



The Gibraltar Issue: A Framing and Discourse Analysis of Spain During the Brexit Negotiation

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ABSTRACT

Gibraltar becomes one of the issues that emerged during the Brexit negotiation in the British withdrawal from the European Union. Spain becomes the inseparable actor in discussing the issue due to its long-standing interference in Gibraltar. Spain used the long process of Brexit to provoke and predispose Gibraltar to its advantages. This study aims to explore the framing of Spain's role in the context of Brexit negotiations concerning Gibraltar by analysing a selection of British and French news articles. A discourse-historical analysis is also used by analysing speeches delivered by the Chief Minister of Gibraltar. From the framing and discourse-historical analysis, this study found that Spain has become the inseparable actor and has been framed in negative terms concerning the Gibraltar issue. Spain appears consistently in the corpus that is used in this study and is mentioned to attempt bringing back Gibraltar as a Spanish territory. The Chief Minister of Gibraltar also referred to Spain as a threat and treated Spain as the aggressor. In addition, this study adopts a constructivist perspective to bring insights into the sentiments behind the framing and discourses that emerged during the Brexit negotiations, especially on the involvement of Spain in discussing the Gibraltar issue.

KEYWORDS

Brexit negotiation; Constructivist approach;
Gibraltar; Spain



INTRODUCTION

The first United Kingdom (UK) votes in the referendum back on 23 June 2016 sparked a shock across Europe as the result 52% of voters who chose the United Kingdom to leave the European Union ([Sandford, 2020](#)). The referendum turned out to be not as easy as David Cameron – the British Prime Minister – assumed that the votes would be in favour of the UK to remain as part of the European Union ([Boffey, 2019](#)). Headlines on the news are swamped such as “Brexit: Is this latest extension the final delay?” as the headline of the BBC News webpage following Boris Johnson writing to the European Union (EU) an agreement to accept a new Brexit extension until 31 January 2020 ([Adler, 2019](#)). This long process of Brexit is caused by the deadlock negotiation between the UK and the EU which purposively to avoid any political and economic damages as a way to safeguard both the bloc’s and the UK’s interests ([Adler, 2019](#)). The scenario of “hard Brexit” became one of the stumbling blocks as the scenario implies “... a very different economic relationship between the UK and the EU than existed when the UK was a member of the EU” ([UK in a Changing Europe, 2020](#)). The scope of these relationships is, but not limited to, the single market and customs union system, and trade with the EU under free trade agreements. The EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement was concluded to set up preferential arrangements in areas such as trade in goods, services, and investments, digital trade, intellectual property, energy, fisheries, social security coordination, and so on ([Directorate-General for Trade, n.d](#)). The EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement is also established to ensure fair competition, continued cooperation in areas of mutual interest, and respect for fundamental rights ([General Secretariat of the Council, n.d](#)). The talk with the EU is not the only negotiation the UK should conduct multilaterally; the country should also engage in bilateral negotiations with Spain regarding Gibraltar. This negotiation acts as a contingency plan in a scenario of no-deal of Brexit -or hard Brexit, which includes not only the rights of the British citizen’s living in EU-27 member states, but also the status of Gibraltar as a British overseas territory and its relationship with Spain.

The previous studies regarding to the UK-Spain relationship have talked about the complexity of the UK-Spain-EU relationship on Gibraltar during the Brexit negotiation process, such as Gibraltar is seen as the “symbolic border” for the leave voters ([Eremyan & Eshinimaeva-Shagdarova, 2018](#)). The strategic geographical location of Gibraltar had made Spain to reassert its influence and claims on Gibraltar, even though Gibraltar was ceded by the Treaty of Utrecht to British sovereignty in 1713. Gibraltar also functioned as a defensive wall of the British power in the Mediterranean. Furthermore, in the 1968 referendum, the people of Gibraltar voted to remain with Britain rather than with Spain – with a staggering number of 12.762 voted to stay with Britain and only 44 voted for Spain ([Johnson, n.d](#)). The unchanged attitudes to remain part of Britain has strengthened the notion of Gibraltarians as British, not Spanish.

This symbolic border has come way back and created the anti-Spanishness of Gibraltar, which not only comes from people born in Gibraltar but also from people born in Spain. Gibraltar is perceived as a place to seek refuge and stay for many people from Spain who were once their relatives killed or imprisoned during the rule of fascists in Spain (Orsini et al., 2018). Moreover, in the minds of many Gibraltarians, Spanish culture is thus innately violent and Spanish people are violent too (Orsini et al., 2018). Gibraltarians also perceive Spain as backward, sloppy, careless, and incompetent (Orsini et al., 2018). These many stereotypes are indicated to create what Orsini (2018) calls as Gibraltar's gated nationalism.

Brexit is also seen as an opportunity for Spain to define a more stable relationship framework between Gibraltar and Spain as the Spanish government would try to find a leverage point to recover sovereignty over Gibraltar territory (Baeza, 2021). Gibraltar was apprehended by the British Fleet in 1704 during the War of the Spanish Succession, in which Admiral George Rooke took Gibraltar from the Spanish (Johnson, n.d). Although Gibraltar had been ceded to Britain under the Treaty of Utrecht (1713), and later was renewed into consecutive Treaty such as the Treaty of Paris (1763) and the Treaty of Versailles (1783), it has not stopped other countries from attempting to seize Gibraltar, including Spain. One of the many attempts occurred in 1779 – also known as the Great Siege, and lasted until 1783, which reached its climax in 1782 (Johnson, n.d). The Spanish planned to attack from the land and sea as they bombarded Gibraltar with a lot of cannons. However, this siege was not successful.

The tendency of changes in the community cohesion and identity in Gibraltar territory due to the changing of border regime after Brexit is also a formidable scenario to the people of Gibraltar (Dittmer, 2019). As 292 respondents involved in the survey between 31 March and 1 April 2018 of the residents in Gibraltar, it was found that they perceived Brexit would bring a tighter or entirely closed border as the result of ill-intent Spanish authorities (Dittmer, 2019). The heightened sense of community identity through the physical exclusion of Spanish citizens and the symbolism of the Spanish state as the enemy is also expected from the changing of the border regime after Brexit (Dittmer, 2019). Especially, the fact that ten thousand workers cross the border every day and more than twelve million tourists make Gibraltar a unique territory and should not be overlooked in the Brexit negotiation (Bosque, 2017). The previous studies have not explored the framing and discourse analysis side of the Gibraltar issue in regard to the Brexit negotiation process. Hence this study aims to add the discussion of the framing and discourse analysis on the Gibraltar issue.

This tendency of including Spain in discussing Gibraltar during the Brexit negotiation also comes from the actively spoken from the Spanish Leader -Pedro Sanchez, as he stated: "Once the UK has left the EU, Gibraltar's political, legal and even geographic relationship with the EU will go through Spain ..." (Boffey & Jones, 2018). The Spanish government has actively put their country, meddling in the Gibraltar issue. Pedro Sanchez also warned



“London’ as he feels the British government had been “distant” and he intends to use Spain’s veto in the EU Commission if the British government would not include Spain as their partner in any negotiations regarding Gibraltar’s future ([Arostegui, 2018](#)).

Spain could not be separated from the discussion of Gibraltar-related issues. Not only Gibraltar shares its border with Spain, but also has been disputed by Spain as the UK possessed the territory. The memorandum between Gibraltar and Spain as part of the withdrawal deal which is laid out in the “Protocol on Gibraltar” clause Article 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 is within the fields of tobacco smuggling, policing, citizen’s and workers’ rights, and environment protection and fishing, by setting up joint committees to exchange information ([Directorate-General for Communication, n.d](#)). Although the British Government stated that the memorandum is based on a spirit of trust and solidarity, the narrative from a long-standing claim of Spain on Gibraltar could not be easily removed ([“Brexit deals bring Spain, Gibraltar closer together,” 2018](#)). For instance, in the news article from Express.co.uk, that the British should remain suspicious of Spain during the negotiations despite Spain offering a ‘truce’ on Gibraltar ([Barnes, 2018](#)). This framing has been consistently used in many media which will be exercised further in the next section.

This study aims to explore the framing of Spain’s role in the context of Brexit negotiations concerning the Gibraltar issues. This exploration is achieved by analysing a curated selected of British and French news articles and a discourse analysis of speeches delivered by the Chief Minister of Gibraltar, Fabian Picardo. In addition, this study adopts a constructivist perspective to provide insights into the sentiment behind the framing and discourses that surfaced during the Brexit negotiation, particularly concerning Spain’s involvement in discussions related to the Gibraltar issue.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study uses the constructivist approach to depict the Spanish-Gibraltar relationship during the Brexit negotiation process. The emergence of constructivism in the study of International Relations is inseparable from the influence of constructivist discourses that developed earlier in Philosophy of Science and Social Philosophy. Constructivist fundamental ideas are closely related to the nature of knowledge which is tied to ideas or concepts created by humans. It is therefore humans who make the social world in which they live ([Wicaksana, 2018](#)). In the context of global politics, constructivists do not ignore the role and influence of material force factors, such as military capabilities, but are of the view that a set of ideas contained in international norms also determines how state and non-state actors act in the international arena ([Wicaksana, 2018](#)). Constructivists argue that social aspects can effectively influence global political practices – the social aspects referred to are ideas and norms ([Wicaksana, 2018](#)).

International actors act according to their identification with the existence of other actors and their response to the rules of interaction that apply in a particular environment

([Wicaksana, 2018](#)). In other words, constructivists stress the importance of normative and ideational structures because these are thought to shape the social identities of political actors ([Reus-Smit, 2005](#)). Constructivists also use the concept of perception as a fundamental descriptive unit behind the behaviour of state actors ([Wicaksana, 2018](#)). Hence, constructivists argue that identities inform interests, and in turn, actions ([Reus-Smit, 2005](#)).

The main argument of this study is that the result of the framing of discourse analysis depicts Gibraltar's attitude toward the involvement of Spain in regard to the Gibraltar issue – which according to the constructivist approach is based on how Gibraltar puts the meaning on their relationship with Spain. This meaning, subsequently, creates identities put by Gibraltar toward Spain and these identities reflect the “perceived” interests of Spain in the Gibraltar issue. This argument derives from the constructivists' argument that diplomacy and conflict between nations is a process of interaction that is determined by the degree of disparity or alignment of one actor's perceptions with others regarding various matters relating to their relationship, especially whether the two-way relationship between them indicates a symptom of the creation of the common good ([Wicaksana, 2018](#)).

METHODS

This study uses ten selected news articles after the first Brexit referendum took place until the period of the negotiation was signed. Hence, June 2016 to November 2018 is selected as the period to be studied. The investigation of news coverage offers a different set of facts and evaluations toward a certain issue ([Entman, 1993](#)). With the Brexit referendum in the background, news framing may prevent audiences from making a balanced assessment toward the attitude of the negotiation process. Therefore, the framing of news articles may affect the referendum voting of Gibraltarians, whether to vote to remain or leave.

This study adopts nine British news articles (5 articles from the Express, 2 articles from the Telegraph, 1 article from the Economist, and 1 article from the Guardian) and one French news article (the Agence France-Presse) as the corpus in the framing analysis. The selection of nine British news articles and one French news article from different publishing companies is to give a diverse and balanced stance in the corpus, such as the Express newspaper has been cited to support the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and right-wing leaning ([Oxford Royale Academy, n.d.](#)); the Telegraphy has been cited to endorse the Conservative Party and also right-wing leaning ([Oxford Royale Academy, n.d.](#)); the Guardian has been cited to attract a stereotype of liberal, and left-wing readers ([Historic Newspapers, 2021](#)); the Economist cites itself to be in the “radical centre” ([Medium, 2017](#)); and the Agence France-Presse has been cited to be independent of all political, economic, philosophical or religious influence ([New World Encyclopedia, n.d.](#)).

Framing analysis methodology from Robert Entman is used in this study. The concept of framing consistently offers a way to describe the power of a communicating text ([Entman, 1993](#)). Furthermore, Robert Entman explains framing analysis “(...) as a way to influence a

human consciousness through the transfer of information such as speech, utterance, news report, etc” ([Entman, 1993](#)). Framing also involves selection –aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described ([Entman, 1993](#)). Selection and salience are two core concepts which help the study to identify the occurrence of framing. Robert Entman identifies salience in a text as “when a piece of information is more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audience, so that the probability of receivers to perceive information, discern meaning and then process it and store it in memory is enhanced” ([Entman, 1993, p. 53](#)). Moreover, “a dominant framing will prevent most audiences from making a balanced assessment of a situation” ([Entman, 1993, p. 56](#)). This means that through framing, a text could powerfully lead the perception of their audiences into what the communicator judged. By using NVivo, this study aims to find a selection of words that appear to be salient within the ten selected news articles. This method intends to have a general idea of how Spain is framed in the Brexit negotiation about the Gibraltar issue.

Furthermore, the analysis moves to the discourse-historical analysis from Ruth Wodak on two speeches of Fabian Picardo, Chief Minister of Gibraltar, regarding the Brexit negotiation in the Gibraltar issue. The speeches are from a Youtube channel: “GBC News” ([see GBC News, 2019](#); [GBC News, 2018](#)). Discourse-historical approach (DHA) has been defined as being part of the critical discourse field of studies. DHA focuses on the historical dimensions of discourse formation, and identity politics, and is oriented toward the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, in particular Habermas’s language philosophy ([Wodak, 2016](#)). Through the eight steps which are being implemented recursively along with the four levels of the triangulation principle, texts are objectified as linguistic actions as well as polyphonic -integrate and manifest various voices ([Wodak, 2016](#)). The DHA also considers the intertextual and interdiscursive relationships between utterances, texts, genres, discourses, and extra-linguistics social or sociological variables, the history of an organization or institution, and situational frames ([Wodak, 2016](#)). Ruth Wodak also gives us how to see the relationships from the intertextual and interdiscursive: “Such connections are established in different ways: through explicit reference to a topic or main actor, through references to the same events, ... and so on” ([Wodak, 2016](#)).

The DHA is three dimensional which (1) identifies specific contents or topics of a specific discourse, (2) investigates the discursive strategy, and (3) examines the linguistic means ([Wodak, 2016](#)). Through these three dimensional, Ruth Wodak provides this study with five selection of discursive strategies: referential/nomination strategy, predication strategy, argumentation strategy, perspectivization strategy, and intensification/mitigation strategy ([Wodak, 2016](#)). By using these five discursive strategies, this study aims to deliver a deeper analysis of framing Spain in the Gibraltar issue on the Brexit negotiation. Speeches from Fabian Picardo are used as he was the Chief Minister of Gibraltar during the Brexit

negotiation process. This study uses two speeches from Fabian Picardo on his responses to the Brexit referendum result and the development of Gibraltar's inclusion in the UK-EU future relationship.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Framing of Spain in the Selected News Articles

Although previous studies in framing either focus on the content or the effect (De Vreese, 2005), this study focuses on the content analysis of the ten selected news articles. This study, then, uses eleven mechanisms from Tankard mentioned by De Vreese (2001) to identify and measure news framing, which among them are leads, headlines, and quotes selection. By using Word Cloud and Word Frequency on NVivo, this study finds several words that describe Spain in the Brexit negotiation about the Gibraltar issue.



Figure 1. Word Cloud. *Source:* NVivo processing result by author (2023)

From the Word Cloud result, this study finds several interesting words such as "claim", "warns", "threatens", and "snub" among others which might be associated with the negative terms depicting Spain on the Gibraltar issue. Furthermore, the Word Frequency result, it shows that "claim/claims/claimed" appears fifteen times, "warn/warns/warned/warning" appears thirteen times, "threatens/threatened" appears eleven times, and "snub" appears nine times. Other words that are worth mentioning are: "pressure", "trouble", "damage", and "harm" which appear less than eight times within the corpus. "Spain" and "Spanish" are mentioned eighty-five times and sixty-four times in ten news articles. This means that the narrative of the long-standing claim position for Gibraltar has made Spain an inseparable actor in the issue. In addition, this study also provides the

most frequently used words within the corpus as shown in the table below to illustrate the salience process of the selected news articles.

Table 1. Word Frequency

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)	Similar Words
gibraltar	9	177	3.80	gibraltar, 'gibraltar
brexiteer	9	128	2.75	brexit, brexit', 'brexit, brexiteer
spain	5	85	1.82	spain
spanish	7	64	1.37	spanish
european	8	45	0.97	european
union	5	39	0.84	union
british	7	38	0.82	british, british'
deal	4	37	0.79	deal, 'deal', deals
border	6	35	0.75	border, bordered, borders
government	10	35	0.75	government, governments
rights	6	31	0.67	right, rights
minister	8	30	0.64	minister, ministers
britain	7	29	0.62	britain, britain'
agreement	9	25	0.54	agreement, agreements
workers'	8	22	0.47	worker, workers, workers', 'workers
territory	9	22	0.47	territorial, territories, territory
vote	4	21	0.45	vote, voted, votes, voting
leave	5	20	0.43	leave, leaves

Source: NVivo processing result by author (2023)

From the Table 1, it is apparent that the framing analysis of ten selected news articles reveals that Spain is framed in a negative way that leads their reader to view Spanish as “the public aggressor”. This negative framing mostly appears in the context of the border issue with Gibraltar. For example: “Spain have threatened to derail Brexit talks by vetoing the final deal in a desperate bid to snatch Gibraltar back through concession on territory and sovereignty of the British Overseas Territory” (Barnes, 2018). The word “border/borders” appears thirty-seven times, “territory/territorial/ territories” appears twenty-two times, and “sovereignty” appears seven times. Hence, the rhetoric of ten news articles within this study corpus shows that Spain tries to influence Brexit negotiation about the Gibraltar issue by providing such a “threat” to the sovereignty/border of Gibraltar.

The Discourse-Historical Analysis of Fabian Picardo’s Speeches

The discursive strategy was applied to two speeches carried out by Fabian Picardo, Chief Minister of Gibraltar. The first speech was delivered right after the first Brexit referendum result was confirmed, and the second speech was during the latest Brexit development regarding Gibraltar’s inclusion in the future UK-EU relationship. The discourse-historical

strategy from Ruth Wodak is applied to the two speeches. The first speech of Fabian Picardo is the response to the “leave” result in the United Kingdom. Meanwhile, the result in Gibraltar was the opposite which 96% of the votes are to “remain”.

Discursive Strategies

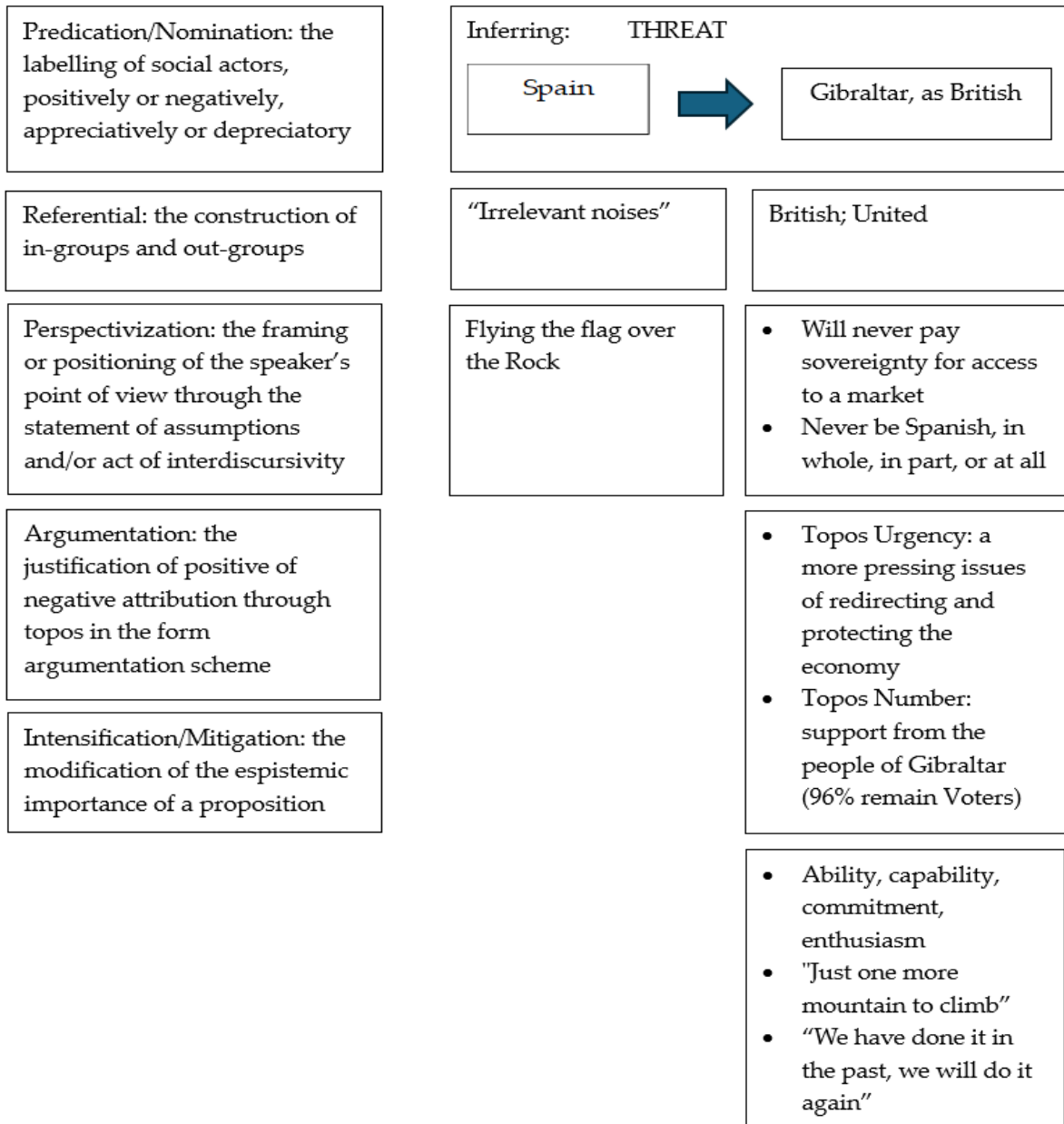


Figure 2. DHA analysis of Fabian Picardo’s speech to the Parliament of Gibraltar. *Source:* processed by author (2023)

The first speech is when Fabian Picardo spoke during the Brexit negotiation period. Fabian Picardo mentions in his speech that all parties need to keep the spirit of unity to



focus on more pressing issues of redirecting and protecting the economy of Gibraltar. The speech was also intended to respond to the statement from Jose Manuel Garcia-Margallo, the Spanish Prime Minister, who saw the opportunity to fly the Spanish flag over the Rock - Gibraltar. Garcia-Margallo's statement was called out by Fabian Picardo as "irrelevant noises", as he saw that Gibraltar never be Spanish, in whole, in part, or at all. This apparent discourse of "us" and "them" is within the obvious realm – not only because Fabian Picardo explicitly mentions Spanish (Spain) but also because Fabian Picardo uses the "never" word in his speech. This study sees these discourses as a way to distinguish the people of Gibraltar from the Spanish. The DHA result on the first speech of Fabian Picardo can be found in Figure 2.

Moreover, in the second speech from Fabian Picardo, it is found that Fabian Picardo uses "fascist" to depict the statement from Pedro Sanchez, the Spanish Prime Minister, in regard to the declaration of EU27 in the withdrawal agreement and negotiation between the UK and the EU without the involvement of Gibraltar's interest. Fabian Picardo states in his speech that Pedro Sanchez is no more but doing Generalissimo himself. It is such a strong statement to mention Pedro Sanchez as a figure closely associated with dictatorship. Pedro Sanchez also closed the Spanish border with Gibraltar from 1965 to 1985 ([Asquez, 2022](#)). In discussing the future of Gibraltar, Fabian Picardo mentions that Gibraltar is fully supported by the British government and Gibraltar is doing well in this Brexit negotiation period, as he mentions this period as the "testing time". The DHA result on the second speech of Fabian Picardo can be found in Figure 3.

From the DHA analysis of the two speeches of Fabian Picardo, this study finds that Fabian Picardo tends to refer to Spain as the threat to Gibraltar. This refers to the continuous effort of the Spanish government to meddle in the Gibraltar issue during the British negotiation period. The persistent discourses that are brought by the Spanish government – despite Fabian Picardo having mentioned them as "noises", do not affect Gibraltar's position. The result of more than 90% votes to "remain" has reaffirmed Gibraltar's position to work together with the British government and has strengthened the reluctance of Gibraltar to never be part of the Spanish occupation ([GBC News, 2016](#)).

Discursive Strategies

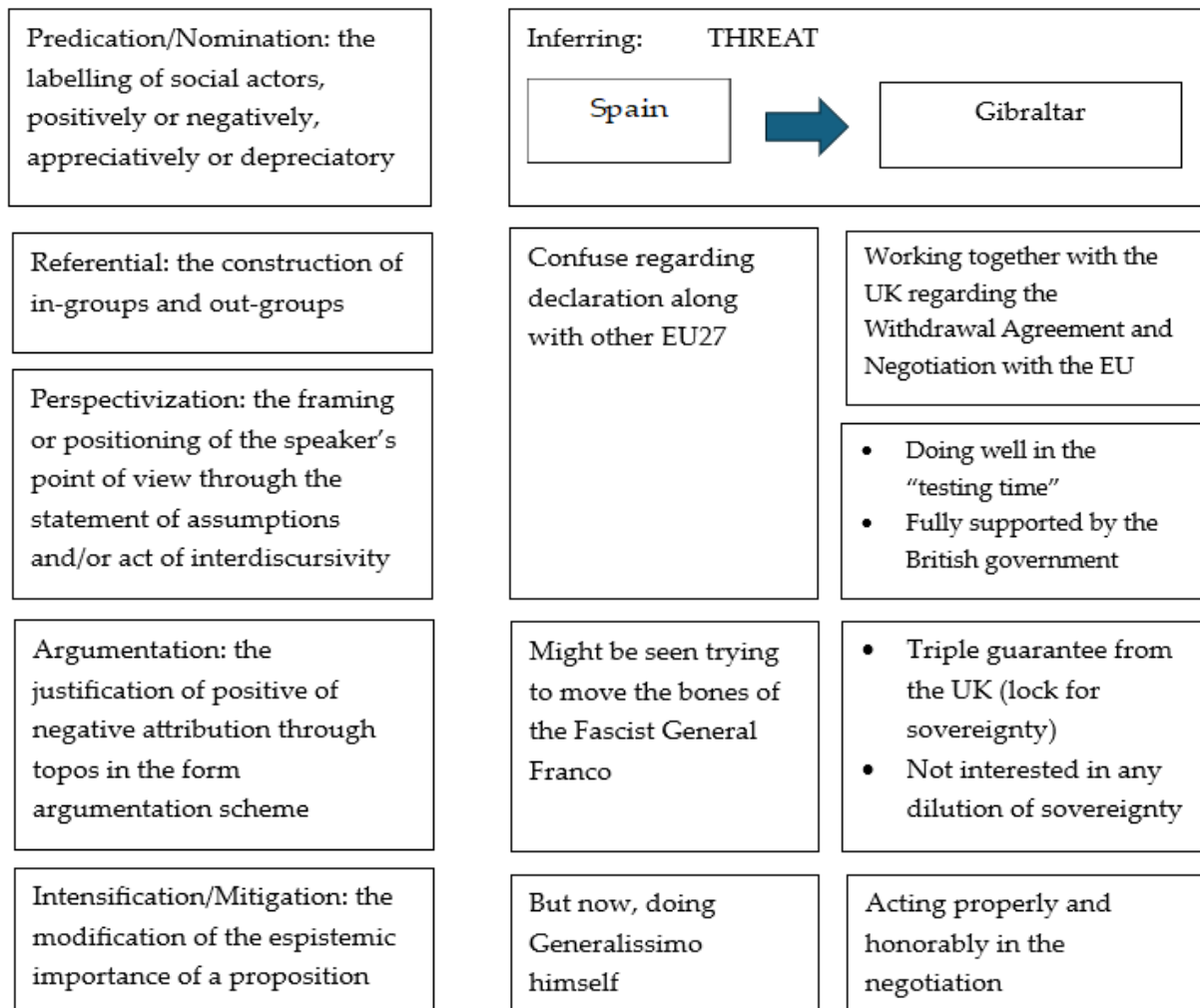


Figure 3. DHA analysis of Fabian Picardo's speech on the development of Gibraltar inclusion in the EU-UK Brexit negotiation. *Source:* processed by author (2023)

The Constructivist Approach Analysis

The constructivist approach is used to further investigate the main argument. The main argument of this study is that the result of the framing of discourse analysis depicts Gibraltar's attitude toward Spain during the Brexit negotiation process, which according to the constructivist approach is based on how Gibraltar puts the meaning of its relationship with Spain. Several quotations from the news articles are given to show how the Gibraltar-Spain relationship regarding the Gibraltar issue is not on the good term. "Spain has threatened to derail Brexit talks by vetoing the final deal in a desperate bid to snatch Gibraltar back (...)" ([Barnes, 2018](#)). Moreover, in another news article, Fabian Ricardo mentions that "He says he sees the Spanish flag flying over Gibraltar very soon" ([Alexander, 2016](#)). From these two news articles alone, the Spanish's intention to actively overtake Gibraltar from one of the British Overseas Territory is apparent.



Furthermore, one news article also cites a statement from Jose Manuel Garcia-Margallo that “Spain will push for Gibraltar to stay out of any general negotiations with the European Union (...) and will aim for bilateral talks to seek co-sovereignty and eventually Spanish control of the peninsula (...)” ([Badcock, 2016](#)). The Brexit negotiations is also framed as an aperture for Spain as it is mentioned that “a Brexit could leave the Rock vulnerable to Spanish aggression” ([Foster, 2016](#)). “Spain have been demanding access to the Rock’s airport” ([Barnes, 2018](#)). This creation of identities of the Spanish as an aggressor towards the ‘vulnerable’ Gibraltar due to the deadlock negotiation of the Brexit processes, has perceived the Spanish as the antagonist actor.

The framing of Spain’s main goal is to regain control over Gibraltar has gained responses from the UK and Gibraltar. As the referendum result in Gibraltar shows that Gibraltar wanted to “remain” in the EU, this also sits right with the selected news articles that are used in this study. Gibraltar has been mentioned as wanting to maintain its ties with the UK ([Agence France Press, 2018](#)). Fabian Picardo also explicitly mentioned that “Gibraltar has been British for 312 years, and its residents are resolutely British – sharing culture, education and attitudes” ([Alexander, 2016](#)). In the DHA analysis of Figure 3, it is also mentioned that Gibraltar is fully supported by the British government. Hence, it is clear a remark how Gibraltar identifies itself as British, not Spanish. This remark also appears in the DHA analysis of Figure 3 that Gibraltar will never be Spanish, not in whole, in part, or at all. These indicate the creation of identities of Gibraltar as British to refuse under the Spanish flag. Gibraltar is also framed as a “vulnerable” actor as Gibraltar’s government submitted a statement “... a warning that a Brexit could leave the Rock vulnerable to Spanish aggressor.” ([Foster, 2016](#)).

This distinct identity between the Spanish is identified as an aggressor, meanwhile Gibraltar is identified to be in a “vulnerable” condition during the “testing time” of Brexit negotiation. Furthermore, the identities attachment of Gibraltar to always be British and is fully supported by the British government reaffirms the notion of unwillingness of Gibraltar to be Spanish. These results have confirmed the notion from the constructivist approach that the meanings put by Gibraltar in its relationship with Spain in the Brexit negotiation process have created identities for each of the parties involved.

CONCLUSION

Through the framing analysis, this study finds that the selected news articles have framed Spain as the aggressor to legitimise Gibraltar’s position in the Brexit referendum. The framing of the selected news articles aligns with the narrative of the Spanish as the aggressor that hope for Gibraltar to be back as the Spanish territory—as before the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. This framing is an important tool to unite the people of Gibraltar that as being “British”, the people of Gibraltar would enjoy more benefits. This result aligns with the discourse-historical analysis strategies from Ruth Wodak that capture the discourse of being



“us” and “them” characteristics between Spain and Gibraltar as part of the British Overseas Territory. Fabian Picardo explicitly differentiates the people of Gibraltar from the Spanish and he cites Pedro Sanchez’s intention to declare with EU27 regarding the withdrawal agreement and negotiation between the UK and the EU without the involvement of Gibraltar as an act of Generalissimo. This means that Fabian Picardo sees Spain as a threat to the sovereignty of Gibraltar and the unity of the UK. Further investigation using the constructivist approach also confirms that the UK and Gibraltar have put identities on Spain as an aggressor that threatens the “vulnerable” Gibraltar to be under the Spanish flag. This creation of identities is then perceived to reflect the tendency of each party to act regarding the Gibraltar issue during the Brexit negotiation process.

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