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The interplay of conceptual metaphors and evaluation in press reports on the AUKUS agreement

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Abstract

The linguistic literature has shown that metaphor provokes evaluative meanings, but it is unclear how different types of metaphor, as well as different genres of discourse influence the realization of such meanings. To partially answer this question, our study aims to investigate the relationship between conceptual metaphors and evaluation in Australian broadsheet and tabloid articles on the AUKUS alliance, the trilateral security partnership between Australia, the U.K., and the U.S. The data comprise all Australian news and opinion articles gathered from Nexis Uni through the University of Granada’s e-library between September 15, 2021, and October 31, 2021. The study employs a parameter-based approach to evaluation and its methodology involves the annotation of metaphors according to the parameters of creativity/conventionality, as well as the examination of their source and target domains. The quantitative analysis indicates that there is a connection between the types of metaphors (conventional and creative) and the characteristics of their evaluation (polarity and explicitness), which are affected by the genre of the corpus and the topic of the content where the metaphors appear. Additionally, the corpus shows that negative emotivity is a prevalent evaluative component of metaphors in both newspapers. The qualitative analysis demonstrates that conceptualizations of metaphors alternate between biological and mechanistic images of the world, with the dominant metaphor domains being almost unilaterally used in both broadsheets and tabloids. The implications of the study suggest that the complex relationship between metaphor and evaluation should be interpreted in light of the text’s genre and topic rather than separately.

Keywords: *metaphor, conventional metaphor, creative metaphor, evaluation, genre, AUKUS*



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Взаимодействие концептуальных метафор и оценок в пресс-релизах о соглашении AUKUS

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Аннотация

Известно, что метафоры обладают оценочными значениями, но остается невыясненным, как различные типы метафор, а также различные жанры дискурса влияют на формирование этих значений. Чтобы частично ответить на этот вопрос, наше исследование нацелено на выявление связи между концептуальными метафорами и оценкой в статьях широкоформатных австралийских газет и таблоидов, посвященных альянсу AUKUS – трехстороннему пакту о партнерстве в области безопасности между Австралией, Великобританией и США. Данные включают австралийские новостные и публицистические статьи, собранные из Nexis Uni через электронную библиотеку Университета Гранады в период с 15 сентября 2021 года по 31 октября 2021 года. В исследовании используется параметрический подход к оценке. Методология включает аннотацию метафор в соответствии с параметрами креативности/конвенциональности, а также изучение их исходных и целевых областей. Количественный анализ выявил связь между типами метафор (конвенциональными и креативными) и характеристиками их оценки (полярностью и эксплицитностью), которые зависят от жанра корпуса и тематики контента, в котором используются метафоры. Кроме того, результаты свидетельствуют о том, что негативная эмотивность является преобладающим оценочным компонентом метафор в обоих типах газет. Качественный анализ показал, что концептуализации метафор чередуются между биологическими и механистическими образами мира, при этом доминирующие области метафор практически односторонне используются как в широкоформатных изданиях, так и в таблоидах. Выводы исследования показывают, что сложные отношения между метафорой и оценкой следует интерпретировать одновременно в свете жанра и темы текста, а не по отдельности.

Ключевые слова: метафора, конвенциональная метафора, креативная метафора, оценка, жанр, AUKUS

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1. Introduction

Human cognition and communication rely heavily on metaphorical imagery, which holds true in political discussions and international relations as much as in any other area of study. Researchers in the field of international relations have identified metaphors as essential to formulating their explanatory frameworks. For instance, the contemporary framework of international relations incorporates representations that, as Marks (2011: 69–79) points out, depend on both biological/evolutionary conceptualizations (such as ‘community of states’) and conceptualizations of construction (for example, ‘the politics of scale’). In illustration of the former, international norms have been likened to “genes”, an image which emphasizes the inevitability or natural order of how things should be, while in the latter, mechanistic metaphors which focus on “construction” images help to highlight the role of actors; political agents are represented as the creators or builders, “constructing” international relations. Within the context of the aforementioned two metaphor paradigms, the present study explores how metaphor frames coverage of the AUKUS agreement, which is the trilateral security collaboration involving Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Analyzing newspaper genres and media in general is vital for comprehending international relations since public perception, shaped by media representations of other nations, impacts foreign policy. Furthermore, the influence of a specific media format is filtered through the ‘logics’ of that format (Kluever 2002: 499).

This paper explores two lines of research: (1) the connection between metaphor and evaluation in news coverage of the AUKUS agreement, and (2) the extent to which coverage of AUKUS in broadsheet and tabloid newspapers aligns or differs concerning the conceptual and evaluative potentials of metaphorical domains. By addressing the first issue, we add to the broader discourse on the link between metaphor and evaluation, while recognizing prior research in this field that presents somewhat contradictory results. The assertion of Systemic Functional Linguistics that metaphors inherently “provoke” attitudinal meanings underpins this study. This assumption is contested by a later examination by Fuoli et al. (2021), which indicates that incorporating the distinction between creative and conventional metaphors into the Appraisal framework (Martin & White 2005) may provide “a more refined account” of metaphors’ evaluative roles (Fuoli 2021: 100). Hidalgo-Downing and Pérez-Sobrino (2024: 211) suggest considering metaphoricity as a metric of evaluation that will enable researchers to ascertain how often and where evaluative metaphors appear across various discourse genres. The exploration of the association between particular types of metaphors (both creative and conventional) and the evaluative polarity present in newspaper discourse is a topic that has not been explored previously, even though it is proposed that this relationship may differ based on the genre of the text and needs to be studied across diverse discourse modalities (Fuoli et al. 2021: 100).

Our study is divided into two segments. The first segment involves a quantitative examination, while the second focuses on a qualitative exploration of

metaphors. The quantitative portion addresses the following two inquiries with theoretical implications: (1) What is the relationship between metaphors and evaluation in general, particularly concerning the creativity of metaphors on one side, and the polarity and explicitness of evaluation on the other side in broadsheets and tabloids on AUKUS? (2) What are the primary evaluative parameters in both categories of newspapers? We expect that the evaluative role of metaphors in tabloids and broadsheets will differ, and that certain types of metaphors may be more prevalent in one format than the other, based on earlier research by Bednarek (2006) which indicated distinct evaluative styles between tabloids and broadsheets. This research will be discussed further in Section 2.4. The qualitative analysis addresses two additional questions that have practical implications and relate to the study of metaphors in international relations: (1) What specific domains and their evaluative parameters are linked to the coverage of AUKUS in broadsheets and tabloids? (2) How do they align with the conceptual framework of metaphors in international relations?

To the best of our knowledge, the set of questions about metaphor and evaluation has never been used in the broadsheet and tabloid genres, and as a result, it contributes to the broader conversation about their relationship. The qualitative portion of the study focuses on the metaphor domains that draw attention to the news regarding AUKUS in the data that is currently available, thereby advancing the study of metaphors in international relations.

The article is structured as follows: The following section, Section 2, provides some basic information on the AUKUS agreement and the role of metaphors in international relations. This section also describes the relevant metaphor framework and evaluative parameters used in the analysis, and it reviews the literature on the relationship between metaphors and evaluation. Section 3 provides an introduction to our dataset and the annotation process concerning metaphors and evaluation. In Section 4, we provide the results and findings from our quantitative and qualitative analyses, and explore these findings in greater detail. The last section concludes the article by documenting the interplay between metaphor and evaluative devices in the news press on the AUKUS pact.

2. Background

This section gives some background on the AUKUS agreement and discusses the prior research on metaphors in international relations. It explains the evaluation framework we will employ in our analysis, and explores the connection between metaphors and evaluation.

2.1. AUKUS Agreement

In September 2021, the leaders of Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States announced an enhanced trilateral security partnership known as “AUKUS.” The aim of this alliance is to advance research and development for

emerging capabilities essential for maintaining a competitive edge, reinforcing defense connections, and increasing the presence of the three nations in the Indo-Pacific. AUKUS is largely interpreted as a reaction to China's significant naval expansions in the South China Sea and its growing influence in regions bordering the Indian Ocean, including Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East (Barnes & Makinda 2022: 1307). In this context, Australia abruptly canceled its \$90 billion submarine agreement with the French partially state-owned Laval Group, instigating the most profound diplomatic crisis with France since its nuclear testing in the Pacific (Staunton & Day 2002: 1).

According to Barnes and Makinda (2022: 1302), China in particular has spoken out against AUKUS, comparing it to an "Asia-Pacific NATO replica" that jeopardizes its influence in the region.

A concise overview of the events listed above is particularly important for the qualitative part of our research (see Section 4.2), which demonstrates how they are reflected in the source and target domains of metaphors and how they connect to different evaluation criteria.

2.2. Metaphorical framework in the context of international relations

We analyze how AUKUS is conceptualized in English-speaking broadsheets and tabloids through the lens of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT, Lakoff & Johnson 1980), a widely used framework in metaphor research that provides a cognitive perspective on metaphor as a means of representing our perceptions and thoughts about the world. This framework posits that metaphors allow us to understand one concept (including more abstract or intricate elements of our experience) by relating it to another, typically from a more concrete realm (Steen et al. 2010, Fuoli et al. 2021, Kalinin & Ignatenko 2024, Zibin & Solopova 2024). Since its inception, this theory has been applied across various contexts to highlight the tendency to map phenomena, events, or beliefs into existing or conventionalized domains. In critical discourse analyses, CMT can elucidate how metaphorical language and thought may shape opinions, positions, and decision-making, thereby "mobilizing individuals, expressing interests, promoting viewpoints, or generating support" (Marks 2018: 7). As stated by Chilton (1995), the traditional conceptual metaphor framework has been repeatedly utilized in numerous social discourse contexts, reflecting its presence across multiple areas of human activity. For example, Chilton (ibid: 190: 203, 324–384) examines the 'conceptual framing' during the Cold War, from George Kennan's X-article in *Foreign Affairs* (1947) to Mikhail Gorbachev's 'common European house' in the late 1980s and George Bush's 'new world order' in 1990. Marks' *International Relations Theory* (2011, 2018) argues that metaphorical interpretations of issues can profoundly affect deterrence and policy responses. Quoting Judge (1989: 3–4), he gives multiple examples, such as how policy challenges are frequently framed using "geometrical principles (e.g. 'spheres' of influence, policy 'levels'), tools (e.g., 'umbrella,' 'shields,' 'tridents'), or sports (e.g., 'keeping the ball in play,' 'scoring points')."

Both politicians and the media depend on established metaphors to propose solutions by utilizing these metaphors. Recent significant studies on metaphor in international relations include an exploration of the heightened and emotional rhetoric around Brexit (Charteris-Black 2019) and Charteris-Black's (2021) and Musolff's (2023) analyses of international discourse related to COVID-19. The accumulation of conceptual metaphors in International Relations underpins the narratives on which International Relations theories are built (Marks 2018). Our analysis employs Marks' International Relations Theory (2011, 2018), which differentiates between biological and mechanical metaphors. Unlike mechanical metaphors that imply a linear cause-and-effect theory with created and static structures, biological metaphors suggest a mode of causation that encompasses evolution and "life cycle" transformation (Marks 2018: 91–97).

Finally, constructivist theory, based on mechanical metaphors, frames "problems" in international relations and puts forth "solutions." For instance, the metaphor of "anarchy" signifies the fundamental dilemma of international relations, while the metaphor of "security" represents the framing of a response to anarchy (ibid: 30). To expand on the biological metaphor, political systems are metaphorically likened to living organisms that resemble healthy beings vulnerable to illness or infection. Moreover, under the contemporary viewpoint, political systems may undergo evolutionary changes manifested as punctuated shifts (ibid: 58, 77–78).

2.3. Parameter-based approach to evaluation

Evaluation is an integral aspect of human behavior: as we engage with our surroundings, we classify and assess what we encounter. This research utilizes the parameter-based evaluation approach (Bednarek 2006), which synthesizes earlier methods of expressing opinions in written texts (Lemke 1992, Hunston 1994, Biber & Finegan 1989). According to Bednarek (2006: 44), the versatility of this framework, where various linguistic expressions can evaluate across two or more parameters and can be combined to articulate intricate evaluations, provides it with greater adaptability and an edge over alternative concepts such as stance (Biber & Finegan 1989) and appraisal (Martin & White 2005). Bednarek (2006: 3) highlights a significant distinction between what can be termed core and peripheral evaluative parameters.

The core evaluative parameters, as she describes, relate to the evaluative qualities assigned to entities, situations, or propositions being assessed. They can be categorized as follows: comprehensibility, emotivity, expectedness, importance, reliability, and possibility/necessity. Evaluations of comprehensibility pertain to how writers assess entities, situations, or propositions as either within or beyond the limits of human comprehension (Bednarek 2006: 45). The emotivity parameter focuses on how the writer evaluates aspects of events as positive or negative, which reflects writer approval or disapproval. The expectedness parameter involves the writer's assessments of aspects of the world as either expected or unexpected

(Bednarek 2006: 48), while reliability extends this concept to include both the writer's evaluation of a proposition's accuracy and their evaluation of the authenticity of specific entities (Bednarek 2006: 52). Importance evaluations concern how the speaker judges the significance, relevance, and importance of the world. Lastly, the possibility/necessity parameter addresses what has commonly been referred to as deontic or dynamic modality, focusing on the writer's assessment of what is (not) necessary or (not) possible (Bednarek 2006: 50).

Peripheral evaluative parameters do not suggest the same qualitative evaluation of entities, situations, or propositions as core evaluative parameters do. However, they can relate to evaluation in various ways. For instance, the evidentiality parameter pertains to writers' assessments of the 'evidence' backing their knowledge (Bednarek 2006: 53). Evidentiality encompasses six distinct dimensions: hearsay, mindsay, perception, general knowledge, (lack of) proof, and unspecified. The second peripheral evaluative parameter, mental state, references the writer's evaluations of the mental states of other social actors (Bednarek 2006: 56). Subvalues associated with this parameter include the different types of mental states actors may experience: beliefs, emotions, expectations, knowledge, and wishes/intentions. The third parameter, evaluations of style, examines the writer's assessment of language usage, such as comments on how information is conveyed or evaluations of the kind of language that is used (Bednarek 2006: 56–57).

Bednarek's (2006: 194) extensive research on English newspaper discourse highlights that the evaluative style of broadsheet newspapers tends to favor mitigation and negation, while tabloid newspapers are characterized by emotivity and unexpectedness, along with frequent references to emotions. Furthermore, Bednarek's analysis revealed that tabloids demonstrate a tendency towards clustered evaluations, heightened intensity and explicitness of evaluation, frequent negative emotivity evaluations, and a general preference for exaggeration¹. We will address in the Conclusion how metaphors with evaluative functions align with this framework.

2.4. Previous research on the relationship between metaphor and evaluation

Numerous studies have investigated the connection between metaphor and evaluation from various viewpoints. In this section, we highlight only a select number of authors pertinent to our research, many of whom have already been noted in Fuoli et al. (2021: 80–83).

In 2006, Musolff incorporated the concept of 'scenarios' into the discussion surrounding the EU. This term 'scenario' interprets source domains as small narratives that convey evaluative significance. More recently, Littlemore et al. (2023) examined the relationship between metaphor, evaluation, and creativity within workplace conversations. In the discipline of Systemic Functional Linguistics, metaphor is viewed as a method for covertly expressing evaluative

¹ See also Zappettini et al. (2021).

meanings as opposed to overtly (Martin & White 2005, Liu 2018). However, Simon-Vandenberg et al. (2003) provide several examples of conventional metaphorical phrases used to describe verbal actions that contain explicit evaluative meanings. Hidalgo-Downing et al. (2024) argue that typical instances of evaluative metaphors are generally not highly conventionalized, which leads to a greater level of incongruity between the source and target domains or involves an element of dehumanization. They enrich the discussion regarding the relationship between evaluation and metaphor from a methodological standpoint by introducing an annotation scheme designed to identify and annotate evaluative stance and evaluative metaphors within a corpus of four English genres: political discourse, newspaper discourse, scientific popularization in newspapers, and online forums.

Further theoretical support for the relationship between metaphor and evaluation arises from the common use of metaphor to express emotion. Fainsilber and Ortony (1987) note that people tend to produce a greater number of metaphors, especially creative ones, when describing highly emotional experiences. Bednarek (2009) provides instances of conventionalized metaphorical phrases that explicitly express feelings. Conversely, Semino (2008: 31) posits that while metaphor is commonly employed to articulate attitudes and emotions, it also serves several non-evaluative purposes, including persuasion, reasoning, explanation, theorizing, entertainment, and organizing discourse.

Regarding polarity, metaphors are more prone to arise from negative emotional experiences than positive ones, especially within creative metaphors (Sakamoto & Utsumi 2014). Research has revealed a human inclination to assign greater importance to negative entities (Rozin & Royzman 2001, Taboada et al. 2017), with individuals being more attentive to and retaining recollections of adverse experiences and figures rather than beneficial ones. Therefore, as stated by Fuoli et al. (2021: 83), the drive to formulate creative metaphors may partly stem from the need to convey negative evaluations, reflecting the interpersonal roles of both metaphor and evaluation.

Fuoli et al. (2021) discovered that in their corpus of movie reviews, which consisted of 60,000 words, metaphorical language was used for evaluative purposes in about fifty percent of the cases. They noted that creative metaphors tended to fulfill an evaluative role more often than conventional metaphors, a finding the authors connect to the ability of creative metaphors to express evaluations in a vivid manner. In terms of polarity, metaphorical evaluations are significantly more negative than non-metaphorical evaluations, with both creative and conventional metaphors displaying similar patterns. Fuoli et al. (2021) connect this finding to the movie review genre, suggesting that the events evaluated lack the emotional intensity found in more impactful utterings, such as spoken testimonies, which yield a clear association between negative emotions and creative metaphor. For these reasons, both the authors and we believe it is valuable to explore the intricate relationship between metaphor and evaluation in other contexts. The language of newspapers serves as a prime example due to the significant presence of both conventional and creative metaphors in that discourse.

3. Data and methods

3.1. Corpus

To compile our AUKUS corpus from the Australian media (refer to Tables 1a and 1b), we utilized Nexis Uni via the University of Granada’s e-library². This digital platform offers databases for various research areas, including computer-assisted legal studies, newspaper searches, and consumer information. Prior to this, we employed Google Trends (<https://trends.google.com/trends/>), a site that evaluates the most prevalent online search queries, to pinpoint the time frame during which AUKUS garnered significant attention in the Australian media, revealing this period to be from September 15, 2021, to October 31, 2021. Subsequently, we gathered all news and opinion pieces from the Australian media for that timeframe using the search term AUKUS. The articles were sourced from 7 broadsheet and 8 tabloid newspapers. We chose 14 articles from the broadsheet category (two articles from each broadsheet publication) and included every article from the tabloid category to ensure a comparable word count across each corpus (summarized below).

Table 1a. AUKUS Corpus – Broadsheets

Country	Newspaper	Code	No. texts	No. tokens
Australia	Brisbane Times	AUS_BT	2	1.944
	The Sydney Morning Herald-online	AUS_SMHO	2	2.096
	AFR Online	AUS_AFRO	2	3.487
	The Australian	AUS_AU	2	3.137
	The Age	AUS_AG	2	4.747
	Canberra Times	AUS_CT	2	1.461
	WA Today	AUS_WAT	2	1.221
Total			14	18.093

Table 1b. AUKUS Corpus – Tabloids

Country	Newspaper	Code	No. texts	No. tokens
Australia	The Daily Telegraph	AUS_DT	8	5.395
	Herald Sun	AUS_HS	3	1.816
	The Courier Mail	AUS_CM	3	1.023
	The Advertiser (Australia)	AUS_AD	4	2.213
	Newcastle Herald	AUS_NH	1	718
	Hobart Mercury (Australia)	AUS_HM	2	1.797
	The West Australian (Perth)	AUS_WAP	1	779
	The Northern Territory News	AUS_NT	3	2.086
			25	15.827

² For more detailed information about this corpus, see the work by Trnavac and Hidalgo Tenorio (2024).

3.2. Annotation process

The annotation process contained two separate stages: annotation of metaphors and annotation of evaluation. Both procedures were performed with O'Donnell's (2016) UAM corpus tool, specialized software for qualitative and quantitative data analysis.

3.2.1. Metaphor identification

We took the decision to identify metaphors in our corpus based on Fuoli et al.'s (2021) detailed annotation manual. Based on their manual, a metaphor is defined as the following: "A string of one or more words that describes one entity in terms of another, unrelated entity by means of comparison" (Fuoli et al. 2021: 13). Below is an example of a metaphorical expression from our corpora, whereby China is dehumanized, and implicitly compared to a domesticated animal, in its interest in the West's discarded resources:

- (1) ...when large emitters such as China continue to increase emissions and **lap up** the industries and jobs we discard (AUS_DT_01102021).

As shown in Fuoli et al. (2021), metaphors were identified based on both Cameron's (2003) vehicle identification process and Steen and Pragglejaz Group (2007) metaphor identification process (MIP), combining the best elements of both. Entire texts were read to establish the general meaning and metaphors were identified based on meaning units at the level of the phrase within its context. In the same vein as Fuoli et al. (2021), we did not consider historically older words as the most basic and allowed for metaphors that switched word class (see Fuoli et al. 2021: 14). Similarly, if a word had a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts, we determined if there was a contrast between the meanings and whether our example could be understood in comparison to it. Whilst some metaphors were single lexical items, others were larger phrases. If there were two distinct ideas in a single phrase, both were tagged separately as metaphors. Similarly, if a metaphor was extended across a phrase, this was also tagged as two instances as in (2).

- (2) There is also concern the new pact further **raises the temperature** in the already **hotly contested** South China Sea region (AUS_AFRO_26092021).

Unlike Fuoli et al. (2021), we did not include phrases that were signalled with *like* or *as*, deciding that these were strictly similes, which it can be argued, are processed differently, and would be considered explicit.

3.2.2. Identification of creative metaphors

As we wanted to explore if there was a difference in the evaluative function of creative versus conventional metaphors, we had to design criteria for creative examples. Here, we again turned to Fuoli et al. (2021: 88–90) and followed their procedure in which creative use of metaphor "encompasses both novel metaphor

per se and the creative manipulations of conventional metaphor” (ibid 77). We also added some new types of creative metaphor that were not found in their data. Below are some specific examples:

a. Combining two conventional metaphors in a novel way:

- (3) Also, these days the party has a **fair sprinkling** of **bomb-throwers** in its ranks who do what they like (AUS_CT_02102021).

Here, *fair sprinkling* and *bomb-throwers* are two separate metaphors. Their juxtaposition is creative and conjures an image of rebels (hyperbolically described as bomb-throwers) as something to be served up on a plate.

b. A combination of tropes, for instance metaphor and metonymy:

- (4) We have **glued ourselves** (METAPHOR) to **the hip of the United States** (METONYMY) and defined our security interests, our national interests, as being exactly the same as those of the United States when it comes to China (AUS_CT_14102021).

Metaphor, metonymy, irony, and hyperbole are tropes that can combine for a stronger rhetoric effect (see Burgers et al. 2016) and choosing to identify them as creative metaphors allowed us to acknowledge their combinations.

c. Combining metaphor with semantic association:

- (5) **Submarine** muddle never **far from the surface**.

In (5), the metaphor creates a semantic association across the phrase with the submarine and its literal location embodying the disagreement over the contract.

d. What Hoey (2005) terms benign ambiguity; whereby the metaphor works on both a literal and metaphorical level:

- (6) ASEAN states were “already very worried about the China-US rivalry **playing out** in their **backyard**” (AUS_AU_21092021).

In (6), *playing out* refers to the development of the rivalry but also shares a collocate with backyard, conjuring an image of children playing.

3.2.3. Identification of metaphorical domains

As well as tagging the metaphors based on creativity/conventionality, we also tagged them based on source and target domains. For that, we drew on the online corpus software Wmatrix (Rayson 2008, ENA, August 30, 2025³) and its existing semantic categories, where suitable, and amended where necessary. The analysis identified evidence of a range of metaphorical domains which foregrounded the most relevant aspects on the AUKUS agreement. Below is a list of these domains.

³ <http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/wmatrix/>

Table 2. Metaphorical domains

Semantic categories of target domains	Target domains	Semantic categories of source domains	Source domains
A11 Importance	POWER, IMPORTANCE, DEFEAT, LOSS OF POWER	B1 Anatomy and physiology	BODY
B2 Health and disease	COVID	L1 Life and living things	NATURE, ANIMALS
E1 Emotional actions, states and processes	EMOTION, DESIRE	A1.1.2 – Fixing and mending	BINDING, TOOL, PROP, CONSTRUCTION, REPAIR, BUILD, CLOTHING
X1 Psychological actions, states and processes	TRUST, BEHAVIOR, DEPENDENCY, DISTRUST, UNCERTAINTY, AGREEMENT, DISAGREEMENT	A1.1.2 Damaging and destroying	PHYSICAL FORCE, BREAKAGE
S5 Groups and affiliation	GOVERNMENT, COUNTRY, ORGANISATION, SOLIDARITY, UNITY	K1 Entertainment generally	GAMES, SPORTS, CHILDREN, MUSIC, GIFT, FESTIVITY
G1 Government and politics	IMMIGRANTS	O4.6 + Temperature: Hot / on fire	PRESSURE, HEAT, FIRE
G3 Warfare, defence and the army; weapons	SUBMARINES, AIRCRAFT, AIRFIELDS	G3 Warfare, defence and the army; weapons	WAR, ARMY
G2 Crime, law and order	MURDER RATES	S3 Relationship	ROMANTIC PARTNER
11.2+Spending and money loss	SPENDING	S9 Religion and the supernatural	RELIGION, MAGIC, RITUAL
13Work and employment	JOBS, CAREER	W2 Light	VISIBILITY
14 Industry	RISKS, DEAL/CONTRACT, BUSINESS, TECHNOLOGY, ECONOMIC PRESSURE	W3 Geographical terms	WATER, ICE
N3.5 Measurement: weight	AMOUNT, VOLUME	M6 Location and direction	SPATIAL, DIRECTION PATH/JOURNEY
Q2 Speech	PHONE CALL	I1. Money	COST, SALESMAN, SHOP, COMMERCE
Q4 The media	HEADLINE	O2 Objects generally	OBJECT
T1 Time	TIME, PAST, FUTURE, PROSPECTS	O4 Physical attributes	WEIGHT, STRENGTH, FITNESS, UGLY, BEAUTY, COLOUR, FRAGILITY, TASTE, SENSE, TEXTURE, APPEARANCE, PARTS PIECES, SOUND, STAINED

Semantic categories of target domains	Target domains	Semantic categories of source domains	Source domains
X2 Mental actions and processes	MISTAKES, COMPLICATION, PROBLEM, SOLUTION, ABILITY, MIND, STRATEGY, PROPOSITION, OPINION, IDEA	F3 + Smoking and drugs abuse	DRUG
		X1 Psychological Actions, States and Processes	SAFE
		M7 Places	HOME
		Y1 Science and technology in general	MACHINE

Assigning categories to each source and target was not an unproblematic task; we often found metaphors that straddled two domains, for instance JOURNEY and SPATIAL often overlapped and in the example (7) below, the source could be attributed to either PHYSICAL FORCE or to CONSTRUCTION:

- (7) ...state ALP leader Peter Malinauskas and frontbencher Tom Koutsantonis have **bluntly hammered home** questions about jobs for South Australia (AUS_AD_25092021).

In these cases, we agreed on the most salient image and the overall understanding of the metaphor. So, in (7), the overall message is that the questions were forced upon their audience, and thus the image of physical force, rather than construction, is more suitable.

3.2.4. Identification of evaluation

In this study, we have a very broad understanding of evaluation. Hidalgo-Downing and Pérez-Sobrino (2024: 495–507) noted that evaluative nouns and verbs, like “war” or “peace,” can serve two purposes at once: they can categorize or classify an entity or event while also expressing an attitude toward it. This is known as both descriptive and moral evaluation (see Alba-Juez & Thompson 2014). Sometimes this can be a major problem for evaluation annotation when stance-taking, a discourse-pragmatic phenomenon, needs to be distinguished from defining positive or negative word connotation, a semantic phenomenon (Hidalgo-Downing & Pérez-Sobrino 2024: 211). Therefore, we decided to include both moral and descriptive evaluations in our annotation scheme.

The annotation of the evaluative expressions involved two tasks; firstly, the identification of the expressions and, secondly, their classification into parameter-based (sub)categories. In the initial phase of the procedure, we excluded other components of the syntactic units to which evaluative items belong and limited the

segments to evaluative lexical items. In (8), for example, only the adjective *good* was coded:

(8) I think that's a **good** thing (AUS_AU_08102021).

The following evaluative parameters were excluded from our annotation:

- The parameter of possibility/necessity because it deals with what is sometimes called objective modality the instances of which do not appear to be equally evaluative as instances of other core parameters;
- The style parameter that marks the speaker's own discourse, as well as most of the instances of evidentiality, since in this study we are interested only in positively and negatively oriented 'attitudinal' meanings⁴.

Apart from classifying evaluative items according to the parameter-based approach, we coded evaluations additionally based on the polarity, as positive or negative, and explicitness, as explicit and implicit. The example in (9) illustrates implicit evaluation:

Implicit evaluation

(9) French President Emmanuel Macron **has not returned Mr Morrison's calls** and Trade Minister Dan Tehan has had some in-person meetings cancelled during his visit to Paris this week (AUS_SMHO_16102021).

Manual identification and classification of metaphors and evaluation is a complex task due to the fact that both introduced frameworks are conceived as flexible interpretive tools (see Fuoli & Hommerberg 2015). Consequently, it can be challenging to achieve high inter-coder agreement scores, particularly when researchers cannot agree on how much a particular notion is evaluative⁵ and reflects the writer's stance on the topic. For this reason, we decided to examine every text in this corpus at least twice and at different points in time. The two authors tagged the entire data independently and then discussed all the disagreements until full consensus. Although this sort of procedure is very time consuming, it ensures the quality of the annotation.

4. Results

This section combines the quantitative analysis which focuses on the interplay between the types of metaphors and different parameters of evaluation and the qualitative analysis of the data in broadsheets and tabloids. In the first set of quantitative results, we investigate a correlation between the types of metaphors and explicitness/polarity of evaluation. The tests in this set are identical to those conducted by Fuoli et al. (2021). In the second set, we analyse the association

⁴ Hearsay and mindsay, subvalues of evidentiality, may include 'attitudinal' meanings and they were used in our annotation process.

⁵ For a thorough description of the evaluation and inter-rater agreement annotation process in those cases, refer to Hidalgo-Downing and Sobrino (2024: 211–217).

between the types of metaphors and any of the two formats of newspapers, as well as the distribution of the parameters of evaluation across broadsheets and tabloids. The qualitative analysis deals with the convergence and divergence of metaphorical domains on AUKUS in two newspapers.

4.1. Quantitative analysis

Our annotation scheme contained three kinds of combinations of segments: (1) segments that are both evaluative and metaphorical, (2) only evaluative but not metaphorical, and (3) only metaphorical but not evaluative. Table 3 demonstrates the distribution of these results in broadsheets and tabloids:

Table 3. Combinations of segments

Combinations of segments	Broadsheets		Tabloids	
	N	%	N	%
Evaluation and metaphor	292	16.31%	217	22.33%
Non-evaluative and metaphor	82	4.58%	63	6.48%
Evaluative and non-metaphoric	1415	79.05%	692	71.19%
		99.94%		100%

In the first set of results, we repeated the tests demonstrated in Fuoli et al. (2021) to check whether the correlation between the types of metaphors and explicitness/polarity of evaluation will give the same correlation in the news reports as it did in film reviews.

In Table 4, we demonstrate the percentage of metaphorical items which served an evaluative function. In line with earlier research (Martin & White 2005), our results show that most metaphors in tabloids and broadsheets express evaluation.

Table 4. Metaphors with evaluative function in broadsheets and tabloids

Percentage of metaphors with evaluative function	Broadsheets	Tabloids
Number of items that are both metaphorical and evaluative	292	217
Total number of metaphorical items	374	280
Percentage of metaphorical items that are also evaluative	78%	76%

As for the question of whether creative metaphors are more likely to perform evaluation in the news corpus than conventional metaphors, the answer based on our data is negative. Tables 5 and 6 demonstrate that in the two newspaper formats, both kinds of metaphors primarily serve an evaluative purpose.

Table 5. Creative metaphors with evaluative function

Percentage of creative metaphors with evaluative function	Broadsheets (n)	Tabloids (n)
Number of creative metaphors that are evaluative	26	27
Total number of creative metaphors	34	33
Percentage of creative metaphors that are evaluative	76%	82%

Table 6. Conventional metaphors with evaluative function

Percentage of conventional metaphors with an evaluative function	Broadsheets (n)	Tabloids (n)
Number of conventional metaphors that are evaluative	266	190
Total number of conventional metaphors	340	247
Percentage of conventional metaphors that are evaluative	78%	77%

We also compared the number of positive and negative evaluative expressions involving metaphor with the number of positive and negative evaluative expressions not involving metaphor both in broadsheets and in tabloids. Table 7 illustrates the test results, which show that the metaphorical evaluation did not exhibit a tendency to employ more negative polarity than the non-metaphorical evaluation.

Table 7. Metaphorical vs. non-metaphorical segments with positive and negative evaluation

	Broadsheets		Tabloids	
	N	Percentage	N	Percentage
Positive evaluation involving metaphor	136	46%	79	43%
Negative evaluation involving metaphor	156	54%	138	57%
Positive evaluation not involving metaphor	468	39%	254	38%
Negative evaluation not involving metaphor	744	61%	408	62%

In addition, we tested the extent to which metaphorical creativity related to the polarity of the evaluation is being used to perform. Table 8 shows the percentage of evaluative creative and conventional metaphors used for positive and for negative evaluation in broadsheets and tabloids.

Table 8. Number of creative and conventional metaphors that were used for positive and negative evaluation

	Broadsheets		Tabloids	
	N	Percentage of total	N	Percentage of total
Number of creative metaphors used for positive evaluation	8	31%	6	22%
Number of creative metaphors used for negative evaluation	18	69%	21	78%
Number of conventional metaphors used for positive evaluation	128	52%	73	38%
Number of conventional metaphors used for negative evaluation	138	48%	117	62%

Creative and conventional metaphors behave similarly when performing evaluative functions, with both performing more negative than positive evaluation.

The vast majority of both creative and conventional metaphors are explicit in our corpus of newspaper articles (see Table 9), which, in our opinion, is conditioned by the very genre of the texts that are primarily informative. This is in contrast with Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal framework that places metaphor within the invoked (implicit) evaluation category, with no mention of metaphor in any other evaluation type.

Table 9. Number of metaphorical evaluative items used for explicit and implicit evaluation

	Broadsheets		Tabloids	
	N	Percentage of total	N	Percentage of total
Number of creative explicit evaluative items	26	100%	27	100%
Number of creative implicit evaluative items	0	0%	0	0%
Number of conventional explicit evaluative items	265	99%	190	100%
Number of conventional implicit evaluative items	1	1%	0	0%

Our study also shows that there is no correlation between the metaphor type and the format of newspapers (Table 10). Similar to the findings of Steen et al. (2010) and Tan (2023) that conventional metaphors are the most frequent and creative metaphors are the least frequent in all analyzed registers⁶, conventional metaphor achieves the biggest proportion and creative metaphor occupies the lowest proportion in both types of newspapers.

Table 10. Number of creative and conventional metaphors that were used in broadsheets and in tabloids

	Raw count
Number of creative metaphors used in broadsheets	34
Number of creative metaphors used in tabloids	33
Number of conventional metaphors used in broadsheets	340
Number of conventional metaphors used in tabloids	247

⁶ Steen's group find that conventional and creative metaphors can perform the ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions and serve different communication ends in different registers. For instance, Hermann (2013) discovers that academic discourse uses many conventional metaphors to build academic theories, while Krennmayr (2011) unveils that conventional and novel metaphors are used more frequently in newspapers than in conversation for deliberate persuasion. Furthermore, Dorst (2011), Herrmann (2013), Kaal (2012), and Krennmayr (2011) detect a very low proportion of creative metaphors, as most metaphors across the four registers are conventional.

The last test that we performed is related to a potential association between the format of newspapers and evaluative parameters. Table 11 demonstrates the number of evaluative instances in broadsheets and tabloids:

Table 11. Number of evaluative parameters in broadsheets and tabloids

Evaluative parameters	Broadsheets	Tabloids
Comprehensibility	8	8
Emotivity	190	183
Expectedness	11	2
Reliability	18	3
Importance	39	13
Mental state	26	8

Their distribution indicates that emotivity is the most frequent parameter in both broadsheets and tabloids.

These general conclusions lead us to the qualitative analysis, which looks at how the different metaphor domains and evaluative parameters are used in the tabloids and broadsheets and how they align with the way metaphors are conceptualized in relation to the International Relations Theory framework outlined in Marks (2011, 2018).

4.2. Qualitative analysis

The qualitative analysis in this study considers which aspects of the newspaper discussion around the AUKUS agreement are foregrounded by the metaphorical domains and what is prioritized as a result. To facilitate analysis, the findings reported in this section are structured according to the most frequent source domains that occur in the press discourse and that are represented in Table 12.

Table 12. List of metaphorical sources in order of frequency

<i>Broadsheets</i>		<i>Tabloids</i>	
Source domains	N	Source domains	N
SPATIAL, PATH/JOURNEY	64	SPATIAL, PATH/JOURNEY	32
NATURE/LIVING	34	BODY	24
PHYSICAL FORCE/BREAKAGE	24	PHYSICAL FORCE/ BREAKAGE	24
TASTE/SENSE/TEXTURE, WEIGHT, FRAGILITY, APPEARANCE, PART/PIECES, SOUND	24	TASTE/SENSE/TEXTURE, WEIGHT, COLOUR, FRAGILITY, APPEARANCE, PARTS/PIECES, SOUND	23
CONSTRUCTION/REPAIR	20	PRESSURE	21
CHILDREN/GAMES	18	VISIBILITY	17
VISIBILITY	17	CHILDREN/GAMES, MUSIC	14
WAR	13	NATURE/LIVING	13
PRESSURE, FIRE, HEAT	11		

The table demonstrates that both formats of newspapers use the domains situated within the biological and mechanistic images of the world (Marks 2011), including source domains such as NATURE/LIVING, PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES, BODY, CHILDREN/GAMES, and WAR as part of the biological image, and CONSTRUCTION/REPAIR, SPATIAL, PRESSURE, VISIBILITY, and PHYSICAL FORCE as part of the mechanistic image. They cover the same domains when assessing the situation regarding the AUKUS agreement, although the frequency of each of them may be different in the two newspapers. The only domains that are present in broadsheets but not in tabloids are CONSTRUCTION/REPAIR and WAR; while BODY is absent from broadsheets but present in tabloids.

The main focus in both newspapers is on the domain SPATIAL, PATH/JOURNEY. The metaphors in this domain are employed to categorize political developments such as: the announcement of AUKUS as a major step for Australia on both defence and diplomatic fronts, a breach of trust between Australia and France and the future of their relationship, the role of Australia in preventing major military conflicts over Taiwan, climate policy, the capacity of ASEAN⁷ to deal with rising tensions in South-East Asia, and the relationship between Australia, the US, and China. Over 20% of all metaphors in this domain have the concept of GOVERNMENT/ORGANISATION as their target concept in broadsheets. The metaphors that are mapping the source domain of SPATIAL, PATH/JOURNEY and the target domain of GOVERNMENT/ORGANISATION frequently evaluate a possibility of “mending/re-constructing a relationship” between France and Australia, for instance, after Australia dumped a \$90 billion submarine contract with Paris, together with the metaphors classified under the domains CONSTRUCTION/REPAIR and CHILDREN/GAME.

- (10) Mr Morrison said on Thursday he welcomed the ambassador’s return to Canberra. “I think that’s a good thing. And I think that was always going to happen. After the consultations that were had, and look forward **to taking the relationship forward** (SPATIAL, PATH/JOURNEY) (AUS_AU_08102021).
- (11) Australians remain our friends but we need among governments **to rebuild the trust** (CONSTRUCTION/REPAIR) (AUS_AU_08102021).
- (12) To be sure, AUKUS, the new subs, and other bilateral initiatives will represent no panacea amid China’s rising might. No such **magic wand** exists (CHILDREN/GAME) (AUS_AFRO_16092021).

More than 75% of the metaphors in the SPATIAL, PATH/JOURNEY category carry a positive implication, with 65% emphasizing emotivity as a crucial evaluative factor and 30% highlighting a sense of importance. The majority of these metaphors characterize the AUKUS agreement as one of the most significant strategic actions Australia has been a part of in generations. Another set of positive metaphors points to the need for Australia to repair its relationship with France. Similarly, positive metaphors are employed for countries aiming for approximately a 50% reduction

⁷ The Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

in emissions by 2030, including the US, Britain, and Japan, while major newspapers criticize Australia for “not committing to exceed its current objective of reducing emissions by 26 to 28 percent of 2005 levels by 2030” (AUS_SMHO_23102021). The prominence of emotive components in this context is evident in tabloids as well, where it reaches 83%. However, in contrast to broadsheets, the evaluative metaphors found in tabloids are evenly divided between positive and negative. The primary domains in this format of newspapers are GOVERNMENT/ORGANISATION and DISTRUST/UNCERTAINTY. The difference in the quantity of positive and negative metaphors suggests a balance between optimistic and pessimistic viewpoints regarding the future of the AUKUS agreement. While tabloids highlight the positive dimensions of the agreement, they also employ metaphors about an aging entity, signifying that the current submarines are outdated and nearing the end of their service life. Conversely, metaphors concerning “distrust/uncertainty” express apprehension about the trustworthiness of the commitment to build at least eight nuclear-powered submarines, which will be significantly larger and require more infrastructure in their place of production (Adelaide). Tabloids emphasize that the Australian government did not consult its citizens on their views on this. They also point out that while AUKUS “places Australia at the center of a new interconnected network of Western alliances that create a united democratic front against China’s increasing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific” (AUS_WAP_23092021), there are opportunity costs associated with the partnership. On one hand, it risks provoking further sanctions from China; on the other hand, it jeopardizes Australia’s relationship with France and complicates efforts to secure a lucrative free trade agreement with Europe.

The next prominent domain within the broadsheets is NATURE/LIVING, which is less dominant in the tabloids. The majority of these metaphors in the broadsheets have a judgment component of emotivity (74%) with a slight prevalence of positive evaluations (53%) in the broadsheets. The tabloids mostly contain negative metaphors within this domain (70%). The metaphors in the broadsheets are employed when discussing issues in the internal politics of Australia, but also external politics. One of the relevant issues is political survival of the Prime Minister Scott Morrison⁸, which was described as being dependent on how he would manage the issues of COVID-19 and climate issues in the Glasgow climate conference. According to the broadsheets, without real action from his government during COVID-19, Australia will slide into “a future of low wages growth, sub-par economic growth and permanent government deficit” (AUS_SH_23102021).

The domain PRESSURE, FIRE, HEAT in both genres of newspapers covers topics of geostrategic conflict, with metaphors which are expressed in terms of heat and high pressure:

⁸ Scott John Morrison is an Australian former politician who served as the 30th prime minister of Australia from 2018 to 2022, holding office as leader of the Liberal Party of Australia.

- (13) And the evidence from the acceleration of China's military posturing and the choreographed sabre-rattling of the AUKUS announcement suggests that is where things are heading. The challenge for all countries now is to maintain **the temperature setting at "warm"** (AUS_WA_23092021).

The prevalent component in the metaphors of the CONSTRUCTION/REPAIR domain is emotivity, present in both broadsheets (58%) and (86%) tabloids, together with a component of a mental state (20% and 9% respectively). 83% and 95% of these metaphors are with negative evaluation and the mapping is mostly happening with the target DISAGREEMENT in about half of instances in the two genres of newspapers. The majority of metaphors describe the Chinese policy towards Taiwan and the relation between China and the US in the context of AUKUS: *to shatter Taiwan's nerves (region's confidence, strategic foundations), clash of ideologies, to smash democratic entities, pushing back, slamming petty move, struggle, aggressively boost, pressed claims, verbal blast, battered by previous diplomatic tiffs*, etc. These topics are supported from the pool of metaphors that belong to the WAR domain in broadsheets: *escalated the attack, potential trigger for conflict, the cavalry has arrived, war footing*.

Slightly different roles from the other metaphors include those which belong to the VISIBILITY domain, with emotivity (65%) and comprehensibility (35%) parameters being dominant in the broadsheets. The tabloids have a more prominent parameter of comprehensibility (47%) than emotivity (29%). Frequently, the metaphors of light mark positive or negative judgments about internal Australian politics (*blind trust, expose the myopia, shines the way forward*).

In the next section, we summarize the results from the quantitative and qualitative analysis.

5. Discussion

The results from the quantitative analysis of our study indicate that the majority of metaphors convey evaluation both in broadsheets and tabloids, thus confirming the previous hypothesis of Martin and White (2005) on the evaluative role of metaphors. The tendencies in our corpus also demonstrate that both conventional and creative metaphors serve primarily evaluative purposes in both newspapers, indicating that creativity is not always a contributing factor to metaphors' evaluative function. Regarding the polarity, metaphorical evaluation was not found to be significantly more negative than non-metaphorical evaluation. Creative and conventional metaphors behave similarly when performing evaluative functions, with both performing more negative than positive evaluation. The majority of creative and conventional metaphors are explicit in our corpus in both types of newspapers. The general findings regarding the relationship between the types of metaphors on the one hand and the polarity and explicitness of evaluation on the other, which deviate from those reported in Section 2.4 of Fuoli et al. (2021), suggest that there is a correlation between the genre of a corpus and the subject

matter of the content in which metaphors are observed. The genre of the movie reviews described in Fuoli et al. (2021) requires vivid language, in which negative affect is more common than in the language of press reports, which is balanced, explicit and informative with more even distribution of evaluative polarity within metaphors. However, it should also be emphasized that the reported results in our study regarding evaluativeness of creative metaphors and polarity of their evaluation may be partially influenced by some additional criteria of creativity used in this work and outlined in Section 3.2.2. The format of newspapers does not seem to be relevant for the distribution of metaphor types: conventional metaphors achieve the biggest proportion in both newspaper types. This conclusion is somewhat logical: creative metaphors are generally less prevalent than conventional ones.

As was mentioned in the section on evaluation of this article, the evaluative function of the broadsheets, described in Bednarek (2006), is characterized by mitigation and negation, while evaluation of the tabloid newspapers is marked by its expression of unexpectedness, negative emotions and emotivity. Our data demonstrates that in both newspapers negative emotivity is a prevalent component of metaphors, while mitigation and unexpectedness were not found as dominant characteristics of metaphors. This confirms that the topic of the data is relevant once the relationship between metaphor and evaluation is investigated.

The qualitative part of this study shows that metaphors in international relations theory have an appreciable impact on how international relations are analysed. As pointed out by Marks (2011), international relations largely comprise abstract concepts and practices, and hence, metaphors are necessary for translating existential impressions into analytical categories. In the present period, according to Marks (2011), changing conceptions of international relations have involved metaphorical perspectives that alternate between mechanistic and biological images of the world, including the organic and construction related metaphors. Our data fits that picture and shows that the dominant domains in the news on the AUKUS agreement are more or less unilaterally used in broadsheets and tabloids with both conceptions of the world being present, which was contributed by the topic and editorial policy of the newspapers themselves.

6. Conclusions

The above findings advance discourse studies research on the relationship between metaphor and evaluation, which began in the Systemic Functional literature with the assertion that metaphors always “provoke” attitudinal meanings. Our research indicates that this is true irrespective of the type of metaphor used or the newspaper format. However, it is important to be mindful of the value of the context and topic itself when evaluating this relationship, as well as the definitions of evaluation itself, its parameters, and the parameters of metaphor. The study also offers methodological contributions, by introducing a refined protocol for the annotation of creative metaphors. In addition, the contribution of this work is

significant from an applied level for studies in international relations since it demonstrated that the representation of AUKUS fits within the previously described framework on metaphors within the International Relations Theory and that the event is uniformly represented in terms of metaphor domains regardless of the newspaper format. A clear drawback of this study is the limited sample size, which resulted in conclusions about the connection between metaphors and evaluation in the newspaper genre being somewhat tentative.

This study's theoretical line can be expanded by increasing the size of the corpus and the number of genres to discuss the impact of genre on the distribution of metaphor and evaluation. From the perspective of International Relations Theory, future research could demonstrate how the use of biological and mechanical imagery in news reports on AUKUS evolves over time.

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CRedit authorship contribution statement

Radoslava Trnavac: Conceptualisation, Writing – original draft, review & editing, Methodology, Investigation; **Katie Patterson:** Writing – original draft, review & editing, Methodology, Investigation

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