CONCLUSION

A journey through variation in political metaphor

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The concluding chapter discusses political, linguistic, psychological, and methodological dimensions related to the study of political metaphor. It highlights common themes discussed in the primary chapters, noting points of convergence in the research questions being investigated, the methods used to investigate them, and the findings they reveal. In synthesizing some of these contributions, we hope to point towards potentially fruitful avenues of future research.

Books are journeys. This one started with a set of questions. What can we learn about the nature of politics, culture, society, and language by studying political discourse – by focusing on how political actors use metaphors in the real world? To address these questions, our tour guides chart a course through a multitude of political metaphors from a variety of countries, an assortment of political leaders, and an array of political situations.

The excursions are authentic. They are authentic in the sense that they focus on real-world data; that they grapple with issues central to the interdisciplinary endeavor; that they find *variation*. There is variation in the socio-cultural context in which political metaphors are used, as well as the characteristics and goals of the political actors who use them. And there is variation in how metaphors are expressed – in written and spoken language, but also in images and gestures. In turn, all of these sources of variation affect the meaning, function, and impact of political metaphors. In our view, this collective message – that there is no simple story to tell about what metaphors mean, how they function, or how they are expressed in real world political discourse – is also authentic. The topic of political metaphor is nuanced; it's complicated; it resists a simple conclusive story because metaphors serve many roles in politics.

We have been eager travelers on this journey and have learned a lot along the way. In this conclusion, we note some points of intersection across the chapters – in the research questions they investigate, the types of metaphors and political

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situations they explore, and insights they reveal. We also highlight some of the methodological innovations and contributions they make. In doing so, we hope to point the way towards fruitful avenues for future research.

1. Political dimensions

Metaphor is ubiquitous in political discourse. This, however, is not what makes political discourse special. Metaphor is ubiquitous in all discourse. Political discourse is special because politics is special. It is special insofar as politics deals with the big question of how do we – best – live together? Politics is about power and how we can influence one another. Defined in terms of power relationships, politics and therefore any discourse related to it is a fertile ground for metaphors, which have the potential to be highly persuasive tools. In Ancient Greece, Artistole in *The Politics* (1984) had already noted this power of metaphors in politics. All chapters in this volume also show that metaphors are intrinsically linked to power and a motivation to persuade. When Heyvaert (Chapter 2) recalls the metaphor of the Belgian Prime Minister describing himself as a ship captain and the response of the opposition lead who says that he does not buy it, we have a telling example of how political metaphors seek to persuade an audience.

In the introduction of this book, we noted in the wake of Musolff's *Political Metaphor Analysis: Discourse and Scenarios* (2016) that what is so distinctive with metaphors in political discourse is their variation. That is, that the same metaphor may bear different meanings and can therefore be used for very different purposes. Focusing on one single metaphor, WAR, Ahrens (Chapter 1) shows that Hilary Clinton, in her different roles, chooses her battles carefully and uses figurative language to gain support for the causes that are important to her. While Ahrens studies the variation within one source domain, Kovář (Chapter 7) takes another stance and explores the variation within one target domain: the European Union's political finality (*finalité européenne*). On this basis, he demonstrates how three main source domains are used – CONTAINER (supranational), EQUILIBRIUM (intergovernmental politics), MOTION (multi-level governance) – in Czech political parties' election manifestos issued for the 2004, 2009, and 2014 European parliament elections. From these two chapters as well as the other contributions, it is quite clear that political metaphors vary significantly both in source domains and in target domains and that this political variation follows a political purpose.

The question that remains for further research is therefore the following: while it is established that there is much variation on the production side (that is how and why we produce metaphors in the political discourse), do we find a similar variation on the reception side (that is how we understand metaphors in political

discourse)? In classical CMT and CDA, such impact is often taken for granted (Perrez & Reuchamps 2015): political discourse matters, so it must influence people. Thibodeau and colleagues (Chapter 8) propose to dig into this important question by comparing discourse analysis and experimental methods. They show that both have their inherent logic, with more similarities than one might imagine. Both approaches can clearly shed light on the influence of political metaphors. It is not so much the question of whether political metaphors matter politically, but how and when.

This volume has sought to address a series of questions on the basis of large amount of empirical data. In total, the corpora used in this book amount to over two million words. This is the way to go in the analysis of political metaphors if one wants to take seriously the study of the political influence of political metaphors. If metaphors matter politically, do they matter linguistically? This is the next question that we should discuss when bringing this book to a draw.

2. Linguistic dimensions

Metaphors play a prominent role in political discourse (see, among many others, Charteris-Black 2011, 2014, Lakoff 1996; Musolff 2004, 2016). The central question of this book is therefore not so much to what extent we will find metaphors in political discourse but rather to determine who produces a metaphor in a particular context and why. Or as Charteris-Black (2014: 174) framed it: to understand "*which* metaphors are chosen in persuasive genres such as political speeches, party political manifestos or press reports, and attempts to explain *why* these metaphors are chosen." From a linguistic perspective, this means that we focus on the pragmatic dimension of metaphor usage in political discourse, seeking to capture their communicative potential. Several chapters present semiotic analyses aiming at identifying and categorizing metaphors in political corpora and trying to relate them to the contexts in which they have been produced. A first way in which the communicative potential has been addressed in this volume is in trying to determine which source and target domains are mobilized in a wide range of different political contexts and how these domains relate to larger scenarios and ideologies. Of particular relevance for the communicative potential of metaphors, is the Deliberate Metaphor Theory (DMT) framework developed by Steen (2008), in which a distinction is made between metaphors at the linguistic, conceptual and communicative levels. Distinguishing deliberate from non-deliberate metaphors at the communicative level makes it possible to appreciate the varying nature of metaphors in discourse. For instance, it helps to account for the distinction between, on the one hand, the metaphors that are part of our everyday language and that are

spontaneously mobilized to talk about certain abstract issues, including political ones, and that covertly construct larger networks of interrelated meanings, and, on the other hand, those metaphors that have presumably been used deliberately as metaphors by a political actor to achieve a rhetorical function (to convince an audience, to dismiss an opponent, to strip a minister of all credibility). The relevance of DMT for political discourse analysis has been illustrated by Heyvaert (Chapter 2), who showed for instance how such deliberate metaphors prompt the audience to frame their reactions in terms of the same metaphorical mapping. It is also suggested by Ahrens (Chapter 1) and Fenton-Smith (Chapter 4). A key question regarding potentially deliberate metaphors is to understand to what extent they are intended to express one's vision of a given political situation, and/or to what extent they are produced as rhetorical expressions that are part of the stylistic characteristics of political discourse.

Another way in which the communicative dimension of political metaphor has been addressed in this volume is by assessing how metaphor usage evolves through political context. In this regard, most of the studies of this volume are based on corpora presenting longitudinal characteristics, either evolving through time (see for instance Heyvaert's analysis of Belgian policy statements from 2006 to 2016, Kovář's analysis of Czech party manifesto's for the 2004, 2009 and 2014 European Parliament elections or Benton-Smith's study of speeches given in the aftermath of political deposals in Australian federal politics during the period 1985–2015) or political function (see for instance Ahrens's study of Hilary Clinton's use of WAR metaphors during her different political functions, Ströbel's analysis of the speeches of Macron and Trump respectively as presidential candidates and elected presidents or Borčić & Čulo's study of TV interviews of Ivo Josipović through his different political roles). This longitudinal perspective on metaphor usage in political discourse makes it possible to understand how and why metaphors emerge in given political contexts. Typically, metaphors tend to emerge in contexts of political crisis, which could be economic, as found by Vogiatzis, or institutional, as found by Heyvaert. Other factors that lead to the emergence of metaphors are the need for constructing and legitimizing one's political identity (see for instance Fenton-Smith, Borčić & Čulo), or the particular political function one is fulfilling (see Ahrens, Ströbel).

There are two ways to look forward from here. A first avenue for future research would consist in broadening the scope of linguistic expressions that have been analyzed in political discourse. Twardzisz (2013: 50) pointed to "the politicization of metaphor research". Inverting this claim, one could also suggest that metaphors have been overrepresented in the study of political discourse, what could be seen as an "over-metaphorization" of political discourse analysis. Beyond metaphor, irony and hyperbole (see for instance Burgers et al., 2018), one could also pay attention

to other forms of figurative analogy, such as the one presented in Examples (1), (2) and (3) below.

(1) Een professor van de KU Leuven ziet gelijkenissen met de komische BBC-reeks *Keeping Up Appearances*, waar de hoofdfiguur bijzonder creatief te werk gaat om de schone schijn op te houden. Hoewel de begroting al jaren een tekort vertoont, benadrukt de Belgische regering steevast dat de begroting in evenwicht is. De schone schijn van de Belgische regering kost evenwel een bom geld aan de belastingbetaler. (Patrick de Groote, 2006)[1]

Eng. A professor of the KU Leuven sees similarities with the BBC sitcom *Keeping Up Appearances* where the central character is particularly talented in keeping up appearances. Although the budget has been showing a deficit for years, the Belgian government firmly maintains that the budget is balanced. The façade of the Belgian government, however, costs a bomb to the taxpayer.

In Example (1), taken from Pauline Heyvaert's corpus of Belgian Policy Statements (see Chapter 2), parliament member Patrick de Groote explicitly compares the way the government deals with the federal budget to the BBC sitcom *Keeping Up Appearances*. Although this would not count as a prototypical metaphor, in that the mapping does not occur between two conceptual domains, but between one conceptual domain and a TV series, such intertextual references, which appear to be typical of some forms of political discourse, show similarities with the function of metaphors in political discourse. On the one hand, they make it possible to frame our understanding of a given political issue. On the other, at the communicative level, they show common rhetorical features with deliberate metaphors. For example, they can be used to strengthen an argument aiming at convincing an audience or dismissing an opponent.

(2) Bart De Wever stelt dat ons land '**Walloniseert**' bij gebrek aan echte hervormingen. (*Het Laatste Nieuws*, 28/10/12)

Eng. Bart De Wever claims that our country is '**Wallonizing**' [= becoming like Wallonia] through lack of real reforms.

(3) SP.A-voorzitter Bruno Tobback vindt de uitspraken van Bart De Wever over de '**wallonisering**' van de economie 'beledigend en onjuist' (*De Standaard*, 29/10/2012)

Eng. SP.-A chairman Bruno Tobback considers Bart De Wever's claims on the '**wallonization**' of the economy as 'offensive and unfair'

1. Source: https://www.lachambre.be/doc/PCRA/pdf/53/ap057.pdf. We kindly thank Pauline Heyvaert for sharing this example with us and allowing us to use it in our conclusion.

Examples (2) and (3) are instances of a neologism coined by NVA-leader Bart De Wever, formally derived from the proper name Wallonia, to suggest the political and economic situation of the country is becoming worse and worse due to the negative influence of one of its parts. With these neologisms, De Wever attempts to impose a particular vision according to which negative characteristics he attributes to Wallonia are applied to the whole country. As is the case with metaphor, this suggests the negative perception of the functioning of Wallonia would be mapped onto the country as a whole. However, such figurative analogies would not be identified as regular metaphors in that the mapping is not realized by two different lexical units but within one single one. But they appear as particularly relevant for the analysis of political discourse (see for instance Goatly 1996).

Another way forward would be to expand on the notion of political discourse. Indeed, in most linguistic research, this notion has been used as one internally coherent concept, but in the practice, it appears that this label has been used to refer to very different types of discourses (cf. Perrez, Randour and Reuchamps, forthcoming), varying as well as far as the medium is concerned (see for instance party manifesto's vs. political speeches, newspaper interviews vs. television debates) as the producer and the audience (for instance political actors speaking to other political actors, see Heyvaert's corpus; political actors talking to the citizens, see Vogiatzis and Borčić & Čulo's respective corpora; media discourse on political issues, as in Musolff 2004; or citizens talking to each other, see for instance Perrez & Reuchamps 2014). It would be interesting to describe the linguistic characteristics of such political discourses in order to determine how they relate to each other to what extent political discourse can be regarded as a proper genre. Furthermore, it would be interesting to consider metaphor variation among these subtypes of political discourses. For instance, do metaphors occur more frequently in parliamentary discourse than in television debates or focus group discussions? But also, does one metaphor circulate among various kinds of political discourse?

3. Psychological dimensions

The chapters also highlight a number of psychological functions of metaphor. One psychological function of metaphor is conceptual: metaphors allow people to represent and reason about complex issues and abstract ideas (Boroditsky 2000; Gibbs 1994; Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Thibodeau, Hendricks & Boroditsky 2017). Psychologists often distinguish between concrete concepts like BIRD and YELLOW, which people can learn about from direct perceptual experience, and abstract concepts like TRADE and TIME, that are more elusive (Boroditsky 2000). Metaphor is a

tool for helping people learn and reason about more complex and abstract concepts. For example, international trade is a complex socio-political issue that is difficult to conceptualize and reason about without the help of simplifying representations like metaphors.

Psychological experiments have shown that metaphorically framing issues like trade affects how people think about them. In one study, participants who read that international trade was a WAR were more likely to support a plan to implement trade tariffs than participants who read that international trade was a TWO-WAY STREET (Robins & Mayer 2000). These two metaphors suggest very different ways of thinking about international trade: the WAR metaphor highlights competition – and suggests that tariffs are important for protecting a country's economic interests; the TWO-WAY STREET metaphor highlights cooperation – and suggests that tariffs prevent countries from developing productive working relationships. In this example, metaphors affect how people construe and make inferences about international trade policies.

Because metaphors serve this conceptual function, observing patterns of metaphor use or asking people to identify their preferred metaphor for an issue can reveal how people think about that issue. For example, in one study, participants were asked to select between two common metaphors for policing – police officers are WARRIORS versus GUARDIANS – before answering a series of questions about their attitudes towards police officers. The metaphor that participants chose was highly predictive of their attitudes. Preference for the GUARDIAN metaphor was associated with a much more positive view of policing (Thibodeau, Crow & Flusberg 2017). In another study, participants were asked whether they identify, metaphorically, more with their HEAD or HEART before completing personality measures, answering general knowledge questions, and making decisions about a series of moral dilemmas. People who identified with their HEAD were more rational and interpersonally cold on the personality measures, answered more of the general knowledge questions correctly and suggested more utilitarian responses to the moral dilemmas (Fetterman & Robinson 2013).

In this way, metaphors can be a window into how people conceptualize topics. Several of the analyses in this book investigate patterns of metaphor usage to reveal how a political actor or party conceptualizes an issue. This can be seen clearly in Kovář's (Chapter 7) analysis of Czech political party manifestos. Different metaphors for the European Union – as an EQUILIBRIUM, CONTAINER, or in MOTION – emphasize different roles for the international body; and, as a result, reveal different ways that the political parties think about the EU. Ahrens (Chapter 1), Borčić and Čulo (Chapter 3), Fenton-Smith (Chapter 4), and Ströbel (Chapter 6) similarly analyze metaphor from this perspective: as a window into how political actors think.

In the psychological literature on metaphor processing, a distinction is made between conventional and novel metaphors (Bowdle & Gentner 2005). Novel metaphors are more cognitively effortful to process. This may make them especially useful political devices – an issue discussed by, for example, Fenton-Smith (Chapter 4). However, conventional metaphors can also engage listeners and influence how people think (Robins & Mayer 2000; Thibodeau, Hendricks, & Boroditsky 2017). Ströbel (Chapter 6) highlights some of the reasons that conventional metaphors are effective: because they can lead people to engage in a process of sensorimotor simulation.

In some cases, the most salient feature of a metaphor is its emotional valence (Citron & Goldberg 2014; Johnson & Taylor 1981). For instance, describing the flu metaphorically, as a *beast*, *riot*, *army*, or *weed* casts the flu in an especially negative and urgent light. One study found that describing the flu with one of these metaphors, rather than comparable literal language, made people more likely to get a flu shot (Sherer, Sherer, & Fagerlin 2015).

Several of the analyses in this book emphasize the role that metaphors serve in helping to establish an emotional tone. This can be seen clearly in Vogiatzis' (Chapter 5) analysis of the metaphors used by the Greek Prime Minister during the financial crisis. Positive metaphors were used to convey a hopeful economic message for the future, despite the widespread unpopularity of the austere economic policies that Greece was forced to adopt at the time. Indeed, several of the chapters in this book discuss the role of political metaphor in setting an emotional tone, including Borčić and Čulo (Chapter 3), Fenton-Smith (Chapter 4), and Ströbel (Chapter 6).

In addition to making complex issues conceptually tractable and emotionally salient, there is a pragmatic, or communicative, dimension to metaphor that moderates their influence. Metaphors that are used deliberately, for example, may be especially persuasive (Perrez & Reuchamps 2014; Steen 2008). Heyvaert (Chapter 2) explores some of the conditions that give rise to the use of deliberate metaphors: namely, unstable political landscapes. Most, if not all, of the chapters discuss how metaphors are used intentionally in a political context – to achieve specific persuasive and rhetorical functions.

Moving forward, there are abundant opportunities to study the psychological dimension of political metaphor. Questions about how people process political metaphors and the factors that moderate the potency of political metaphors are largely psychological in nature. The analyses presented in this volume highlight a number of distinctions between types of metaphors – deliberate vs. non-deliberate, novel vs. conventional, positive vs. negative, etc. They also show that variation in the production of metaphors is linked to the role of political actors and the political situations of countries. Psychological studies can play an important role in helping researchers understand how these factors affect people on an individual level.

4. Methodological dimensions

Political metaphor is an interdisciplinary topic of inquiry, touching on questions at the heart of political science, psychology, linguistics, sociology, anthropology, and more. As a result, it is investigated with a variety of methods. These methods often have distinct, but overlapping, goals, theoretical commitments, strengths, and limitations. Chapter 8 compares two: Critical Discourse Analysis and experiments. It reflects on some of the ways that the underlying logic and mechanics of the two approaches are similar and different, arguing that both make valuable contributions to our understanding of political metaphor – in related but different ways. In short, some research questions are better suited to investigation with critical discourse analysis; others are better suited to investigation with experiments; embracing the strengths and limitations of both can help advance our theoretical and practical understanding of political metaphor.

Most of the chapters in the book, though, use critical discourse analysis to investigate the meaning, structure and function of political metaphor. Critical discourse analysis views language as a form of social practice that helps to establish and maintain social power structures (Fairclough 2013; Musolff 2016). Scholars engaged in critical discourse analysis, therefore, focus on real world patterns of language use, real world political actors, real world political situations, and real-world consequences.

A starting point for the book is the observation that there is incredible variation in political metaphor. The central question of the book is why. What functions do political metaphors serve? How do they get their meaning? How are they expressed?

The chapters focus on different types of political metaphors, used by different political actors, in different countries. Nevertheless, there is a notable overlap in the specific research questions that are explored. For example, several chapters investigate how the role of a political actor affects their use of metaphor. Ahrens (Chapter 1) focuses on Hillary Clinton, contrasting her use of WAR metaphors in the speeches she gave as First Lady, as a Senator, and as a candidate for President of the United States. Borčić and Čulo (Chapter 3) examine Ivo Josipović's use of metaphor in TV interviews before, during, and after he served as President of Croatia. Ströbel (Chapter 6) contrasts the sensorimotor based concepts used by Donald Trump and Emmanuel Macron before and after their elections as Presidents of the United States in 2016 and France in 2017, respectively.

The types of discourse that are analyzed in these three chapters differ. Ahrens develops a compressive corpus of public speeches given by Hillary Clinton from 1992 to 2008. Borčić & Čulo consider four interviews from popular TV show. Ströbel finds examples of sensorimotor based concepts in speeches given in the immediate run up to and aftermath of the 2016 and 2017 presidential elections.

The units of analysis also differ. Ahrens quantifies Clinton's use of WAR metaphors. Borčić & Čulo quantify Josipović's use of personifying metaphors. Ströbel emphasizes sensorimotor based concepts. However, the three analyses reach similar conclusions: that a political actor's goals are shaped by their role, which, in turn, affect how they use metaphor to persuade, inform, and motive the public. In other words, these chapters suggest that one cause of variation in political metaphor can be traced to the speaker's political role.

Similarly, a number of chapters investigate how a country's political situation affects the use of metaphor. Heyvaert (Chapter 2) shows how deliberate metaphors are more common in times of political turmoil by focusing on policy statements by Belgian political leaders. Fenton-Smith (Chapter 4) identifies common metaphor scenarios in Australian disposal speeches and shows how they help manage the transfer of power. Vogiatzis (Chapter 5) analyzes five speeches given by the Prime Minister of Greece to describe the state of the economy, how specific policies will achieve important goals in the long-run, and the role of prime minister in the process. Finally, Kovář (Chapter 7) considers how the metaphors used in party manifestos about the European Union's political finality reflect different attitudes towards and conceptions of the complex political landscape.

Again, these studies develop and analyze different types of political discourse, support their arguments with different types of evidence, and emphasize different functions of political metaphor. However, an important high-level take-away message from all four of these chapters is that political situations shape the goals of political actors, which, in turn, shape how political metaphors are used. That is, another source of variation in political metaphor can be traced to the socio-political environment in which the discourse unfolds.

There are also a number of research questions that are unique to specific chapters, which reveal additional sources of variation in political metaphor. Some of these sources of variation include: the gender of the speaker (Ahrens, Chapter 1); the audience for the speech/discourse – for instance, whether the speech is intended for other political elites versus the general public (Heyvaert, Chapter 2; Fenton-Smith, Chapter 4); and the intended function of the metaphor. For example, in some cases political actors use metaphors to help construct and maintain their political image (Borčić & Čulo, Chapter 3), to set an emotional tone for an unpopular economic policy (Vogiatzis, Chapter 5), to trigger a mental simulation (Ströbel, Chapter 6), or help listeners conceptualize a complex issue (Kovář, Chapter 7).

The methodological tools developed and used by the analyses in this volume lay a foundation for future research. Indeed, one important contribution of this volume is to raise new questions about the role of metaphor in politics. For example, there are questions about the generality of the findings. Do patterns of metaphor usage that are identified with one political actor, country, or socio-political situation

emerge with other political actors, countries, and situations, as well? Another important contribution of this volume relates to the data that has been collected in the service of conducting the analyses, which have the potential to be analyzed in other ways in order to address further questions about variation in political metaphor. Finally, the methodological choices that are made in the primary analyses of the volume can serve as a model for future research: choices about the types of metaphors studied, the units of analysis, and the way in which patterns of metaphor use are interpreted.

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