonwealth’s total population lived in countries where consensual same-sex acts are punished severely, including with sentences of prison, hard labour, floggings, and in the case of Nigeria, death, as ‘something we cannot support.’ As a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Global LGBT Rights (founded in June 2015 with the goal of promoting LGBT rights around the world) and the Labour Party’s special envoy on LGBT rights, Lord Cashman (2 November 2017) pointed out that while the Commonwealth is described as a ‘family of nations’ it is not ‘a family where we are treated equally or with dignity.’ The criminalization of same-sex relationships in over 35 Commonwealth countries is an ‘unacceptable’ and ‘shameful’ legacy of Britain’s imperial past, he argued, lamenting that many former colonies ‘cling desperately to’ and in some cases ‘are increasingly defending ... and advocating further repression.’ For the Liberal Democrat peer Lord Scriven (16 March 2017), respect and equality for all groups and individuals was a prerequisite for positive relationships and a well-functioning Commonwealth. History, he concluded, would judge the ‘leadership role’ the UK takes not only by what was accomplished in the area of trade, but rather ‘by what we do to support all people within our family of nations to be equal.’

Finally, others criticised the UK government's treatment of retired UK citizens, many with Commonwealth roots, who are being discriminated against for deciding to retire abroad. Approximately 550,000 Britons living overseas are excluded from the annual upward adjustments to their state pensions – so-called 'frozen pensions' (Jones 2018). Of these, approximately 520,000 live in Commonwealth countries. As a consequence, UK pensioners living in most Commonwealth countries receive the same rate on their state pensions as long as they live overseas, while pensioners residing in the UK see their rates increase over time. Describing this discriminatory policy a 'national shame and a great injustice', Liberal Democrat Baroness Benjamin (16 March 2017) called on the UK government to recognize the rights of UK citizens of Commonwealth origin to move freely and to be treated the same as UK-based pensioners:

In the case of the Commonwealth, with increasing numbers of those who came to the UK in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s now considering a return in their retirement years, there is surely an obligation not to penalise them, while allowing full rights elsewhere. Many of them helped to make Britain great over the years. The Commonwealth will surely be stronger if Britain recognises that it cannot expect only to enjoy the benefits of membership when it needs it, but that it must also meet its obligations when people move the other way. ... I believe that change on this issue is possible and would be the right thing to do, as it would do much to strengthen Commonwealth relations in years to come. This should be part of our legacy for our Commonwealth family.

For Benjamin and other speakers communicating the critical judgmental CW-FON variant, if the UK government intended to revitalize its relations with Commonwealth countries after decades of EU membership, then the country has an obligation to pursue policies that enhance the human rights of all members of the family of nations.

Quantifying the language of the CW-FON metaphor variants

The preceding presentation of the thematic qualities of the two CW-FON variants has been supported and extended with quantitative explorations of the data set. First, two word frequency queries were performed – one on each of the CW-FON variant groups of speeches. The queries produced 3,000 of the most frequently-used words in each group of speeches, and 9 of the most relevant words to each variant (all located within the first 140 most frequently-used words) were selected and cross-referenced against their frequency in all of the speeches in both groups. The results are summarized in Table 3 (both in the raw number of occurrences and the weighted percentage of each word as it occurs in the combined speeches in the individual variant groups).

Insert Table 3 – Word frequency comparison between speeches containing CW-FON metaphor variants (23 June 2015-10 October 2018)

As shown, the most frequently-used word in both groups of speeches was (as expected) ‘Commonwealth’, although speakers communicating the positive aspirational variant used the word to a significantly greater degree as a weighted percentage in their combined speeches. The word ‘family’ is used frequently by speakers in both groups, but again, more so by speakers in the aspirational CW-FON metaphor group. It can be reasonably concluded that speakers of this variant are more likely to use these words due to their interest in promoting the idea that Commonwealth members have a shared historical familial identity that can be utilized in the present.

Otherwise the language used by speakers in both groups differed significantly, clearly reflecting the distinguishing features of the two variants described above. Speakers of the positive aspirational variant, for example, were more likely to use words with economic

connotations (including ‘trade’, ‘opportunity’, ‘prosperity’) and words that reflect the geographic dimensions of the Commonwealth and the UK government’s promotion of a less regionally-focussed orientation (including ‘global’ and ‘international’). It is worth noting that there is such a disparity in the use of the word ‘trade’ by speakers in the two variants groups, particularly since 10 of the 22 critical judgmental variant references (or 45%) were made during debates in which a central theme was increasing intra-Commonwealth trade (on 22 February in the Commons and 16 March 2017 in the Lords). Speakers in the judgmental variant group, on the other hand, were much more likely to use rights-related language in their speeches (including ‘rights’, ‘human’, ‘women’, ‘equality’, ‘discrimination’, ‘lgbt’, ‘colonial’). The most frequently-used words by speakers in this group indicates an effort to challenge or discredit the image of the Commonwealth as a harmonious family unit. The language used by speakers in the two groups thus aligns closely with the description of the opposing CW-FON metaphor variants – one communicating a positive vision of the Commonwealth, its potential as an economic trading bloc and its importance to Britain’s future global orientation and identity, and the other a more pessimistic and sceptical vision of the organization and the ability of its members to cooperate and achieve joint aims, particularly in the realm of human rights.

Quantifying history in the CW-FON metaphor variants

The word frequency queries also revealed that speakers in both variant groups used the word ‘history’; however, the aspirational variant speakers used the word much more frequently, and in fact, the two groups appear to actually *use* history in markedly different ways. There already exists an extensive literature on how politicians and policymakers (mainly in the context of United States politics) use their historical knowledge and historical analogies to make sense of

complex political and diplomatic processes and events (Jervis 1976; Neustadt and May 1986), as well as how these actors use historical knowledge in their rhetorical arsenals (Faber 1978; Kaarbo and Kenealy 2017; Miller 2016). This study, on the other hand, provides an opportunity to examine the use of history in the political communication of multi-variant ‘family of nation’ conceptual metaphors in British political discourse.

To facilitate a quantitative analysis of the historical content, the speeches in each variant group were coded for references to historical events, phenomenon, persons, recollections, etc., relating to both the ‘recent’ and ‘distant’ past. This allowed for the running of a number of queries to determine the percentage of content in each speech that was historical in nature, making it then possible to determine the proportion of content which was historical in all of the combined speeches in each variant group, as well as the proportion of the historical content which was referring to the ‘recent’ or ‘distant’ past. The dividing line between ‘recent’ and ‘distant’ historical references is the year 1973. To illustrate, here are two examples of historical references from the data set, one to the ‘distant’ (pre-1973) and one to the ‘recent (post-1973) past:

... of course Britain did not stand alone, and does not stand alone now; we stand alongside our brothers and sisters, who have grown up with us and with whom we have grown up, who came from all parts of what was once the empire and is now the Commonwealth and who have enriched our lives and our culture every day since our contacts were first built. The Windrush generation are not a foreign generation but our own generation and very much part of us. It is to that spirit of unity that she is speaking, and it is one of pride, not shame (Tom Tugendhat, Conservative MP, positive/aspirational CW-FON variant, 14 June 2018).

and,

The Commonwealth was one of the earliest intergovernmental organisations, in 1980, to recognise the importance of people’s right to know and to be involved in decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods. Despite strenuous efforts on the part of

parliamentarians through many CPA [Commonwealth Parliamentary Association] programmes, in the shape of workshops on the concept, practice and experience of freedom of information, only 20 Commonwealth countries had introduced freedom of information laws by 2010—that is, roughly 30% in 30 years (Baroness D’Souza, Crossbencher, critical/judgmental CW-FON variant, 16 March 2017).

The rationale behind using 1973 as the dividing line between the ‘recent’ and ‘distant’ past is that in this year the UK joined the European Economic Community (EEC), an event which participants in Brexit debates point to as the time when the UK became a regional rather than global power, in the process shifting much focus and resources away from its Commonwealth relations. It was hypothesised that the advocates for a more global identity and orientation for the UK post-Brexit would be more likely to make references to the country’s ‘distant’ past, including to topics in pre-1973 imperial and Commonwealth history, than those with a more critical view on the impact leaving the EU may have.

Insert Table 4 – Historical content in speeches containing CW-FON metaphor variants (23 June 2015-31 October 2018)

As Table 4 shows, this hypothesis was validated in this data set as speakers of the positive aspirational CW-FON variant utilized more historical knowledge in their speeches overall and a significant proportion referred to the ‘distant’ past. Since the aim of speakers communicating the judgmental variant was primarily to stress the contemporary shortcomings of the Commonwealth family, particularly in the areas of human rights, it is understandable that most of the references to the past would be of a more recent nature. On the other hand, the tendency to make more historical references to the period before the UK joined the EEC arguably contributes to one of the functions of the aspirational CW-FON variant – the promotion of a global understanding of where Britain has historically belonged and policies, including those related to revitalizing intra-Commonwealth economic ties, which will help the country recover

that orientation and identity. Most of the speakers of this variant belong to the Conservative Party, which it has been argued places a greater emphasis on tradition and inherited institutions like the monarchy than the other main parties, and this may influence the extent to which they draw on historical knowledge from the ‘distant’ past (Hickson, 2005; Scruton, 2014). More so, however, another explanation could be tied to a resurgent empire nostalgia, reflected in positive public portrayals of Britain’s imperial and post-colonial relationships by Conservatives in contemporary Brexit-related discourse (Bell and Vucetic 2019; Olusogo 2017; Wellings and Baxendale 2015).

Discussion and conclusion

This study has examined the competitive communication of a Commonwealth as ‘family of nations’ metaphor, and how British parliamentarians have struggled over control of its meaning. While two variants have been identified, interpreted and analyzed, it has been shown that Conservative speakers have been much more likely to communicate the more positive aspirational variant in what has been presented here as a rhetorical contribution to the UK government’s promotion of a narrative that facilitates the imagination of a more global orientation and identity for the country following its departure from the EU. The results of this study therefore build on the work of Wellings (2016) who, in his work on the republication of Henrietta Marshall’s early 20th century children’s history book *Our Island Story*, argues that English Conservative politicians and public intellectuals have been using the ‘memory of Empire’ and an ideologically-determined ‘reading of the past’ in debates surrounding the UK’s ‘disengagement’ with the EU and ‘re-engagement’ with historical allies in the so-called Anglosphere, all in the hope of ‘repositioning’ the UK ‘as a globally oriented actor’ (368-69).

Although the metaphor variants examined in this study differ substantially in their familial portrayals of the multi-national Commonwealth, some interesting similarities can also be discerned. For example, Polonska-Kimunguyi and Kimunguyi (2017) have argued that in his rhetorical efforts to promote a new ‘Global Britain’ foreign policy orientation for the UK, the former foreign minister Boris Johnson constructed Africa (including Britain’s former colonies there) as a ‘problem’ (economic or otherwise) that required the remedial injection of liberal values. This discursive construction of Africa as a ‘problem’, the authors assert, reflects ‘a continuation of British imperial and post-imperial discourses of “developing” or “civilizing” Africa’ (326).

The impulse to intervene in order to ameliorate African ‘problems’ can also be detected in the speeches analysed in this study in *both* the positive aspirational and critical judgemental CW-FON metaphor variant groups. For example, speakers of the latter variant argue that the UK has a responsibility to intervene more aggressively (directly or indirectly) in the affairs of former colonies where certain social groups are being discriminated against or human rights are lacking, including in areas (such as the criminalization of consensual same-sex relationships) in which laws established by British colonial administrations have persisted to the present-day. On the other hand, speakers of the positive aspirational variant promote deeper UK engagement with Commonwealth countries as a means of fostering economic development and stimulating trade, and particularly in the least developed member countries.

The extensive debates triggered by the Brexit referendum result, many of which centre on the theme of the adoption of more ‘global’ roles and identifications beyond Europe, has produced a plethora of rich resources making possible expansive and diverse explorations of the discursive

constructions of Britain's former colonies and their roles – from the perspective of members of the political elite – in the country's transition from EU member into a more unilateral actor in the international system. The study of these ever-expanding resources may also produce insights into how and to what extent representations of developing Commonwealth countries as 'problems' in need of external assistance, including by way of the promotion of British principles of 'free markets, democracy and human rights', serve to legitimize interventions in these places and may by extension, as Polonska-Kimunguyi and Kimunguyi (2017) observe, point to deeper motivations for increased influence and control over African policies (326). Brysk et al. (2002) have argued that relationships between the UK, France and Spain and their former colonies have been constructed as 'domestic' and 'paternalistic' (273-274), and the speeches containing CW-FON metaphors examined in this study lend support this argument. The impulse to intervene interpreted in these speeches, justified by claims that the intervention is made for the good of those being intervened upon, reminds one of parent-child relationships and their associated family hierarchies.

The complex, uncertain and emotional character of Brexit has resulted in the communication of a vast array of metaphors to help explain it. As Christopher Grey (2018) notes: 'All of these ... metaphors serve as ways of trying to explain Brexit to ourselves and others and to make something that is hard to grasp in its entirety more comprehensible'. Others have observed that Brexit has become 'a multi-metaphored beast' because it requires simplified explanation as it 'bears no obvious resemblance to any other political situation in modern history' (Tapper 2019). Furthermore, the metaphors communicated in the context of Brexit-inspired debates are highly political and 'rarely innocent' (Grey 2018), reflecting as they do the different visions communicated by supporters and opponents of the UK leaving the EU. Contemporary events in

Britain are producing a rich resource of metaphorical references (and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future), which could provoke interesting avenues of inquiry into the nature of political dialogue and debate. For example, the rigorous study of Brexit's metaphors, building on the analytical methods applied in this study, could provide useful insights into: the linguistic drivers of Eurosceptic thought, including in the construction of notions of Europe and Europeans, Britain and Britons; the metaphorical preferences of different categories of political actors on these and other questions; the relationship between metaphor and crisis, and whether the latter influences the thematic domains, frequency of use, and competition over the meanings and sentiments of the former, and; the political uses of the past in the construction and communication of influential metaphorical slogans. The all-embracing and enduring nature of the dialogue and debates surrounding Brexit means that not only will it be possible for future inquiries along these lines to be made on extremely large data sets, but also in relation to multiple spheres of British society (political, social, economic, cultural, etc.), opening the door to a wide range of opportunities for comparative research.

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Table 1 – Family of nations references in the UK Parliament (23 June 2015-10 October 2018)

	CON	LAB	LD	SNP	PC	DUP	CB	NON-AFF	LS	Total
CW-FON	59	4	10	2	0	2	8	10	0	95
UK-FON	37	7	2	35	9	0	0	0	1	91
EU-FON	11	21	2	10	1	1	5	1	0	52
INT-FON	2	3	1	4	1	0	0	0	2	13
UN-FON	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	4
E-A-FON	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	111	36	16	51	11	4	13	11	3	256

(CON [Conservative Party]; LAB [Labour Party]; LD [Liberal Democrat]; SNP [Scottish National Party]; PC [Plaid Cymru]; DUP [Democratic Unionist Party]; CB [Crossbencher]; NAFL [non-affiliated]; LS [Lord Spiritual])

Chart 1 – Commonwealth Family of Nations (CW-FON) references (23 June 2015-31 October 2018)

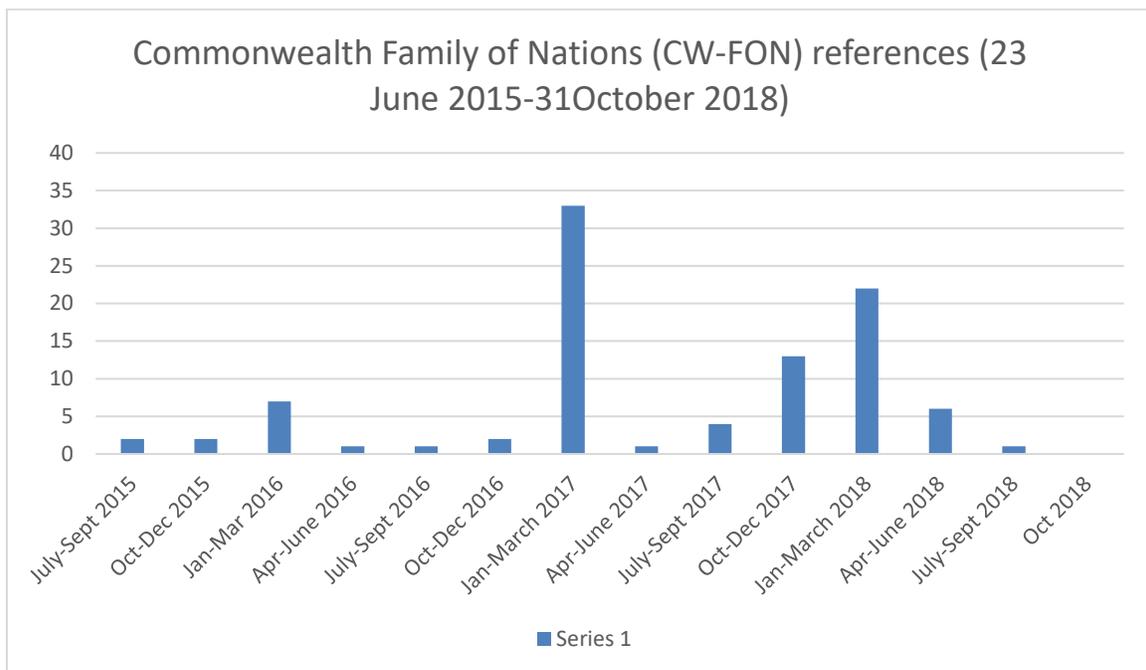


Table 2 – Variants of the CW-FON metaphor (23 June 2015-31 October 2018)

	Aspirational (positive) variant	Judgmental (critical) variant	Other	
			Positive	Critical
CON	30	6	19	4
LAB	0	4	0	0
LD	0	7	0	3
SNP	0	1	1	0
DUP	1	0	1	0
CB	1	3	2	2
NAF	8	1	0	1

(CON [Conservative Party]; LAB [Labour Party]; LD [Liberal Democrat]; SNP [Scottish National Party]; DUP [Democratic Unionist Party]; CB [Crossbencher]; NAFL [non-affiliated])

Table 3 – Word frequency comparison between speeches containing CW-FON metaphor variants (23 June 2015-10 October 2018)

	positive / aspirational (weighted percentage)	critical / judgmental (weighted percentage)
Commonwealth	509 (3.59%)	250 (2.74%)
trade	172 (1.21%)	26 (0.28%)
family	66 (0.47%)	34 (0.37%)
global	45 (0.32%)	16 (0.18%)
opportunity	41 (0.29%)	14 (0.15%)
international	38 (0.27%)	12 (0.13%)
history	25 (0.18%)	7 (0.08%)
potential	21 (0.15%)	10 (0.11%)
prosperity	18 (0.13%)	7 (0.08%)
people	73 (0.51%)	76 (0.83%)
rights	33 (0.23%)	68 (0.74%)
women	6 (0.04%)	50 (0.55%)
human	20 (0.14%)	48 (0.53%)
equality	7 (0.05%)	27 (0.30%)
discrimination	5 (0.04%)	26 (0.28%)
gender	1 (0.01%)	18 (0.20%)
lgbti	4 (0.03%)	17 (0.19%)
colonial	2 (0.01)	7 (0.08%)

Table 4 – Historical content in speeches containing CW-FON metaphor variants (23 June 2015-31October 2018)

	Historical references (average % of speeches)	Average % of speeches referencing distant history	Average % of speeches referencing recent history	Distant history share of total historical references (%)
positive/aspirational speakers	28.5	13.3	15.2	46.6
critical/judgmental Speakers	24.9	6.1	18.8	24.4

Appendix – List of CW-FON metaphor statements, 23 June 2015 – 31 October 2018

<u>Date</u>	<u>Speaker</u>	<u>Party</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u># CW-FON refs</u>
09-09-2015	David Cameron	Conservative	Commons	1
15-09-2015	Andrew Rosindell	Conservative	Commons	1
01-12-2015	Martin John Docherty	SNP	Commons	1
17-12-2015	Lord Luce	Crossbencher	Lords	1
04-02-2016	Craig Mackinlay	Conservative	Commons	1
11-02-2016	Baroness Verma	Conservative	Lords	1
14-03-2016	Hugo Swire	Conservative	Commons	2
14-03-2016	Ian Liddell-Grainger	Conservative	Commons	2
14-03-2016	Patrick Grady	SNP	Commons	1
21-04-2016	David Cameron	Conservative	Commons	1
08-09-2016	Lord Howell	Conservative	Lords	1
11-10-2016	Jake Berry	Conservative	Commons	1
20-10-2016	Lord Howell	Conservative	Lords	1
20-01-2017	Alan Mak	Conservative	Commons	1
20-01-2017	Peter Heaton-Jones	Conservative	Commons	1
21-02-2017	Lord Taylor (Warwick)	Non-affiliated	Lords	1
22-02-2017	Jake Berry	Conservative	Commons	2
22-02-2017	John Howell	Conservative	Commons	1
22-02-2017	Jim Shannon	DUP	Commons	1
16-03-2017	Baroness Anelay	Conservative	Lords	4
16-03-2017	Baroness Benjamin	Liberal Democrat	Lords	1
16-03-2017	Baroness D'Souza	Crossbencher	Lords	1
16-03-2017	Baroness Jenkin	Conservative	Lords	1
16-03-2017	Baroness Mobarik	Conservative	Lords	3
16-03-2017	Baroness Uddin	Non-affiliated	Lords	1
16-03-2017	Earl of Sandwich	Crossbencher	Lords	1
16-03-2017	Lord Goodlad	Conservative	Lords	1
16-03-2017	Lord Lexden	Conservative	Lords	1
16-03-2017	Lord Popat	Conservative	Lords	3
16-03-2017	Lord Purvis	Liberal Democrat	Lords	3
16-03-2017	Lord Scriven	Liberal Democrat	Lords	5
16-03-2017	Viscount Waverly	Crossbencher	Lords	1
20-04-2017	Nigel Evans	Conservative	Commons	1
12-09-2017	Hugo Swire	Conservative	Commons	1
12-09-2017	Lord Ahmad	Conservative	Lords	3
02-11-2017	Lord Ahmad	Conservative	Lords	1
02-11-2017	Lord Cashman	Labour	Lords	1
02-11-2017	Lord Collins	Labour	Lords	1
02-11-2017	Lord Mendelsohn	Labour	Lords	1
02-11-2017	Lord Taylor (Warwick)	Non-affiliated	Lords	2

27-11-2017	Baroness Fairhead	Conservative	Lords	1
27-11-2017	Lord Taylor (Warwick)	Non-affiliated	Lords	4
13-12-2017	Lord Ahmad	Conservative	Lords	2
31-01-2018	Lord Taylor (Warwick)	Non-affiliated	Lords	2
22-01-2018	Lord Popat	Conservative	Lords	1
20-02-2018	Hugo Swire	Conservative	Commons	1
20-02-2018	Lord Ahmad	Conservative	Lords	1
06-03-2018	Hugo Swire	Conservative	Commons	3
06-03-2018	Mark Fields	Conservative	Commons	1
21-03-2018	Baroness Spelman	Conservative	Lords	1
21-03-2018	Hugo Swire	Conservative	Commons	1
21-03-2018	Richard Graham	Conservative	Commons	1
21-03-2018	Sir Nicolas Soames	Conservative	Commons	2
22-03-2018	Baroness Anelay	Conservative	Lords	1
22-03-2018	Earl of Sandwich	Crossbencher	Lords	1
22-03-2018	Lord Cashman	Labour	Lords	1
22-03-2018	Lord Kakkar	Crossbencher	Lords	1
22-03-2018	Lord Luce	Crossbencher	Lords	1
22-03-2018	Lord Popat	Conservative	Lords	1
22-03-2018	Viscount Waverly	Crossbencher	Lords	1
27-03-2018	David Evennett	Conservative	Commons	1
18-04-2018	Theresa May	Conservative	Commons	1
03-05-2018	Lord Ahmad	Conservative	Lords	1
15-05-2018	Jim Shannon	DUP	Commons	1
15-05-2018	Mary Robinson	Conservative	Commons	1
14-06-2018	Tom Tugendhat	Conservative	Commons	1
21-06-2018	Lord Stunell	Liberal Democrat	Lords	1
23-07-2018	Lord Ahmad	Conservative	Lords	1
TOTAL				95