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**ARTICLE REVIEW****MICHAŁ KRZYŻANOWSKI, “BREXIT AND THE IMAGINARY OF ‘CRISIS’: A DISCOURSE-CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF EUROPEAN NEWS MEDIA,” CRITICAL DISCOURSE STUDIES 16, NO. 4 (2019): 465–490.**

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Michał Krzyżanowski’s article on Brexit and the imaginary of ‘crisis’ offers a refreshing view on the political leviathan that is Brexit. In this age of populism and fake news, articles that dissect the discourses employed by the media such as this one are a welcome addition to the debate, allowing readers to have a better understanding of political events. In his article, Krzyżanowski shows us how Brexit was portrayed as an imaginary or future crisis in the media discourses of Austria, Germany, Poland and Sweden. These countries were selected based on their different histories and associations with the EU. Each country carries different types and lengths of experience with EU membership and therefore each country represents a prototypical view for various ideas and visions of European politics. The article is a solid piece of work. There are only a few weaknesses.

One of those weaknesses is the positioning of the article in the extant literature. In the introduction, Krzyżanowski states that “This study joins the existent body of analyses of Brexit as a populist and nationalist project... as well as the growing body of work on UK and international media and political conceptualisations of, and discourses about, Brexit...” (Krzyżanowski, 2019). Three publications in this growing body of literature are named, but these three mentions alone form a weak portrayal of the overall body of literature. The article omits the rich history of the field of discourse analysis. Mentioning literature from the field would add legitimacy to the method of critical discourse analysis employed here.

Krzyżanowski starts his analysis with an explanation of how the concept of ‘crisis’ in social and political science has served as a tool in mobilising social and political action. Especially important in his article is the observation that the discursive construction of the concept has traditionally relied on a specific placement at the historical past-to-future axis, which makes it a peculiar form of an imaginary, serving not only past-present-related descriptions, but also allowing it to be used for powerful ideological projections. The connection of the concept of ‘crisis’ with politics and the media is made by Krzyżanowski here. Continuing, Krzyżanowski shows us that, in the post-war European context, foreign crises (even crises that one could call ‘European’, like the 1968 student revolt) have mostly been interpreted in a national, and not transnational or European, manner. Recent

years, however, have brought a change in the perception and discursive construction of crisis, in the sense that the concept has become one of the central concepts in the wider public European discourse and in the sense that the concept has been opened up to allow for ambivalence as to the definition of the concept. As Krzyżanowski states, one of the tendencies he describes "... enabled 'crisis' to become an element of utopian visions of an 'imaginary reconstitution of society'... that can easily be redefined, re-appropriated and claimed/disclaimed by various political and actors, often in a populist and politically-opportunistic fashion..." (Krzyżanowski, 2019). Hence, the concept of 'crisis' is a discursive construct, and thus Krzyżanowski is able to research the concept with the method of critical discourse analysis. This explanation of the concept of 'crisis' might seem a bit long at first, but is essential as a theoretical background to the discourse analysis, since the conceptual-discourse analysis employed later on in the article specifically explores how Brexit has been portrayed as a crisis in the media.

Krzyżanowski continues, explicating the objectives of the analysis. Throughout the article, several aims are stated several times. The dense, subject-specific language can make it difficult to separate the main aim from the other objectives. The main aim of the article is to explore how the variety of mediated imaginaries at the Brexit and crisis intersection were found in European media discourse. In other words, Krzyżanowski tries to show us how the discourses of Brexit and crisis were portrayed in European media. The rationale for researching this is the apparent discrepancy between discourses employed UK media and other European media: UK media discourse seemed to downplay the critical nature of Brexit, whereas in other European media Brexit was portrayed as a multifaceted 'crisis' of huge importance to the EU, UK and international politics as a whole. Therefore, the justification of the article seems legitimate. However, as Krzyżanowski states in the introduction of his article, "The starting point for such a cross-national analysis is the assumption that... a significant part of the UK media... were strategically downplaying the critical nature of UK's eventual decision to leave the EU..." (Krzyżanowski, 2019). In the article, Krzyżanowski only shows one source of UK media that downplays the critical nature of Brexit. More examples are not given. Whereas the corpus of European media discourse analysed is 3,720 articles (of which ca. 200 have been used in the analyses shown in the article), the UK media discourse has not been taken into account in this corpus. Therefore, Krzyżanowski's claim of a general downplaying of Brexit's critical nature by UK media is shaky at best and could use some support.

The employed methodology in this article is presented in a clear manner. The method used is a critical discourse analysis (CDA), which in this case is argumentation-oriented, meaning that "it is deployed in order to discover the key arguments that are used to frame the discursive Brexit-crisis connected in the analysed media" (Krzyżanowski, 2019). The central aim here is to explore in depth the key argumentative frames, called "topoi" by Krzyżanowski, that summarise arguments that are constructed for or against the key debated ideas and views. Other key concepts, like discursive strategies, are explained by Krzyżanowski with elaborate references to the literature on CDA.

The research design and empirical material used in the article are also elaborately explained, but they might be confusing to the reader, specifically regarding the topoi. The European Union (EU) member states of which the media discourses are analysed are introduced along with an elaborate explanation on the research material. These countries are, respectively, Austria, Germany, Poland and Sweden. The corpora of data, consisting

of specific newspapers, are named and it is shown that for every country, both liberal and conservative (i.e. pro-European and Eurosceptic) discourses have been picked for analysis. The scope of the empirical material encompasses four months, ca. eight weeks before and eight weeks after the Brexit referendum in 2016. In this way, the key tendencies before and after the referendum are caught in the analysis. Of the 3,720 articles collected, the qualitative analysis presented in the article was done on ca. 200 articles published on the day of the referendum and in the following six days after the referendum. Figures depicting the analysed newspaper corpora per newspaper/country and the semantic field of the concept of Brexit in the analysed media discourse are shown, which are a pleasing and simplified representation of the researched material. Figure 2, representing the topoi or key argumentative frames deployed in the analysed media reporting, might be a bit confusing to the reader. Indeed, the figure is a fine representation of the topoi itself, but it is not clear how these topoi have been retrieved. It seems that the topoi are something that the researcher extracted out of the analysis of the corpora of data, but their representation in the core analysis of the article might lead the reader to think that the topoi were thought up beforehand as some kind of hypotheses and were thus used as a guiding principle throughout the research. The analysis itself is properly executed, but the position of the topoi is not entirely clear and could thus use some clarification. The presentation of the topoi and a general overview of how the analysis relates to them constitutes a short summary of the overall findings of the article. It is shown that Brexit was extensively related to the concept of crisis in a discourse, which runs along three main dimensions that were respectively UK-, international- and Europe/EU-specific.

Krzyżanowski subsequently goes into details about each country's liberal and conservative media coverage. For each country, he looks at how the main argumentations of the liberal and conservative media align with specific topoi. Excerpts of newspaper data are shown as examples. In Poland's case, *Gazeta Wyborcza* is used as a representation of liberal discourse of the Polish media and *Nasz Dziennik* is used as a representation of conservative discourse. Krzyżanowski shows that the liberal media portrayed the view that Brexit was set to become a crisis in all areas of life and of international and European geopolitics. Polish migrants were an important focus in this media. The conservative media on the other hand portrayed Brexit as the logical result of the anyway flawed EU project. This media claimed, similar to the German conservative media, that Polish political actors were crucial in causing as well as welcoming Brexit. Domestication of the discourse is also done by the conservative media, for example by providing criticism of the EU that recontextualised Polish pre-1989 discourse. Krzyżanowski shows an excerpt of a newspaper in which the EU was metaphorically compared to a 'central committee' ('Komitet Centralny'), whereby the EU was historically presupposed to be undemocratic and dictating to its member states what to do. Interestingly enough, from all countries analysed, the Polish media had the smallest share in discourse on Brexit, i.e. the smallest amount of newspaper articles written on the subject: 198 articles. The Austrian corpora amounted to 1,346. This discrepancy, although remarkable, is not further explored by Krzyżanowski, which could have added an extra dimension to the research.

The conclusion of the article sums up the findings of the analysis and Krzyżanowski returns to a discussion of his hypothesis, which was stated in the introduction. This shows that Krzyżanowski values a systematic method of analysis and his readers will value that in turn. The article is very clearly written and is easy to understand. The subject-specific

language might be difficult at times, but the intended audience should not have any issues understanding the material (the article was published in *Critical Discourse Studies*).

In presenting the findings of the research, the conclusion shows again how both liberal and conservative media recognised a far-reaching, negative and critical impact of the Brexit vote and considered its importance as a crisis with an array of dimensions that were UK-, international- and European-specific. Krzyżanowski shows that, almost irrespective of the ideological background of the media outlet (liberal or conservative), the analysed discourse not only pointed to the past/current ontologies of the Brexit vote, but it also painted a vast array of scenarios of future crises caused by the UK's decision to leave the EU. Another key aspect pointed out here is the found tendency of the media (again irrespective of ideological ties) to domesticate the Brexit debates and to consider the critical implications of Brexit from the point of view of studied national spheres and politics/societies. The focal 'Brexit as crisis' was in most cases debated in terms of its implication for specific national public spheres including their own perceptions of both national and transnational spaces. Overall, liberal media had the tendency to remain pro-European and considered Brexit from a variety of national and international perspectives and interpretations. Political and social consequences were stressed by the liberal media, whereas economic repercussions were not emphasised. The conservative media, overall, focused on the economic implications of Brexit, while avoiding discussing social and political implications.

Anyone interested in the subject of critical discourse analysis will find this article a pleasure to read. It not only adds to the extant literature on the Brexit, it also shows us an innovative method of analysing international events and concepts, which makes critical discourse analysis an approach that goes beyond linguistics that could be used in fields like political science and International Relations.