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**THE USE OF METAPHORS IN POLITICAL SPEECHES:  
METAPHORS IN THE SPEECHES OF BARACK OBAMA  
AND DONALD J. TRUMP**

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**Abstract.** *Politics is a struggle for power with the aim of putting political ideas into practice. When giving a speech, politicians want to attract the attention of the public by all available means. The language which they use aims to mobilize the constituents, to persuade the undecided and to attack political opponents. It is for this reason that figurative language and figures of speech appear rather frequently in political speeches. A metaphor as a linguistic tool can be manipulated both for pragmatic and strategic reasons. Metaphors encountered in political speeches facilitate human understanding of complex concepts by explaining them via bodily experiences and the physical senses. It is for that reason that they rhetorically contribute to mental representations of political issues. This study aims to explore how politicians tend to convey their messages and ideas through the use of different types of metaphors: ontological, structural, and orientational. In order to achieve this goal, I will analyze three speeches given by Barack Obama between 2008 and 2009, and three speeches given by Donald J. Trump between 2016 and 2018 while using the model of study proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980).*

**Key words:** *discourse, cognitive linguistics, metaphor, American politics*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Language is frequently regarded as one of the oldest tools of persuasion. Individuals employ persuasive language to sway others into aligning with their facts, embracing their values, and endorsing their arguments and conclusions. Essentially, it serves as a means to prompt others to adopt a particular mindset. It's important to recognize that carefully selected language has the power to shape the preconceptions, perspectives, aspirations, and anxieties of the public, leading individuals to accept falsehoods as truths or endorse policies that run

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counter to their interests. Political language and speeches, in particular, are typically characterized by meticulously crafted, managed, and directed language (Shäffner 1996, 202).

In times of presidential (or parliamentary) elections, political candidates employ figurative language in order to present themselves, introduce new policies, and question the arguments of their opponents (Charteris-Black 2018, 234). Due to the fact that politicians invest time and effort in preparing eloquent speeches that they can present to voters, the arguments that they make often deploy common rhetorical elements such as ironies, allusions, parallelism, metaphors, and smiles (Bos Van der Brug and de Vreese 2013; Boudreau and MacKenzie 2014). Studies on political discourse have showed that metaphors in particular play a central role in political speeches (Lakoff 1995; Karimova 2016; Delgado 2021). In his book, *The Language of Politics* (2002),

Gerard Steen argues that skillful utilization of metaphorical language serves as a powerful instrument for politicians, empowering them to secure or uphold their authority (2002, 45). He also adds that the use of metaphor in politics is considered a “fundamentally persuasive discourse act” (Steen 2002, 52). Steen’s definition implies that metaphors are used in order to highlight some important aspects in a speech act and to ignore others. This argument is supported by Frederick George Baily, the author of the study *Stratagems and Spoils: A Social Anthropology of Politics* (2018), who claims that it is through the use of metaphors that politicians present themselves in a positive light, degrade their rivals, and simultaneously justify their own actions. Similarly, Jonathan Charteris-Black warns that metaphors in political context are frequently used for ideological purposes since they activate unconscious emotional associations and thereby contribute to myth creation (2011, 28). As he elaborates further, the primary purpose of employing metaphors in political rhetoric is to shape our perspective on political matters by excluding alternative viewpoints (Charteris-Black 2011, 32). Once a metaphorical perspective is embraced, it becomes the guiding framework through which the public organizes relevant information and interprets news events that align with this perspective.

Alternatively, Jason Mio (1997) presents a contrasting perspective regarding the use of metaphors in political discourse. He suggests that political concepts are often intricate and abstract, making them challenging for voters to grasp. Therefore, Mio argues that metaphors can play a crucial role in simplifying complex ideas by associating them with more tangible concepts, aiding voter comprehension. Hence, politicians utilize metaphors to effectively convey abstract ideas by grounding them in tangible experiences and concrete language. This demonstrates the politicians’ capacity for rational thought and enhances the persuasiveness of their arguments (Sudrama 2017; Littlemore 2003). Nevertheless, it's important to recognize that metaphors can be interpreted in various ways, leading voters to ascribe their own meanings to them, whether positive or negative. Therefore, politicians must consider the context and audience when selecting metaphors to ensure their message resonates effectively and avoids unintended misinterpretations. This adaptability in metaphor usage allows politicians to tailor their rhetoric to specific situations and audiences, maximizing its persuasive impact.

## 2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Barbara Lesz highlights the influential role of metaphors in shaping cognitive perception, emphasizing how they can subtly influence our understanding of complex concepts (2011, 21). Despite this profound impact, she notes that even native speakers may

not always recognize the presence of metaphors in speech or text. As a result, individuals may unknowingly internalize metaphorical constructs without fully grasping their implications. This lack of awareness underscores the subconscious nature of metaphorical language and its ability to operate beneath the surface of conscious thought. This dual characteristic of metaphors underscores their potency in shaping individuals' opinions and perspectives, subtly molding their worldview (Pikalo 2008; Karimova 2016).

Metaphors have the capacity to inject vigor into a message, rendering speeches more memorable and evoking emotional responses. For instance, likening a political figure to "a Hitler" can evoke strong emotions, shaping perceptions of the leader in question. Politicians harness metaphors to sway emotions, a strategy exemplified in renowned speeches like Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" address, George W. Bush's "Thousand Points of Light" speech, and Winston Churchill's "Iron Curtain" address, all designed to inspire and galvanize audiences (Mio et al. 2005, 288). Increased utilization of metaphors in political speeches appears to correlate with heightened inspiration among followers. This is primarily due to the emotional resonance elicited by these speeches, which effectively convey the necessary courses of action. (Mio et al. 2005, 289-293). According to a study conducted by Mio et al., (2005) concerning the charisma of American presidents, it was found that those who employed a greater number of metaphors in their inaugural addresses were perceived as more charismatic. Sections rich in metaphors were deemed particularly inspirational, indicating that metaphors serve as powerful rhetorical devices for inspiration.

Jennifer M. Wei (2001) took a firm stance on the significance and prevalence of metaphors utilized in election discourse to convey thoughts and shape ideas in Taiwan. Drawing data from newspaper and website coverage of the 1997 Taiwanese elections, she analyzed the interactions among voters, readers, and campaigners. Employing a cognitively and culturally grounded analytical framework proposed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980), Wei delved into the specific socio-cultural conditions that fostered the emergence of novel and effective metaphors. Her study argued that recent social events and distinct cultural contexts gave rise to benign metaphors that depicted the unique socio-cultural landscape of Taiwanese politics. Additionally, her research provided a socio-cultural examination of particular political metaphors, demonstrating that these metaphors served strategic purposes beyond mere heuristic or cognitive functions. By utilizing the cognitive approach advocated by Lakoff et al. (1980), Wei's study also enabled linguists to explore both the universal and culturally specific aspects of conceptual metaphors. It confirmed that while conceptual metaphors stem from fundamental human experiences, our diverse cultural backgrounds shape our perceptions of the world and influence our utilization of metaphors. Therefore, Wei's (2001) research underscored the pivotal role of socio-cultural contexts in the development and utilization of metaphors. In contrast to Wei (2001), who examined metaphorical expressions in Taiwanese political news coverage, Ida Vestermark (2007) conducted a study on the metaphorical personification of America in political discourse. Utilizing the Cognitive-Semantic Approach developed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Vestermark focused on the personification of America in the inaugural addresses of Ronald Reagan (1981), George H.W. Bush (1989), Bill Clinton (1993), and George W. Bush (2001). Her analysis centered on the utilization and interpretation of metaphors by these presidents, aiming to decipher the underlying messages conveyed to the audience. Employing this approach, Vestermark identified conceptual metaphors and examined how they attributed human characteristics to the non-human entity of America, while also elucidating the potential intentions of the speakers. In his research, Rotimi

Taiwo (2010) investigated metaphors in Nigerian political discourse, employing a combination of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Cognitive Linguistics, as pioneered by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Taiwo primarily focused on identifying metaphors and analyzing how discourses mapped the source and target domains in their metaphoric expressions. Drawing from Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Theory of Conceptual Metaphor, he identified three target domains that served as sources of conceptual metaphors in his data: the nation, politicians, and politics. Specifically, Taiwo outlined the conceptualizations of the NATION as a FAMILY and as a PERSON, along with the conceptual mappings of POLITICS AS BATTLE and POLITICS AS A JOURNEY.

### 3. THE CONCEPT OF METAPHOR

A metaphor is a linguistic device where a word or phrase, typically representing one concept, is employed in lieu of another to imply a resemblance or comparison between the two, often conveying deeper meanings or associations. Metaphors are so ingrained within language and culture that their presence may go unnoticed or unacknowledged (Gibbs 1994, 210). Lakoff and Johnson's book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) revolutionized the study of metaphors. It introduced three key propositions: metaphors are pervasive and extend beyond literary realms; they exhibit significant levels of organization and consistency; and they represent not only linguistic devices but also fundamental cognitive processes. These two authors assert that metaphor is ubiquitous in daily existence, permeating not only language but also behavior and cognition. Additionally, they argue that the conventional framework through which we perceive and engage with the world is essentially metaphorical in essence (Lakoff, Johnson 1980, 3). Lakoff and Johnson propose that metaphor involves comprehending one concept through the lens of another, where a conceptual domain (*the target*) is interpreted in relation to another conceptual domain (*the source*). These domains are described as collections of information that structure interconnected ideas (Evans and Green 2006; Holyoak and Stamenković 2018). As a result, complex concepts are often grasped by likening them to more tangible ones (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Take, for instance, the metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY, where LOVE represents the target domain and JOURNEY serves as the source domain. In this case, JOURNEY is more concrete than LOVE, allowing us to draw parallels from our everyday experiences. This example follows the format where mnemonic labels like TARGET DOMAIN IS SOURCE DOMAIN are used to identify the mapping between concepts. Furthermore, Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) asserts that there are "systematic correspondences" between the source and target domains, where the constituent elements of one domain correspond to those of the other (2006, 210). These correspondences, termed as mappings, are evident in the LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, where elements like travelers map onto lovers and vehicles onto love relationships (Kövecses 2002, 6). However, according to Lakoff and Johnson, the mappings are unidirectional, flowing from the concrete source to the abstract target domain, as per the principle of unidirectionality. This principle implies that while we can understand love in terms of a journey, the reverse is not feasible.

Moreover, it is important to note that metaphors represent asymmetric and partial mappings across domains, where speakers utilize only some aspects of the source domain to understand the target domain. This concept, termed "partial metaphorical utilization" by Lakoff, suggests that not all aspects of the target domain need to be utilized by the source domain in the metaphorical process. For instance, consider the metaphor TIME IS MONEY, which suggests

that time carries a valuable worth, as evident in phrases like "I cannot spare more time on this project," "I've invested a lot of time in my career," "This will save you time," and "He doesn't use his time profitably." In these expressions, elements related to banking, such as investing, saving, spending, and budgeting, are metaphorically applied to time. However, the physical attributes of money, such as putting it in pockets or storing it in a bank, are not transferred to time. Therefore, while time is metaphorically equated with money in terms of value, it doesn't encompass all aspects of monetary transactions. Lakoff and Johnson add that each metaphorical mapping involves a predetermined set of correspondences between entities in a source domain and those in a target domain. These correspondences, once activated, project patterns from the source domain onto the target domain. Nevertheless, the cross-domain correspondences are not arbitrary; rather, they are rooted in our physical and cultural experiences (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2002; Shapiro 2010). This idea underscores the interconnectedness of the mind and body, proposing that our cognitive processes are shaped, and possibly dictated by, our interactions with the physical world.

Extensive exploration into cognitive metaphors and their linguistic representations has unveiled a discernible set of recurrent source metaphors employed in structuring conventional target concepts. Kövecses delineates various commonplace source domains, encompassing the human form, health, fauna, flora, architectural constructs, machinery and implements, recreational pursuits, economic transactions, culinary activities, temperature fluctuations, luminosity dynamics, physical forces, and directional cues (2002, 16-20). These metaphors, based on their cognitive utility, are classified into three distinct categories: structural, ontological, and orientational.

### **3.1. Structural Conceptual Metaphors**

In this type of conceptual metaphor, intricate and abstract phenomena are understood in terms of simpler and more tangible experiences. Kövecses elucidates that within a structural metaphor, "the source domain furnishes a comprehensive knowledge framework for the target concept" (2002, 37). For instance, one can interpret the target concept A by drawing parallels to the structural dynamics of source concept B, as exemplified in the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR. War, being a concrete concept deeply ingrained in our collective consciousness, is frequently projected onto abstract domains such as argument and love (Lakoff 1987: case study 1; Kövecses 1991). This transference occurs because war, with its multifaceted nature involving strategic planning, tactical maneuvers, engagement, victory, defeat, and negotiation, offers a familiar framework for understanding more intangible concepts. Drawing upon our everyday experiences, we employ the rich tapestry of war-related terminology when navigating the domain of argument: employing strategies to "defeat" opponents' arguments, "attack" weak points, or "retreat" when faced with adversity. Despite the absence of physical combat, verbal exchanges are metaphorically likened to a battlefield, underscoring the pervasive influence of structural metaphors in shaping our understanding of abstract concepts.

### **3.2. Orientational metaphors**

The term orientational metaphor is coined from the fact that most metaphors serving this purpose are related to fundamental human spatial orientations, such as up-down, center-periphery, in-out, front-back, on-off, deep-shallow (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2002). As a result, these metaphors are grounded in an anthropocentric worldview, where vertical orientation is symbolized by the up-down dichotomy (up representing good and down

representing evil). Common examples include MORE IS UP, LESS IS DOWN, GOOD IS UP, BAD IS DOWN. Lakoff & Johnson note that there is an "internal coherence to each spatialization metaphor," indicating that their meanings are not isolated occurrences but part of a systematic framework (1980, 14). Kövecses argues that these metaphors can also be termed "coherence metaphors" based on their cognitive function (2000, 63). For instance, the orientational metaphor HAPPY IS UP is part of a coherent system rather than a random linguistic expression. When discussing a concept using the word "up," it typically conveys positive emotions and concepts, as visualized by an increase or upward movement in daily activities. Conversely, "down" is associated with negative concepts and unfavorable emotions. Therefore, these metaphors play a significant role in shaping our understanding and expression of emotions.

### 3.3. Ontological metaphors

Ontological metaphors facilitate the conceptualization of concrete entities as abstract concepts (Kövecses 2000, 25). Hence, these metaphors attribute a sense of existence to concepts that lack physical presence. Ontological metaphors assist individuals in articulating their experiences in tangible terms, facilitating the recognition, description, and measurement of the intangible facets of those experiences. An example of a prominent ontological metaphor in American culture is THE MIND IS AN ENTITY, which portrays the mind as a tangible object susceptible to manipulation and operation, as outlined by Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 25-29). According to some authors, when experiences are conceptualized into specific objects or materials, they become classifiable, groupable, and quantifiable, enabling reasoning about those experiences. Even when the boundaries of objects in the objective world are unclear, they are still classified. Ontological metaphors encompass two main types: container metaphor, and entity and substance metaphor. The container metaphor, as identified by Lakoff & Johnson (1980), conceptualizes abstract concepts using the structure of tangible containers. Expressions like "He was full of anger" or "She did it in three minutes" illustrate how abstract notions are framed within the context of containers. On the other hand, entity and substance metaphors are ontological metaphors that portray abstract concepts as concrete physical objects. This linguistic mechanism transforms aspects of experience such as events, activities, emotions, and ideas into entities and substances, allowing individuals to refer to them as if they were tangible objects.

## 4. DATA

This paper analyzes three speeches given by Barack Obama between 2008 and 2009 and three speeches given by Donald Trump between 2016 and 2018. It is important to note that all six speeches were delivered on different occasions and on different topics. The speeches that were given by Barack Obama are the following: *A More Perfect Union* (2008), *Health Care Speech* (2009), and *A New Beginning* (2009). On the other hand, Donald Trump's speeches are the following three: *Donald Trump 2016 Campaign Kickoff Speech* (2016), *Shooting in Parkland, Florida* (2016), and *State Union Speech* (2018). The transcriptions of the published texts of the speeches were used in this analysis and not the actual words spoken. Furthermore, all transcriptions were taken from different websites that specialize in United States presidential speeches and public policy. Table 1 presents comprehensive data concerning the speeches analyzed.

Bearing in mind that metaphors are powerful tools in the world of politics that politicians use in order to convey their messages to the audience, the main purpose of the

present study is to discover what types of metaphors are commonly used by politicians in political speeches. Thus, this study will help to discover whether orientational, ontological, or structural metaphors prevail in the speeches of the former two US presidents.

**Table 1** The speeches which were analyzed

	Title	Speaker	Year	Speech Source	Speech Length	Location and Audience
1.	<i>A More Perfect Union</i>	Barack Obama	2008	<a href="https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=88478467">https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=88478467</a>	37 min.	National Constitution Center in Philadelphia Public
2.	<i>Health Care Speech</i>	Barack Obama	2009	Obama's Health Care Speech to Congress - The New York Times (nytimes.com)	45 min.	The White House Congress
3.	<i>A New Beginning</i>	Barack Obama	2009	<a href="https://www.npr.org/2009/06/04/104923292/transcript-obama-seeks-new-beginning-in-cairo">https://www.npr.org/2009/06/04/104923292/transcript-obama-seeks-new-beginning-in-cairo</a>	40 min.	Cairo University in Egypt Public
4.	<i>Donald Trump 2016 campaign kickoff speech</i>	Donald Trump	2016	<a href="https://time.com/3923128/donald-trump-announcement-speech/">https://time.com/3923128/donald-trump-announcement-speech/</a>	38 min.	Trump Tower in New York City Public
5.	<i>Shooting in Parkland, Florida</i>	Donald Trump	2018	<a href="https://edition.cnn.com/2018/02/15/politics/transcript-trump-parkland-shooting/index.html">https://edition.cnn.com/2018/02/15/politics/transcript-trump-parkland-shooting/index.html</a>	40 min.	Parkland, Florida Public
6.	<i>State Union Speech</i>	Donald Trump	2018	<a href="https://edition.cnn.com/2018/01/30/politics/2018-state-of-the-union-transcript/index.html">https://edition.cnn.com/2018/01/30/politics/2018-state-of-the-union-transcript/index.html</a>	60 min.	The White House Congress

## 5. METHODOLOGY

Critical Metaphor Theory is employed in this paper to analyze the six political speeches. This approach is selected for its robustness and effectiveness in dissecting the utilization and significance of language within a social context. Political speeches, being intricate compositions often laden with abstraction, require a thorough examination to decipher their intended messages. As a result, Critical Metaphor Theory serves as a valuable tool in identifying, organizing, scrutinizing, and comprehending how abstract ideas are represented in terms of tangible concepts, thereby aiding in comprehension and communication of meanings. Obama's speeches are analyzed firstly then Trump's secondly. Three instances of metaphor usage are highlighted and analyzed per speech. It's crucial to acknowledge that, given space constraints and the impracticality of analyzing every metaphor in both speeches, only recurrent and deliberate metaphors that enhance comprehension of how metaphor functions in persuasion are thoroughly examined and discussed. The metaphor analysis utilized in this paper adheres to the subsequent stages: 1. The selection of speeches. 2. Metaphor

identification. 3. Metaphor interpretation (identifying and classifying concepts). 4. Metaphor explanation (agency, rhetorical, purpose, identifying ideology).

## 6. THE ANALYSIS OF BARACK OBAMA'S SPEECHES

### 6.1. A More Perfect Union (2008)

- 1) "Yes, yes. I said before, and I will say again, that when we started on this journey we did so with an abiding faith in the American people and their ability."

The expression "we embarked on this journey..." represents a structural metaphor (POLITICS IS A JOURNEY). Obama portrays his tenure as President of the United States as a journey, likening the experience to a voyage. Just as journeys culminate in safely reaching a destination, successful political scenarios entail navigating through social, economic, and other challenges. While roads may be rough, "political landscapes" can be fraught with obstacles. In this analogy, the rough roads from the source domain are mapped onto socio-political occurrences (Semino 2008, 56). In the initial instance, Obama discusses a progression toward democracy. There is no literal movement involved, nor a physical attainment of democracy, yet he employs the notion of movement to illustrate global advancement.

- 2) "Each of us can pursue our individual dreams but still come together as one American family."

The POLITICS IS LOVE metaphor suggests that political unity and cohesion are akin to the bonds found within a loving family. In the statement above, Obama employs this structural metaphor to convey the idea that despite pursuing individual goals and aspirations, citizens can still unite under a common national identity and shared values, much like members of a family come together despite their differences. Thus, Obama effectively evokes the idea of America as a family that must come together. The country is not a literal family with parents and siblings; however, this analogy is selected for its evocation of the affection commonly associated with familial relationships. By framing politics as love, Obama emphasizes the importance of solidarity, cooperation, and mutual respect in achieving collective goals and fostering a sense of belonging and unity among citizens.

- 3) "So, to all of you that have put your heart and soul, not just into our campaigns, but into making schools better."

In the provided excerpt, Obama acknowledges the dedication of American citizens who have passionately contributed to improving schools, stating. This statement employs an ontological metaphor, depicting individuals as vessels containing their thoughts, efforts, and emotions (Thompson 2018, 187). By attributing the action of "putting one's heart and soul" into an endeavor, Obama emphasizes the depth of commitment and enthusiasm with which these individuals have worked towards enhancing the educational system.



## 6.2. Health Care Speech (2009)

- 1) "Our financial system was on the verge of collapse."

Obama portrays the American financial system as a tangible entity on the brink of collapse. By employing an ontological metaphor, he depicts the financial system as a concrete object, emphasizing its vulnerability. This strategy reflects a common tendency in economic discourse to anthropomorphize abstract concepts, drawing on individuals' physical experiences to make sense of the intangible (Shapiro 2010, 243- 247). Moreover, the example underscores the notion that metaphors often stem from individuals' bodily interactions and everyday encounters.

- 2) "We are going to be stronger than ever before."

One of the fundamental metaphors in our foreign policy revolves around the concept of a nation being likened to a person (NATION IS A PERSON). In metaphorical terms, Obama suggests that a nation possesses human-like characteristics. He emphasizes the idea that America, as a person, has the potential to thrive and excel in its endeavors. By invoking solidarity and unity with this person, Obama aims to inspire citizens to deeply care for their country as they would for another individual (Lakoff 2006, 189). Metaphorically, he paints a picture of America as a strong, resilient entity capable of achieving greatness.

- 3) "My health care proposal has also been attacked by some who oppose reform as a "government takeover" of the entire health care system..."

In this instance, Obama attributes entity and substance characteristics to something that doesn't inherently possess them. This metaphor is ontological in nature, where the abstract concept of a "proposal" is portrayed as a tangible object susceptible to attack and damage (Kövecses 2010, 344). By framing his disapproval of those opposed to his proposal in this way, Obama emphasizes the seriousness of the situation.

## 6.3. A New Beginning (2009)

- 1) "We should protect our state, our freedom and the innocent."

The state is anthropomorphized and depicted as an entity with social connections in a global community. Its territory is likened to a home, with neighbors, allies, and adversaries. In addition, states are attributed with inherent characteristics, such as peace-loving or aggressive tendencies. Economic prosperity is equated with the state's well-being, while military prowess signifies its strength. Obama urges Americans to safeguard their interests, employing the POLITICS IS WAR metaphor to instill a sense of urgency and concern. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) point out, our cultural knowledge and experience of physical conflict facilitate the understanding of abstract political actions. Several linguistic analyses suggest that this is one of the primary functions of war metaphors in political rhetoric (Hartmann-Mahmud 2002; Alexandrescu 2014; Thompson 2018). In this example, the war frame is an effective way of grabbing people's attention and focusing it on the target problem.

- 2) "Employment, agriculture, business—all of these show the steady, if slow, healing of our enormous wound."

The illness metaphor characterizes the financial crisis as a malady afflicting the economy of a nation, necessitating remedial measures for recovery. Like a sick individual,

the economy is portrayed as weakened and in need of care to regain strength and energy. This ontological metaphor implies that the economy, much like a patient, cannot overcome its ailment without external assistance. Thus, the government assumes the role of a doctor tasked with administering the appropriate treatments to facilitate economic healing. This depiction emphasizes the urgency of addressing the crisis and underscores the government's responsibility to foster economic recovery.

- 3) "I can stand here with confidence and say that we have pulled this economy back from the brink."

In the statement "We have pulled this economy back from the brink," Obama uses an ontological metaphor to describe the economy as an object that can be physically pulled back from a dangerous edge. This metaphor imbues the abstract concept of the economy with tangible qualities, allowing people to conceptualize it as something concrete and susceptible to physical actions (Charteris-Black 2011, 78). By portraying the economy as an object on the brink of disaster, Obama emphasizes the precariousness of its situation and the urgency of intervention. This metaphorical framing suggests that concerted efforts were needed to prevent the economy from plunging into crisis, highlighting the importance of decisive action in stabilizing economic conditions.

## 7. THE ANALYSIS OF DONALD TRUMP'S SPEECHES

### 7.1. Donald Trump 2016 campaign kickoff speech

- 1) "They hate our values and they hate everything we prize as Americans, and we're right, because our country didn't grow great with them."

The conceptual metaphor COUNTRIES ARE PLANTS draws upon the metaphorical potential inherent in the concept of plants (Kövecses 2002, 89). Terms such as "grow," "flourish," and "root," originally associated with vegetation, have undergone semantic transformation and are now used metaphorically in contexts referring to countries and their development. Politicians, like Donald Trump, employ these metaphorical expressions to convey the idea of America's continuous growth and progress, not only economically but also in terms of democracy and strength. The phrase "our country didn't grow great with them" presupposes that countries, like plants, have the potential for growth and vitality.

- 2) "Whirlpool begged the Obama-Biden administration, but I don't want companies moving."

Corporations are considered legal entities, meaning that they, rather than the individuals involved in running or investing in them, are held accountable for their contractual agreements and wrongful actions. However, the concept of personhood attributed to corporations often extends beyond mere legal recognition. Describing a firm as a "person" serves as a rhetorical tool, justifying the treatment of the company as having inherent value separate from its utility to its stakeholders. By likening a company to a person in the phrase "I don't want companies moving", Trump indirectly suggests the ability to exert control and influence over its decisions. This metaphorical framework suggests that organizations possess characteristics akin to those

of individuals. Thus, the structural metaphor ORGANIZATION IS A PERSON / COMPANIES ARE PEOPLE is present in this example.

- 3) "I was brought up seeing my parents having to juggle their budget like the rest of us."

According to Kövecses (2010), different facets of political power can be understood by drawing parallels from domains like games and sports, business, and war. Ida Vestermark (2007) maintains that within the context of sports, politics is viewed as a competition regulated by specific rules, often involving two opposing sides. Political leaders strive to abide by these regulations to secure a fair outcome for all stakeholders. This metaphorical theme portrays the leader as resilient, akin to an athlete competing in a game. It also implies that the leader is alert to potential obstacles, treating politics as a strategic endeavor. When discussing a fair economy, Trump endeavors to persuade people that he is managing the crisis appropriately, transparently, and thoughtfully. The metaphor POLITICS IS A GAME suggests that politics operates similarly to a game, emphasizing strategy, fairness, and vigilance.

## 7.2. Shooting in Parkland, Florida 2018

- 1) "My fellow Americans, today I speak to a nation in grief."

In this statement, the ontological metaphor NATION IS A PERSON is utilized to personify the nation, assigning it human traits and feelings. By depicting the nation as undergoing grief, the speaker portrays it as though it were an individual experiencing mourning or profound sadness. This metaphor enables the speaker to elicit empathy and unity among the audience by encouraging them to empathize with the nation's emotional condition (Sawer 1996, 123). Moreover, it underscores the interconnection between the citizens and the collective entity of the nation, underscoring a shared sense of identity and inclusion. Overall, the metaphor aims to evoke an emotional reaction and underscore the seriousness of the issue at hand.

- 2) "No child, no teacher, should ever be in danger in an American school."

The concept of the CONTAINER image-schema encompasses an interior, an exterior, and a boundary, shaping its fundamental logic. This logic dictates that everything must reside either within or outside a container, and if container A is situated within container B, and B within C, then A is within C. According to Nayak and Mukerjee (2012), containment metaphors serve as a fundamental mechanism through which humans conceptualize abstract emotions. For instance, the expression "in danger" is regarded as a metaphor in which the emotion "danger" is perceived as a container. This illustrates an ontological metaphor where humans, emotions, actions, and activities are conceptualized as containers possessing boundaries and orientations of inclusion or exclusion.

- 3) "Our entire nation, with one heavy heart, is praying for the victims and their families."

The conceptual metaphor NATION IS A PERSON falls under the broader category of personification, as described by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Personification allows individuals to understand phenomena in terms that align with human motivations, goals, actions, and characteristics. Essentially, the nation is attributed with human-like actions, such as creating jobs, making promises, dealing with situations, and overcoming challenges

like illness. In this instance, Trump demonstrates his willingness to aid while portraying America as a unified entity experiencing grief and sorrow, with him offering prayers for the victims and their families.

### 7.3. State Union Speech

- 1) "Each day since, we have gone forward with a clear vision and a righteous mission -- to make America great again for all Americans."

The POLITICS IS A JOURNEY metaphor is rooted in the experience-based kinesthetic SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema proposed by Lakoff which conceptualizes the achievement of a goal as a journey along a path (2006, 275). Trump employs this structural metaphor to convey the progress and growth of America as a nation. Political decisions are depicted as the path towards achieving the ultimate goal or destination of the journey, shaped by the interests of the political party. Therefore, advancing along this path signifies success in reaching desired objectives, while stagnation or regression implies political failure.

- 2) "Now we want to rebuild our country, and that's exactly what we're doing."

The building metaphor draws from the conceptual framework of A COUNTRY IS A BUILDING. Building a structure entails significant resources such as materials, finances, and collaborative efforts from various individuals like architects and laborers. This analogy holds political relevance as it underscores the need for unity and perseverance to achieve collective objectives. In this context, Trump urges the American populace to commit to fostering the most prosperous and inclusive society. Through the prefix "re-", Trump subtly suggests that the previous administration left American society in disrepair, akin to a dilapidated building in need of urgent refurbishment. This narrative allows him to present himself favorably to the public while criticizing the shortcomings of the previous government.

- 3) "We endured floods and fires and storms. But through it all, we have seen the beauty of America's soul, and the steel in America's spine."

In the expression "the beauty of America's soul," Trump depicts America as a living entity with a soul of great beauty, employing an ontological metaphor to attribute human-like qualities to the nation. Furthermore, the metaphor NATION HAS A BODY attributes physical characteristics to America, characterizing it as both beautiful and adaptable. By doing so, Trump emphasizes the nation's strength and vitality, reinforcing a positive image of America's qualities.

## 8. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Obama demonstrates a high level of proficiency in using metaphors to convey his messages effectively. His speeches often convey a sense of optimism and hope for the future, reflected in his use of metaphors that emphasize progress, resilience, and potential. By framing political issues in positive terms and highlighting opportunities for growth and change, he inspires confidence and motivates action among his audience. Table 2 illustrates the overall count of metaphors found in Obama's speeches, as well as the breakdown of structural, ontological, and orientational metaphors.

**Table 2** Total number and distribution of metaphors in Obama's speeches

Speaker	Speech Title	Total Number of Metaphors	Number of Structural Metaphors	Number of Ontological Metaphors	Number of Orientational metaphors
Barack Obama	<i>A More Perfect Union</i> (2008)	28	20	8	0
Barack Obama	<i>Health Care Speech</i> (2009)	37	28	9	0
Barack Obama	<i>A New Beginning</i> (2009)	54	39	15	0

The combined count of metaphors in Barack Obama's speeches totaled 119, comprising 87 structural metaphors and 32 ontological metaphors. Notably, there were no orientational metaphors present in Obama's speeches. Specifically, his *A More Perfect Union* speech from 2008 contained a total of 28 metaphors, with 20 being structural and 8 being ontological. In his 2009 *Health Care Speech*, there were 37 metaphors in total, consisting of 28 structural and 9 ontological ones. Lastly, in his 2009 speech titled *A New Beginning*, there were 54 metaphors identified, with 39 being structural and 15 being ontological.

The analysis has revealed the following 6 main structural metaphors in his speeches: POLITICS IS A JOURNEY (40%), POLITICS IS LOVE (20%), AMERICA IS A PERSON (10%), POLITICS IS WAR (10%), ECONOMY IS A BUILDING (10%), OPPORTUNITIES ARE BEACONS (10%).

The most dominant metaphor that was used in Obama's speech at 40% of the overall pool of metaphors is the POLITICS IS A JOURNEY metaphor. By employing this metaphor, Obama views the unity and prosperity of America as the ultimate goal toward which his leadership journey is directed, with citizens acting as fellow travelers on the same path. The second dominant metaphor at 20% is the POLITICS IS LOVE metaphor which suggests that political unity, cohesion, and cooperation are analogous to the bonds found within loving relationships. In this metaphorical framework, the idea is that political interactions should be characterized by compassion, empathy, and mutual support, much like the dynamics of love within a family or community. The AMERICA IS A PERSON metaphor encompasses 10% of all the structural metaphors in Obama's speech. By likening America to a person, the public can better grasp the country's policies and endeavors through the lens of the president's actions and objectives, as suggested by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Obama employs the metaphor of POLITICS IS WAR (10%) to emphasize the challenges and conflicts faced in political endeavors. This portrayal positions Obama as a president who encourages his constituents to respond with civility and maintain unity during crises. Furthermore, Obama uses the ECONOMY IS A BUILDING (10%) metaphor to assure the public of the stability and strength of the economic foundation, especially during times of uncertainty or crisis. Finally, Obama has employed the OPPORTUNITIES ARE BEACONS (10%) metaphor to inspire hope and optimism among the American people, especially during times of economic uncertainty or social change. By portraying opportunities as beacons, he emphasizes the potential for individuals to overcome challenges and achieve their aspirations.

On the other hand, the ontological metaphors that Obama uses are the following four: NATION IS AN ENTITY (40%), ILLNESS IS AN ENTITY (30%), INFLATION IS AN ENTITY (20%), and EMOTIONS ARE CONTAINERS (10%). The most significant metaphor

that Obama utilizes is the NATION IS AN ENTITY metaphor which accounts for 40% of the total metaphor findings. By portraying the nation as a cohesive entity working towards shared progress and prosperity, this metaphor is used to emphasize the importance of national unity in addressing challenges. On the other hand, when discussing economic challenges or social issues, Obama employs the ILLNESS IS AN ENTITY metaphor, which stands at 30%, to characterize problems such as poverty, inequality, or unemployment as "illnesses" afflicting the nation. By framing these issues as tangible entities, he emphasizes the urgency of addressing them with targeted interventions and policies aimed at promoting recovery and well-being. When discussing the nation's monetary policy, Obama uses the INFLATION IS AN ENTITY (20%) metaphor to depict inflation as a distinct entity that poses risks to the economy so as to highlight the need for proactive measures to control inflationary pressures and maintain price stability. Finally, the EMOTIONS ARE CONTAINERS metaphor is the least dominant metaphor, encompassing 10% of the overall findings, and it is used to describe feelings such as hope, fear, or resilience as "containers" that influence people's perceptions, decisions, and actions. By framing emotions in this manner, he underscores the importance of emotional intelligence and empathy in addressing social challenges and fostering unity and understanding within society.

The total count of metaphors observed in Donald Trump's speeches amounts to 106, comprising 89 structural metaphors and 27 ontological metaphors. Notably, no orientational metaphors were identified in his speeches. Specifically, his 2016 Donald Trump Campaign Speech contained a total of 37 metaphors, with 20 being structural and 8 being ontological. In his 2018 speech addressing the shooting in Parkland, Florida, there were 32 metaphors identified, consisting of 21 structural and 10 ontological ones. Lastly, his 2018 State Union Speech contained 47 metaphors in total, with 38 being structural and 9 being ontological. Table 3 presents the total number of metaphors identified in Trump's speeches, along with the distribution of structural, ontological, and orientational metaphors.

**Table 3** Total number and distribution of metaphors in Trump's speeches

Speaker	Speech Title	Total Number of Metaphors	Structural Metaphors	Ontological Metaphors	Orientalational Metaphors
Donald J. Trump	<i>Donald Trump 2016 campaign</i> (2016)	37	30	8	0
Donald J. Trump	<i>Shooting in Parkland, Florida</i> (2018)	32	21	10	0
Donald J. Trump	<i>State Union Speech</i> (2018)	47	38	9	0

The analysis of Donald Trump's speeches reveals a strategic and deliberate use of metaphorical language to convey his messages and shape public perception. Through a combination of personification, ontological, and structural metaphors, Trump effectively simplifies complex political concepts, making them more accessible and relatable to his audience. The analysis has revealed the following 7 main structural metaphors present in his speeches: POLITICS IS WAR (30%), POLITICS IS A JOURNEY (20%), TAXES ARE PAIN (20%), POLITICS IS A GAME (15%), HISTORY IS WAR (10%), CRISES ARE FOES (5%), COUNTRIES ARE PLANTS (5%), and ARGUMENT IS WAR (5%).

The most common metaphor to appear in Trump's speeches is the POLITICS IS WAR metaphor, constituting 30% of the overall data. By using this metaphor, Trump portrays political adversaries as enemies in a battle for control or dominance and highlights the importance of strategy, tactics, and winning in the field of politics. The second most frequent metaphor is the POLITICS IS A JOURNEY metaphor at 20%. This metaphor is used to portray Trump's political campaign as a journey toward achieving specific goals or objectives. By employing this metaphor, Trump emphasizes the progress that he made and the challenges that he faced, so as to rally supporters around the idea of moving forward together towards a common destination. By using the TAXES ARE PAIN (20%) metaphorical framework, Trump depicts taxes as burdensome, unpleasant, or even harmful to individuals or businesses. This comparison implies that the process of taxation causes negative feelings or hardships similar to those experienced when one is in pain. In addition, he employs the POLITICS IS A GAME (15%) metaphor to characterize political competition as a strategic game where different players vie for power, influence, and victory. The HISTORY IS WAR metaphor stands at 10% of the total metaphor data. This metaphor is used to draw parallels between historical conflicts and contemporary challenges, emphasizing the importance of strength, resilience, and determination in overcoming adversity. Furthermore, by embedding the CRISES ARE FOES (5%) metaphor in his political speeches, Trump influences how the public perceives the issues America is confronting as well as the course of actions that the president is advocating. The COUNTRIES ARE PLANTS metaphor also accounts for 5% of the findings, and is used to depict countries as entities capable of growth, development, and vitality. Finally, by framing argument as war in the ARGUMENT IS WAR (5%) metaphor, Trump emphasizes the importance of assertiveness, strength, and winning, appealing to his supporters' desire for victory and dominance in political discourse.

The most common ontological metaphors that appear in Trump's speeches are the following three: NATION HAS A BODY (50%), EMOTIONS ARE CONTAINERS (30%), and ORGANIZATION IS A PERSON (20%). Utilizing the metaphor of the nation as a sentient entity, capable of summoning, calling, judging, and feeling, serves as a persuasive rhetorical strategy, attributing justification to presidential actions. The NATION HAS A BODY metaphor effectively portrays the country as a cohesive entity whose actions and emotions mirror the motivations and directives of its leaders. Notably, this metaphor accounts for 50% of all metaphorical data, emphasizing its widespread usage. According to Landtsheer et al. (2008), the act of voting is often driven more by emotional impulses than rational thought processes. Portraying America as a body in need of a political leader who can act as a mender and a caretaker resonates deeply with individuals, as good health is universally cherished as a fundamental element of happiness. In addition, Trump often relies on the EMOTIONS ARE CONTAINERS (30%) metaphor to highlight that emotions such as fear, anger, or patriotism are contained within individuals or groups, and to suggest that these emotions can be contained, controlled, or unleashed as needed. Finally, the third most common ontological metaphor in Trump's speeches is the ORGANIZATION IS A PERSON metaphor at 20%. It is used to attribute human-like characteristics to organizations or institutions. By portraying organizations as persons, Trump imbues them with qualities such as responsibility or corruption, depending on his rhetorical goals.

## 9. CONCLUSION

This paper has analyzed three political speeches given by Barack Obama and three political speeches given by Donald J. Trump. The findings indicate that Both Obama and Trump employ metaphorical language to convey their messages, but they do so in different ways reflecting their distinct leadership styles and communication strategies. Obama tends to use metaphors that evoke optimism and progress, aligning with his message of hope and inclusivity. It can be argued that Obama takes a personal and intimate approach to understanding America. He sees the nation as an individual entity with the ability to hold him accountable, make judgments, and beckon him into action. As a result, Obama holds a deep reverence and affection for this personified version of the country, fostering a relationship characterized by close connection and mutual interaction. In contrast, Trump's metaphors often emphasize competition, strength, and victory, reflecting his confrontational and assertive approach to leadership. Trump perceives America as a determined figure capable of conquering any obstacle, imbuing his speeches with a sense of pridefulness.

The analysis also reveals differences in the frequency and dominance of metaphors between the two leaders. Obama's speeches are characterized by a more balanced distribution of metaphors, with no single metaphor dominating the discourse. In contrast, Trump's speeches exhibit a more concentrated usage of certain metaphors, particularly the POLITICS IS WAR metaphor, which appears most frequently. This suggests a more consistent rhetorical theme in Trump's communication. Furthermore, both leaders employ a combination of ontological and structural metaphors, with structural metaphors being the prevailing type of metaphors they use. It should be noted that there are also differences in the types of metaphors both presidents emphasize. Obama tends to utilize ontological metaphors, such as NATION HAS A BODY and ILLNESS IS AN ENTITY, alongside structural ones. Trump, on the other hand, leans more towards structural metaphors in his speeches such as the POLITICS IS WAR and POLITICS IS A GAME, which reflect his focus on competition and progress. Additionally, neither Obama nor Trump employ orientational metaphors in their speeches.

The present study acknowledges that it may not capture and analyze all metaphors present in the two speeches in a comprehensive manner. Moreover, the identification of metaphors can vary from person to person. What one individual perceives and categorizes as a metaphor might not be recognized as such by another, and vice versa. Consequently, it is essential to recognize that the audience's demographic composition, values, and political affiliations can impact how metaphors are perceived and interpreted. Charteris-Black (2018) suggests that differences in metaphor processing among individuals are influenced by their awareness of resemblances and historical connotations associated with words, which shape how these words are interpreted metaphorically. Thus, by understanding the audience's perspectives and preferences, presidents can effectively employ metaphors to connect with and persuade their listeners.

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## **UPOTREBA METAFORA U POLITIČKIM GOVORIMA: METAFORE U GOVORIMA BARAKA OBAME I DONALDA TRAMPA**

*Politika je borba za vlast sa ciljem sprovođenja političkih ideja u delo. Kada drže govor, političari žele da privuku pažnju javnosti svim raspoloživim sredstvima. Jezik koji koriste ima za cilj da mobilise birače, da ubedi neodlučne i da napadne političke protivnike. Iz tog razloga se figurativni jezik često pojavljuje u političkim govorima. Metaforom kao lingvističkim sredstvom može se manipulirati i iz pragmatičnih i iz strateških razloga. Metafore koje se susreću u političkim govorima omogućavaju ljudima da shvate složene koncepte tako što ih povezuju sa našim telesnim iskustvima i fizičkim čulima. Iz tog razloga metafore doprinose našem razumevanju političkih pitanja. Ova studija ima za cilj da istraži način na koji političari prenose poruke i ideje upotrebom različitih tipova metafora: ontoloških, strukturalnih i orijentacionih. Da bi se postigao ovaj cilj, ova studija će analizirati tri govora Baraka Obame datih između 2008. i 2009. godine i tri govora Donalda Trampa datih između 2016. i 2018. godine, koristeći model studije koji su predložili Lejkof i Džonson (1980).*

Ključne reči: *politički diskurs, kognitivna lingvistika, metafora, američka politika*