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# Conceptualising presidential elections

## Competing metaphorical models, and alternative approaches to their critical analysis

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This contribution investigates the metaphorical conceptualisation of US-presidential elections. A solid onomasiological metaphor study (cf. Jäkel 2003) brings out alternative and even competing models. One point of this paper is to decide which approach to the analysis of political metaphor is better suited for a critical discourse analysis: Steen's (2008, 2011a) concept of *deliberate metaphor* on the one hand, or Charteris-Black's (2012) *purposeful metaphor* on the other hand. This is discussed on the basis of authentic discourse data from the US-presidential campaign of 2016 and the 2018 midterm elections. Following a concise analysis of some conventional metaphors instating standard alternative models in the public media domain, Donald Trump's and Hillary Clinton's uses of metaphor are compared to results of an investigation of former US-president Barack Obama's metaphorical language in a corpus of eight of his major speeches held between 2008 and 2012 (cf. Jäkel 2012).

**Keywords:** purposeful/deliberate metaphor, political discourse, onomasiological metaphor analysis, critical discourse analysis, presidential elections

### 1. Introduction

The hypothesis that highly abstract domains of discourse are prone to some experiential grounding via systematic metaphorical mappings from some more concrete source domains is one of the central tenets of the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor, alternatively called Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1993; cf. Jäkel 2003). The language of politics certainly constitutes a highly abstract domain, and thus lends itself to an investigation of the metaphorical use of certain lexemes, which, if systematic, can be analysed as motivated

by conceptual metaphors. Such onomasiological metaphor analysis (Jäkel 2003) therefore can contribute to a cognitively motivated critical discourse analysis of the language of politics (cf. Jäkel 2012). This contribution will focus on one particular issue of US-American politics: the presidential elections and midterm elections, and the language used by politicians and their commentators in the public media domain to talk about them. It will be argued that based on a solid onomasiological analysis, we can find alternative and even competing metaphorical models of political elections. Apart from well-known examples like *THE ELECTION AS A WAR*, or *THE ELECTION AS A CROSSROADS*, we will analyse such alternative conceptualisations of *THE ELECTION AS A LAWSUIT* versus *THE ELECTION AS A JOB INTERVIEW*, as exemplified in authentic discourse data from the US-presidential campaign of 2016, and the 2018 midterm elections.

One additional theoretical point of this paper is to decide which approach to the analysis of political metaphor is better suited for a critical discourse analysis: Steen's (2008, 2011a, 2011b) concept of *deliberate metaphor* on the one hand, or Charteris-Black's (2011, 2012) *purposeful metaphor* on the other hand. This will be discussed on the basis of authentic discourse data from the US-presidential campaign of 2016, and the 2018 midterm elections. Donald Trump's and Hillary Clinton's uses of metaphor will also be compared to results of an investigation of former US-president Barack Obama's metaphorical language in a corpus of eight of his major speeches held between 2008 and 2012 (cf. Jäkel 2012). The comparison with Obama's use of metaphor is intended to help in getting a firmer grip on the issue of deliberateness or purpose of fully contextualised metaphorical language in a larger corpus (about 44,000 words) of authentic language. All of the rhetorically motivated metaphors in this investigation have mainly persuasive functions: e.g., convincing the audience, generating pathos, creating consensus and confidence, or avoiding precision.

The structure of this paper can be outlined in short like this: I will start with an analytical section (2.) on some standard alternative metaphors conceptualising presidential elections. I will then (3.) interpolate a short theoretical discussion of the preferred model for the analysis of non-standard metaphors in political rhetoric as deliberate or purposeful. This will be followed by more detailed analyses of competing metaphorical models conceptualising presidential elections, with section (4.) focussing on the 2016 contestants Trump versus Clinton. Section (5.) on Obama's use of metaphor will include the results from a corpus study of eight of his speeches. The paper will end with a short summary and conclusion.

## 2. Conceptualising presidential elections: Some standard alternative metaphors

In discourse about US-American elections, we can find some highly conventional metaphors in the context of talking about states and their alleged, predicted or actual voting results. This section will analyse the four compound nouns or noun phrases *swing state*, *toss-up state*, *battleground state*, and *purple state*, all of which are near-synonyms, and any of which can serve as antonym to the label of *safe state*. *Safe states* have been won by one and the same of the two major parties for years on end. If this is not the case, any of the four alternative labels mentioned can be applied. In all of these nominal constructions, the first constituent receives a metaphorical sense through being combined with the head *state* as its co-text (cf. Jäkel 2003: 44, 127). None of these metaphors is creative or novel, but all have to be regarded instead as utterly conventional ways of talking about elections and their outcomes.

The examples in this section are all taken from the public news coverage on television and in newspapers in the run-up to the midterm elections of 2018; sources are indicated. It will be argued that each of the four linguistic metaphors is based on a different conceptual model of political elections. Moreover, the underlying metaphors carry different implications, which in some cases even contradict those of competing models. However, it will be argued that none of these ways of talking about political elections seems to suggest that we are dealing with conscious choices made by rhetorically aware speakers. Here are some exemplifications:

- (1) Those *swing* states are absolutely vital. [CNN, 7/4/2018]
- (2) Why Virginia is still a *swing* state. [NBC Washington, 11/9/2017]

Without having made an exact count, the term *swing state* (Examples (1), (2)), which came to be used in the 1960s, is in all likelihood still the most frequently used of the four terms.<sup>1</sup> The underlying conceptual model of *swing* states sees ELECTIONS as a PENDULUM, and POLITICS as a CLOCKWORK. The image-schematic idea is that of a kind of mechanism which is characterised by some regular motion to and fro. The mapping of that regular pattern to the target domain of POLITICAL ELECTIONS results in the implication that the outcome of the elections is almost predictable: Like the pendulum that will swing from one side to the other and

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1. This observation is confirmed by a check of the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA), which yields the following frequency counts: *swing state(s)* 2639, followed by *battleground state(s)* 1693, *purple state(s)* 107, and *toss-up state(s)* 55.

back, the voting results from a *swing* state will rather swing in the opposite direction from the one taken in the previous election.

Though denotationally synonymous, the term *toss-up state*, in comparison, exemplifies an alternative conceptual metaphor, which conceives of ELECTIONS as a LOTTERY, and POLITICS AS A GAMBLING GAME (Examples (3), (4)):

- (3) New Mexico is no longer considered a *toss-up* state. [CNN, 1/17/2018]  
 (4) Florida now a *toss-up*. [CNN headline, 4/10/2018]

Motivated by the image of the actual tossing of a coin in order to make a decision, the idea here is that of sheer luck, and a chance result. In marked contrast to the previously discussed model, the mapping of the coin flip to the target domain of POLITICAL ELECTIONS results in the implication that the outcome of the elections is completely unpredictable. The coin flip counts as the very model of unpredictability. Though statistically, both possible outcomes are likely to appear over time in equal shares, no one is able to predict which outcome will be the next.

The next term, *battleground state* (Examples (5), (6)) is probably the oldest label of the four, going back as far as the 1860s:

- (5) Some states, like Florida, are perennial *battleground* states. [NBC Washington, 11/9/2017]  
 (6) Virginia was solidly *red* until 2008, when it became a *battleground* state. [NBC Washington, 11/9/2017]

Grounded in a very traditional and established conceptualisation, *battleground* states are a linguistic exemplification of the metaphorical model ELECTIONS AS WAR, which represents a special case of the well-known conceptual metaphor POLITICS AS WAR. In the context of that model, political opponents figure as adversaries, with armies soldiering and fighting in opposed partisan camps. The rich metaphorical mapping includes hard-fought campaigns, the implications of which are of elections as an extremely martial enterprise. Again, we will see that in direct comparison this makes for a clear contrast with the next model.

Of all the four alternatives, the term *purple state* (Examples (7), (8)) represents the latest addition to the field, having come into use only after the year 2000. In 2004, it was even chosen as ‘Word of the year’ by The American Dialect Society:

- (7) Virginia is no longer a *purple* state. [Washington Post, 6/12/2017]  
 (8) Farmsworth said he thinks Virginia is moving in a *bluer* direction, but it’s definitely still a *purple* state. [Washington Post, 6/12/2017]

This colour symbolism is based on the relatively recent colour coding of electoral maps since the year 2000, in which states with a majority of votes for the Republican candidate were coloured in red, while states with a majority for the Democratic candidate were coloured in blue. If some commentators derive the label of *purple* states, the underlying metaphorical model could be described as ELECTIONS AS PAINTING. While the US-American electoral system in general works on a 'winner takes all' principle, which yields those *blue states* versus *red states* results, a more detailed representation uses maps in which the colour *purple* is used to mark some of those *unsafe states*. The metaphorical mapping from the source domain of PAINTING includes the possibility of a peaceful blend of red and blue resulting in some shades of purple, which goes against the 'either-or' logic. What this implies is a much more reconciliatory view, which stands in stark contrast to the martial WAR model inspected above. Maybe it is not too far-fetched to mention the different shades of purple worn on Joe Biden's inauguration day 2021 – violet by Vice President Kamala Harris, and magenta by Michelle Obama – as symbolising unity, reconciliation, and even the promise of bipartisanship.

So far, the analysis of alternative metaphors has revealed fundamental differences between conceptual models of POLITICAL ELECTIONS. In addition, it has even identified two contrasting pairs, as far as metaphorical implications are concerned: On the one hand, the model of *swing* states, with ELECTIONS AS A PENDULUM, seems to be diametrically opposed to the model of *toss-up* states, with ELECTIONS AS A LOTTERY, as the first implies predictability whereas the second implies unpredictability of political election results. On the other hand, the model of *battleground* states, which conceptualises ELECTIONS AS WAR, contrasts with the model of *purple* states, which conceptualises ELECTIONS AS PAINTING, in that the first supports a rather martial view of political elections, whereas the second favours a much more reconciliatory view.

All of this said, however, it should not be concluded that any of these expressions will, under normal circumstances, be chosen deliberately or on purpose. As stated above, all four expressions are denotational equivalents of each other which can be used as near synonyms. In fact, no basic difference in use depending on context (e.g. different states, different majority margins, different political stances or convictions of commentators or their media outlets) could be detected. Moreover, the four expressions can all be regarded as highly conventional ways of talking, which may be chosen by speakers or commentators without any awareness of their metaphorical underpinnings. One further argument to support this claim lies in the fact that in the discourse of political commentaries, the linguistic realisations of alternative metaphorical models can very often be seen to appear in close proximity as mixed metaphors, as the following Examples (9), (10) reveal:

- (9) *Battle for the toss-up states.* [CNN headline, 10/14/2008]
- (10) Pennsylvania and Wisconsin have always been covered as *battleground* states despite them voting *blue*, but 2016 was the first time they actually *swung*. [NBC Washington, 11/9/2017]

The slightly dated Example (9) proves that more than one of these metaphors – here: the WAR plus the GAMBLING GAME type – can be combined in the minimal space of a short headline, and have been used without any problems with this mix of metaphors for more than ten years now. Notice that Example (6) above also combined two different metaphors, with instantiations of the PAINTING plus the WAR model. The little story told in the slightly longer Excerpt (10) even features a collection of three different metaphors, unabashedly combining the WAR model with its alternatives of PAINTING and PENDULUM. The normality of such mixed metaphors proves that in the cases analysed so far, we have been dealing with standard alternative conventional metaphors.

### 3. Deliberate or purposeful? How to analyse metaphors in political rhetoric

Before we continue to analyse the use of metaphors in political discourse with a view to speakers consciously trying to create certain rhetorical effects, a short theoretical interpolation is due. With the rhetorically aware speaker we are approaching a field of metaphor use that was the traditional homeground of classical rhetoric and the Aristotelean theory of metaphor (see Jäkel 2003), which is not exactly what the Conceptual Metaphor Theory in the wake of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) focussed as its centre of interest. This, instead, was the systematic analysis of conventional metaphorical expressions and idioms giving voice to underlying systems of conceptual metaphors. The metaphorical language was so unspectacular and normal that in most cases its metaphoricity went unnoticed by both speakers and addressees – until exposed to analysis by Cognitive linguists following Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

In recent years, however, a kind of backshift has been noticeable which, though still firmly rooted in the Cognitive approach, focuses again on the conscious use of well-chosen metaphors and their possible or intended rhetorical functions. Among other, less interesting proposals, two contributions deserve to be mentioned here: Gerard Steen's so-called *deliberate metaphor* approach (2008, 2011a), and Jonathan Charteris-Black's alternative approach to *purposeful metaphor* (2011, 2012).

When Steen first came up with his notion of *deliberate metaphor*, it could be seen as a welcome supplement to the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor. This view was supported by definitions of *deliberate metaphor* like the following (Steen 2008: 222): “A metaphor is used deliberately when it is expressly meant to change the addressee’s perspective on the referent or topic that is the target of the metaphor, by making the addressee look at it from a different conceptual domain or space, which functions as a conceptual source.” While this and similar statements could at least be read with a focus on the speaker’s intention to influence the audience, “meaning to change the addressee’s perspective”, Steen as the sole copyright holder of the notion of *deliberate metaphor* used later publications to shift his definition away from this reading, which may not have been what he had in mind in the first place. Instead, he has replaced it by now explicitly focussing on the actual addressee’s attention and way of processing a certain metaphor, as in the following, more recent definition (Steen 2011a: 84): “[A] metaphor is deliberate when addressees must pay attention to the source domain as an independent conceptual domain (or space or category) that they are instructed to use to think about the target of the metaphor.”

If the addressee is somehow forced to (“*must*”) process a metaphor consciously by actively paying “attention to the source domain as an independent conceptual domain”, for that metaphor to count as *deliberate*, we are no longer talking about the speaker’s alleged intentions, but about the recipient’s side of the communication. There is a methodological problem here, as in discourse data there is hardly ever unambiguous evidence for any addressee’s way of processing an incoming metaphor. Moreover, his publications show no sign that Steen himself has ever taken pains to investigate the actual processing of metaphor by other means than recourse to discourse data. Theoretically at least, this could be done by testing recipients under controlled conditions – maybe by some sophisticated neuro-imaging technologies, or, in the absence of these, by at least systematically asking informants to reflect consciously about their processing of metaphors, however unreliable this would be.

For somebody rooted firmly in the Cognitive approach (cf. Jäkel 2003) looking for a pragmatic supplement of the onomasiological metaphor analysis, this development made the deliberate metaphor approach unattractive as a method of (critically) analysing conscious metaphor use by rhetorically aware speakers. Instead, I will now turn to Jonathan Charteris-Black’s approach to *purposeful metaphor*, which offers itself as a more attractive and viable alternative. To amend the Cognitive approach, I share the general view expressed by Charteris-Black (2011: 247): “[A]nother dimension of metaphor that is revealed by Critical Metaphor Analysis ... is the way that metaphor selection is governed by the rhetorical aim of persuasion.” Based on this principle, Charteris-Black’s definition



of *purposeful metaphor* is as follows (2012: 2): “I propose the term ‘purposeful metaphor’ for a theory of metaphor in communication where there is linguistic and contextual evidence of purpose.”

In contrast to the more recent versions of *deliberateness* outlined by Steen, this definition and notion of *purposefulness* in metaphor use proposed by Charteris-Black seems more useful and promising for critical discourse analysts interested in investigating conscious metaphor use in authentic discourse data. Why this instrument is particularly prone for application to political discourse such as investigated in this paper is argued in more detail in the following explanation by Charteris-Black (2012: 1): “[P]urposeful metaphor’ contributes to an explanation of metaphor use in political and legal discourse, and other persuasive genres. Linguistic evidence for purposefulness is in the interaction between textually complex use of metaphor and contextual features such as political purpose.”

The “textually complex use of metaphor” indicating purposefulness can make use of the very same indicators used in Steen et al. (2010), then still for *deliberateness*. These indicators included truly *novel metaphors* (cf. Cameron 2003) as well as explicit *similes* (cf. Steen 2008: ‘direct metaphors’). And, as even conventional (‘indirect’) metaphors can be used on purpose (‘deliberately’), further indicators are found in the occurrence of numerous metaphorical expressions as instances of one conceptual metaphor, like in *reoccurring metaphors*, *local clusters of metaphors*, or *creative extensions* of established conventional metaphors, plus emphatically *poetic metaphors*.

Equipped with this toolkit, the following sections (4 and 5) will exemplify the use of purposeful metaphor as an instrument of critical discourse analysis.

#### 4. Competing metaphorical models: Trump versus Clinton

In the context of their 2016 election campaign for president of the United States, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump as the two contestants displayed some striking uses of metaphor that can only be analysed as purposeful in the sense explained above. The general persuasive purpose is obvious: in order to get elected, convincing voters to vote for you is required of the candidates. Focussing on the competing models of POLITICAL ELECTIONS explicitly voiced by the contestants, the analysis in this section will zoom in on one “textually complex use of metaphor” (Charteris-Black 2012: 1) from each of the two candidates, starting with Donald Trump:

- (11) On election day, the politicians *stand trial* before the people. The voters are *the jury*. Their ballots are *the verdict*. [Donald Trump 06/22/2016]

The unique metaphorical model displayed in this passage (11) is one that conceptualises THE ELECTION as a LAWSUIT. The metaphorical mappings from the source domain of LAWSUITS to the target domain of THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION feature the political candidates as the accused, standing trial. If we remember that during his entire campaign, Trump staged himself as the anti-establishment candidate who ran as a non-politician, it may dawn on us that somehow he manages to ingeniously count himself out from “*the politicians*” having to stand trial, leaving only Hillary Clinton as the accused.

The metaphorical mapping further includes a particular role for the voters, who figure as the jury, giving their verdict. The logical implication of this LAWSUIT model has it that “*the verdict*” can only be negative, against the candidate found guilty. Again, this of course needs to be seen in the larger context (cf. Charteris-Black 2012) of Trump’s campaign, in which he was constantly attacking his opponent Hillary Clinton for illegal actions or even criminal offences, and holding out the prospect of putting her to trial as soon as he was elected for president. Trump’s election rallies notoriously culminated in his audience joining in long “*Lock her up!*” chants, which would be directed by Trump as cheerleader indulging in that eerie celebration.

As can be witnessed here, the general persuasive purpose of any candidate of getting elected took a very particular form in Donald Trump’s campaign. More than positively trying to convince voters to vote for him, he spent much of his energy in the negative attempt at demolishing his opponent’s credibility as a serious politician. Today we know that he succeeded. What is remarkable, though, is how well thought out, how elaborate and how purposeful the use of Trump’s central metaphorical model of POLITICAL ELECTIONS was.

Hillary Clinton’s campaign also featured a central metaphorical model of POLITICAL ELECTIONS, albeit one completely different from Trump’s. Talking about the presidential campaign in the run-up to the televised presidential debates, she came up with the following passage:

- (12) It’s like a big *job interview*. You’re hearing from two people that you might *hire*. And I, frankly, think it’s better for us to have an economy where you hear ‘*You’re hired*’, instead of ‘*You’re fired*’. [Hillary Clinton 08/03/2016]

The special metaphorical model displayed in this passage (12) is one that conceptualises THE ELECTION as a JOB INTERVIEW. For the conceptual analysis it does not really make a difference that due to the “*like*” particle, the metaphor is introduced as an explicit simile (in Steen’s terminology, a ‘direct’ metaphor). The metaphorical mappings from the source domain of JOB INTERVIEW to the target domain of THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION feature the political candidates as the applicants for the biggest job advertised. The role reserved for the voters in this mapping is that

of the bosses, or at the very least, the heads of human resources, who are in charge of deciding. Their aim, implied in the logic of this metaphorical model, is hiring the best qualified candidate for that most important job.

In marked contrast to her opponent, Hillary Clinton of course takes care to point out that when it comes to qualifications for the job as US president, nobody is better suited than her, who has long experience in public office, including her service to the country as foreign secretary under President Obama. While this is the positive advertisement to support her application for the big job, she also includes a jab at her opponent in the passage analysed, linking her vision of a growing economy with an allusion to Trump's reality-TV appearance as boss in *"The Apprentice"*. In that popular reality-TV show, her opponent would notoriously end each episode on the note of *"You're fired!"*. This is now held against him as a presidential candidate, who if elected would be responsible for a national economy in need of more employment rather than less.

Even if Hillary Clinton's election campaign, in comparison to her opponent's, was more based on pointing out her own factual knowledge, international experience and, therefore, focused on actual qualifications, the choice of her central metaphorical model of POLITICAL ELECTIONS was by no means less rhetorically clever than that of Donald Trump. Even if in hindsight we know that she lost the election against him, the metaphorical model proposed by Hillary Clinton was just as well thought out, elaborate, and purposeful. In both Examples ((11), (12)) analysed in this section, the evidence of purposeful metaphor use lies in the elaborate local cluster of linguistic metaphors motivated by the same conceptual model. Moreover, both conceptual metaphors are quite novel. In Clinton's case (12), the evidence is even strengthened by the use of an explicit simile.

## 5. Obama's alternative model

In this final analytical section, two things will be done. First, in order to widen the perspective after inspecting the two competing models used by Trump and Clinton against each other, we will bring in another metaphorical model of PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, which was employed by former President Barack Obama when he was running for his second term in office. Second, in contrast to the models analysed in Section 4, Obama's ELECTION model can be analysed as an integral part of a relatively conventional conceptual metaphor he favoured and purposefully exploited in many of his speeches. In addition, the comparison with Obama's use of metaphor is intended to help in getting a firmer grip on the issue of deliberateness or purpose of fully contextualised metaphorical language in a larger corpus (~ 44,000 words) of authentic language, as for this I can draw on

my own investigation of eight speeches held by Barack Obama between 2008 and 2012.

To begin with, here is Obama's central metaphorical model of PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, which he proclaimed towards the end of his convention speech in September 2012, when he was running for his second term:

- (13a) And on every issue, the choice you face won't just be between two candidates or two parties. It will be *a choice between two different paths* for America, [...].
- (13b) *The path* we offer may be *harder*, but *it leads to a better place*. [...]
- (13c) America, I never said *this journey* would be easy, and I won't promise that now. Yes, *our path is harder*, but *it leads to a better place*. Yes, *our road is longer*, but *we travel it together*. We don't *turn back*. We *leave no one behind*. We *pull each other up*. [...] we *keep our eyes fixed on that distant horizon*, knowing that Providence is with us, and that we are surely blessed to be citizens of the greatest nation on Earth.

[Obama 9/2012, *Convention Speech*, including the final passage]

The metaphorical model displayed in this passage (13) is one that conceptualises THE ELECTION as a CROSSROADS, very much in keeping with Obama's favourite JOURNEY metaphor (cf. Jäkel 2012). The metaphorical mappings from the source domain of a JOURNEY to the target domain of THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION feature the political candidates as competing scouts, offering to lead in the right direction. The role assigned to the voters by this model is that of travellers, choosing between different paths (Example (13a)).

Next (Examples (13b), (c)), we find Obama offering himself as the inspired leader, heroically advocating the more difficult path. Notice the religious overtones, including a Biblical allusion (to Matthew 7:13; cf. Jäkel 2003:278), also expressing care for the weaker travellers and mutual support, not to forget hope for a better future that lies ahead in the distance. In all likelihood, this speaker shares the general persuasive purpose of all candidates to get (re)elected. In comparison with Trump's and Clinton's rhetorical strategies, however, we may notice that presidential candidate Obama, without overtly denouncing alternative options (which figure as alternative paths to travel), manages to model himself as prophet, wise and caring leader, and heroic scout. All of this is achieved by means of another well-chosen, elaborate, and purposeful metaphorical model of POLITICAL ELECTIONS.

If we continue the comparison, Obama's ELECTION model shows more striking differences. The investigation of eight important political speeches held by Obama between 2008 and 2012 reveals that his ELECTION model forms an integral

part of his alltime favourite, the conceptual metaphor of POLITICS / POLITICAL PROGRESS AS A JOURNEY. This metaphor is already featured in Obama's *Victory Speech* from November 4, 2008 (cf. Jäkel 2012):

- (14a) The *road ahead* will be *long*.
- (14b) Our *climb* will be *steep*.
- (14c) We may not *get there* in one year or even in one term.
- (14d) But, America, I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will *get there*.
- (14e) I promise you, we as a people will *get there*. [Obama 2008, *Victory Speech*]

In a critical discourse analysis (Jäkel 2012: 263f.), I analysed Obama's elaborate use (cf. the examples in 14) of the rather conventional JOURNEY or PATH metaphor as purposefully chosen to attune his listeners to strenuous long-term efforts, which are supposed to be worthwhile in view of the common goal that can be reached. The rhetorical 'surplus value' of this conceptual metaphor PROGRESS AS JOURNEY (cf. Lakoff 1993: 206–08; Jäkel 2003: 263–64) lies in the fact that the speaker, relying on the persuasive power of the metaphor, can avoid specifying concrete and particular goals, which might jeopardise the miraculous consent of the stereotypical ONWARDS and UPWARDS metaphor for PROGRESS. The suggestive pathos of PROGRESS – but where? – shows that purposeful metaphors cannot only be employed to highlight certain aspects, but also to hide – in this case, in order to avoid precision.

Further elaborations of his favourite JOURNEY metaphor can be found in virtually every speech by Obama. I will quote two more exemplary passages (15), (16), both from his first *Inaugural Address*, held on January 20, 2009:

- (15a) Our *journey* has never been one of *shortcuts* or settling for less.
- (15b) It has not been *the path* for the fainthearted [...].
- (15c) [I]t has been the risk-takers [...] who have *carried us up the long, rugged path toward* prosperity and freedom. [...]
- (15d) This is *the journey we continue* today. [Obama 2009, *Inaugural Address*]

Both Examples (15) and (16) show elaborations of the JOURNEY metaphor that repeatedly point out the strenuousness of the PATH (Examples (15b), (c)) as well as carrying religious undertones (Example (16c)) we already encountered above.

- (16a) Let it be said by our children's children that when we were tested, we refused to *let this journey end*,

(16b) that we did *not turn back* nor did we falter,

(16c) and *with eyes fixed on the horizon* and God's grace upon us

(16d) we *carried forth* that great gift of freedom

(16e) and *delivered it* safely to future generations.

[Obama 2009, *Inaugural Address*, final passage]

In Example (16), we finally witness a creative extension of the JOURNEY metaphor as a cross-generational RELAY RACE (cf. Jäkel 2012:269), in which the precious FREEDOM of the target domain POLITICS (Example (16d)) figures as the BATON (Example (16e)). As in the previous Section 4, all of the Examples (13), (14), (15), (16) analysed in this Section 5 clearly indicated the purposeful use of metaphors through elaborate local clusters of linguistic metaphors motivated by the same underlying conceptual model. What distinguishes Obama's model from those analysed in Section 4 above is the fact that both Trump and Clinton employ rather novel metaphors, whereas Obama purposefully elaborates and extends a conventional conceptual metaphor. As argued, however, in all three cases, there can be no doubt about the purposeful use of metaphor.

After analysing some exemplary passages, I will shortly summarise the results of my own corpus study investigating Barack Obama's general use of metaphors. The corpus included the following eight political speeches held by Obama between 2008 and 2012:

- *Victory Speech* (Obama 11 / 2008)
- *Inaugural Address* (Obama 1 / 2009)
- *Prague Speech* (Obama 4 / 2009)
- *Cairo Speech* (Obama 6 / 2009)
- *State of the Union Address* (Obama 1 / 2010)
- *State of the Union Address* (Obama 1 / 2011)
- *State of the Union Address* (Obama 1 / 2012)
- *Convention Speech* (Obama 9 / 2012)

In total, this yielded a corpus of about 44,000 words. The investigation made use of a simplified model of the "MIPVU" metaphor identification procedure propagated by Steen et al. (2010), with a manual search of the complete corpus, identifying and counting all linguistic metaphors. The metaphor frequencies found in the eight individual speeches are given in the following list:

- *Victory Speech* (11 / 2008) 3.84%
- *Inaugural Address* (1 / 2009) 5.64%
- *Prague Speech* (4 / 2009) 6.00%

- *Cairo Speech* (6 / 2009) 2.44%
- *State of the Union Address* (1 / 2010) 4.37%
- *State of the Union Address* (1 / 2011) 4.46%
- *State of the Union Address* (1 / 2012) 4.97%
- *Convention Speech* (9 / 2012) 3.17%
- Corpus average: 4.36%

The investigation of Obama's speeches resulted in a general metaphor frequency of 4.36% (2.44–6.00%). The share of purposeful metaphors however remains debatable: Similes were extremely rare (totalling two in the whole corpus), as were other 'direct metaphors' (there was one single case of parable). What could be detected as other potentially purposeful metaphors were many reoccurring metaphors, several local clusters of metaphors, sometimes including creative extensions, and some poetic and novel metaphors.

While in this paper I have focused on metaphor, it has to be said that Obama's speeches are characterised by the ingenuous use and combination of all kinds of rhetorical devices, including not only metaphor, but also metonymy, pairs and triads of structures, etc. (cf. Jäkel 2012). All of these have mainly persuasive functions, e.g., convincing the audience, generating pathos, creating consensus and confidence, avoiding precision.

## 6. Summary and conclusion

After this tour of detailed metaphor studies from the realm of US-American political discourse with a focus on the target domain of (presidential) elections, which was amended by the results from a medium size corpus study of former President Obama's use of metaphor, a summary and conclusion is in place to round off this investigation.

First of all, a solid onomasiological metaphor analysis (cf. Jäkel 2003) has shown that in public media discourse, political elections are conceptualised by means of a number of alternative conventional metaphors. Although these can be regarded as denotational equivalents, they display certain differences in their metaphorical focus: aspects that are highlighted or hidden. Methodically we may conclude that investigating the role of conceptual metaphor in the representation of political events by means of onomasiological metaphor analysis can contribute to Critical Discourse Analysis.





Studying purposeful uses of metaphors for presidential elections in political speeches reveals particular rhetorical functions/purposes: e.g., convincing the audience, generating pathos, creating consensus and confidence, avoiding precision.

While in general, what has been discovered here are different realisations of the mainly persuasive function of metaphor, we found that it is not only the metaphorical highlighting that can be performed purposefully, but also the hiding.

Thus, in investigations of political discourse, especially if focussing on the use of metaphor, a critical approach is needed. In this context, the analysis of purposeful metaphors in authentic (political) discourse in particular can make a valuable contribution to an Applied and Critical Cognitive Linguistics. It may be concluded that combining the onomasiological analysis of metaphor with the investigation of other rhetorical devices as well as with a thorough study of textual structures seems most promising. In these analyses, context should of course be taken into account.

If it was claimed a while ago that “the theory of deliberate metaphor still needs more deliberation, discussion, and eventually, research” (Steen 2011b: 59), the same surely holds today for the analysis of purposeful metaphor. The studies and analyses presented here are meant to contribute to this enterprise. Investigating the purposeful use of metaphor can be regarded as a welcome amendment to the onomasiological approach based on the Cognitive theory of metaphor.

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