

## METAPHORICAL ALLUSION IN MILITARY POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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### Summary

The research paper is devoted to the diachronic analysis of political metaphoric allusions based on military terms in the English language. The study determines the ways of political military discourse allusions development in the 20<sup>th</sup> and at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The main objective of this work is to afford deeper insights into the genuine nature of metaphoric allusions, defining their forms, types and functions. The semantic and functional issues related to metaphoric allusions in the sphere of politics are the subject of the article, which has the aim of providing their interpretations, investigating their sources and use. The methods of research: empiric research, monitoring of mass media and multimedia content, classification, content analysis, semantic analysis. War words and phrases used by politicians in public addresses prone to generate new shades of meanings through military intertextual patterns and enrich the work by association thus giving it depth by revealing an implicit nature in political discourse through allusion. Its universal character has become common knowledge and ubiquitous in all walks of life. Being a figure of speech through which some counterparts are compared on the basis of their aspects to history, culture, mythology, literature, war and religion. Metaphoric allusions fill lexical gaps, characterize and deepen the understanding of the essence of existing objects.” Using war metaphoric allusions shuffles categorization in insidious ways. As such, politicians call for obedience rather than awareness and appeal to our patriotism, not to our solidarity”. (Costanza Musu , 2020: April 8). The core ideas are often taken from common sources, like war, battle, conflict which usually refer to some sort of competition, fight, or struggle and serve as a means of intertextuality in further semantic transformation in political domain acquiring a novice emotional charge.

**Keywords:** metaphor, metaphoric allusion, political discourse sources of metaphorization, intertextuality, intertextual pattern, categorization.

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### 1. Introduction

Political lexicon, part of the vocabulary of the English language, conveys the notions related to social life and reveals social and ideological phenomena. It has been subjected to considerable changes for the last twenty years and it remains one of the unstable layers in the lexical-semantic system. This fact has aroused the interest of researchers in semantic processes taking place in this sublanguage which is often marked by the presence of tropes and terms including military ones (Billig, M. & MacMillan K. 2005: 16)(Carver, T. & Pikalo J. 2008: 320). (De Landtsheer, C.1994: 4)(Glucksberg, S. 2001:5-15) (Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. 1980:241) (Shelestiuk, V. 2006: 161).

When studying political language, researchers tend to follow three different but related paths. The first is to concentrate principally on the mere content of political language. These studies mostly relate to *ethos*, the norms and values that are hold by the communicator or the ideological

content of the message. This type of research is commonly practiced in communications and in political science. The second is followed by researchers who try to unravel what politicians say by focusing on the structuring of arguments and their validity. These researchers focus on *logos* or the appeal to logic. This type of research has persisted in almost all branches of the study of political language. The third is somewhat less obvious, though at least equally rewarding: by focusing on the style of political language or its form, researchers try to complement studies that take only manifest content into account. They argue correctly that how politicians say things and how they verbally express their thoughts both affect the meaning the words acquire. They examine language in its concrete use and because they look for connotative meanings and emotional effects (Carver, T. & Pikalo J. 2008: 271) *This study focuses on* metaphoric allusions based on war words in political discourse. The semantic and functional issues related to metaphoric allusions in the sphere of politics are *the subject of the article*, which have the aim of providing their interpretations, investigating their sources and use.

## 2. The nature of Allusion in political military discourse

Allusion is an implicit reference to another work of literature or art, to a person or an event. It is often a kind of appeal to a reader to share some experience with the writer. Allusion may enrich the work by association and give it depth. They distinguish: a) a reference to events and people, b) reference to facts about the author himself, c) a metaphoric allusion, and d) an imitative allusion (Cuddon, 1999: 27). “The literary allusion” is a device for the simultaneous activation of two texts. The activation is achieved through the manipulation of a special signal: a sign (simple or complex) in a given text characterized by an additional larger “referent”. This referent is always an independent text. The simultaneous activation of the two texts thus connected results in the formation of intertextual patterns whose nature cannot be predetermined. ... The “free” nature of the intertextual patterns is the feature by which it would be possible to distinguish between the literary allusion and other closely related text-linking devices, such as parody and pastiche” (Ben-Porot, Ziva. 1976: 107-108)

Allusion is a form of intertextuality that works largely through verbal echoes between texts (Montgomery, 2000: 161). In a wider context, an allusion is a passing or casually short statement indicating some broader meaning. Allusions generate new meanings and intertextual patterns.

Many allusions are based on metaphors. “Until a century ago, a metaphor was just a mere figure of speech, but since the development of discourse analysis a metaphor has become more than merely incidental to the content of the arguments or findings. Scholars in political studies know the importance of metaphors in electoral and policy-related politics, coming across metaphors that are, knowingly or unknowingly, influencing our perception of politics” (Carver, T. & Pikalo J. 2008: 2).

Although there are different definitions and classifications of metaphors, their universal character has become common knowledge. Metaphors fill lexical gaps or characterize and deepen the understanding of the essence of existing objects. Metaphors cover various aspects of the language and appear in all its functional variants.

## 3. The forms and types of allusion in political military discourse

The form of political metaphoric allusions may be simple, consisting of one word, or complex, extending over a large part of the discourse. An allusion has certain important

semantic peculiarities, in that the meaning of the word (the allusion) should be regarded as a form for the new meaning. In other words, the primary meaning of the word or phrase which is assumed to be known (i.e. the allusion) serves as a vessel into which new meaning is poured. So here there is also a kind of interplay between two meanings. Complex metaphoric allusions cannot be understood independently of the context in which they occur, and gain sense only in course of the discourse development. Their core ideas are often taken from common sources, like war, battle, conflict which usually refer to some sort of competition, fight, or struggle.

Aggressive, offensive nature of military operations may be transferred by analogy to some politicians' actions, which are characterized by a rigid approach to solving problems. The following lexemes within military terminology have become bases of metaphoric allusions: *armor, battle, bomb, bullet, cannon, fight, fighter, parachute, shield, struggle, sword, target, troops, war, warfare, warrior, weapons* and others.

In this example we find a metaphoric allusion based on the idea of a game (the competitor – the target): “*The press typically makes a mayor its target in a periodic game of pin the tail on the donkey*” (Leland T. Jones, 1993: 25). The metaphoric allusion is to the classic children's game, often played at birthday parties. Children draw a large image of a donkey without a tail, and mount it on a vertical surface, such as a wall. Players take turns one at a time. The blindfolded player tries to pin the donkey tail on the end of the donkey, trying to remember where the donkey was hanging. The winner is the player who manages to place the tail closest to the correct spot on the donkey (often marked with a target).

Another example demonstrates metaphoric allusion built upon the concept of cold war: “*Some unreconstructed old Cold Warriors strap on their rusty armor and come over here on the floor and tell us, “Oh no, you can't reduce this military spending”*” (Jim Sasser, The Newsletter of Economists Allied for Arms Reduction, Fall 1992). The Cold War (1947–1991) was a state of political and military tension after World War II between powers in the Western Bloc (the United States, its NATO allies and others) and powers in the Eastern Bloc (the Soviet Union and its allies in the Warsaw Pact).

The evolution of military metaphors is worthy of note since they seem to be reserved for periods of war: WWII and the Cold War. After 1989, no explicit mention of military metaphors is yet to be found in inaugural addresses, which could either correspond to a peace period or rather a change in war (a focus on terrorism), then a change in military powers. (Rémi Digonnet, 2014: 21)

*I assume unhesitatingly the leadership of this great army of our people dedicated to a disciplined attack upon our common problems (Roosevelt, 1933)*

*Not only against their human oppressors, but also against their ancient enemies – hunger, misery, and despair (Truman, 1949)*

*We sense with all our faculties that forces of good and evil are massed and armed and opposed as rarely before in history (Eisenhower, 1953)*

*But this peaceful revolution of hope cannot become the prey of hostile powers (Kennedy, 1961) I have believed that this injustice to our people, this waste of our resources, was our real enemy (Johnson, 1965)*

*As for the enemies of freedom, those who are potential adversaries (Reagan, 1981)*

*It is a weapon [moral courage of free men and women] that we as Americans do have (Reagan, 1981) For freedom is our best ally (Reagan, 1985)*

(Rémi Digonnet, 2014 : 9).

Weapons are another common source of metaphoric allusions in political discourse. They convey the sense of strength, force, ability, particularly in case of crisis intensification.

*"I just fell on my own sword"* (Clinton, B.1992:15). In this example the presidential candidate was ruefully reflecting on his unsuccessful nominating speech at the 1988 Democratic convention.

The following statements refer to difficulties, problems in terms of war. *"Today is the day. This is the bullet"* (Berk, 1993:28). *"I'm not saying that public-works investment is a silver bullet, but it is helping to reduce unemployment"* (Thomas M. Downs, 1992:24).

1. Another much-used phrase "to bite the bullet" is a war metaphor traced to the times when wounded soldiers were given a lead bullet to bite on during surgery. Credit for the broader, figurative meaning usually goes to Rudyard Kipling who in "The Light That Failed" (1890) had one character tell another: *"Bite on the bullet, old man, and don't let them think you're afraid"* (Sommer, E. & Weiss, D. 2001: 660). The phrase means "to bravely accept something unpleasant". (Sommer, E. & Weiss, D. 2001: 660).

Political language can be used to exaggerate, manipulate, and mislead. Metaphoric allusions are often seen as a manipulative tool which intends to influence people's thoughts and emotions or escape from facts to abstractions, which additionally point at their emotive function. Politicians tend to express themselves more metaphorically when anxiety level increases in society. One of the functions of metaphoric allusions is to assist in the explanation of complex political arguments. They tend to be used in order to reinforce a particular perspective, to reassure an ideological position, or ridicule one's opponents.

The purpose of the following metaphoric allusion is to show the politician from the negative perspective: *"She is a loose cannon, but some might prefer her inside, firing out"* (Bill Keller, "Winnie Mandela Free", The New York Times, June 6, 1993). The allusion is to Winnie Madikizela-Mandela (born Nomzamo Winifred Zanyiwe Madikizela; 26 September 1936), a South African activist and politician who has held several government positions and headed the African National Congress Women's League.

Here is another instance of allusion which requires a good knowledge of the political and economic situation, a variety of issues of domestic and foreign policy if it is to be completely understood: *"Here are a few examples of minefields ... we will be watching our President try to walk his way through"* (A. M. Rosenthal, 1992: 20). The essence of the metaphoric allusion is that the President has to take some action that may have hidden dangers or difficulties.

The meaning that can be derived from the following metaphoric allusion is that active work was carried out round the clock at Mr. Bill Clinton's election campaign headquarters: *"... campaign organization was ... a high-octane 24-hour-a-day war room"* (Thomas L. & Friedman, 1992:11). High octane gas makes the engine of a vehicle work very well and quietly. This word used in journalism, means "exciting and full of energy". "A war room" is a room at a military headquarters where maps showing the current status of troops in battle are maintained; a room (as at a business headquarters) used for conferences and planning that is often specially equipped (as with computers, or charts). The headquarters are characterized as a war room.

The usage of the lexeme "war" in political discourse illustrates the conceptualization of politics as aggressive activities: *"This ominous turf war between the top state institutions is taking place at a time when numerous opposition groups are shuffling to gain a foothold in the run-up to general elections, due in early 2013 but likely to be held before then"* (M. Ilyas Khan, 2012: 11). "Turf war" is a colloquial term for "a bitter struggle for territory, power, control, or rights". It can also be described as contention for any resource between two or more parties, resulting in confrontation. The phrase may have originated in the American West, where cow herders and sheep herders fought over grazing turf.

As COVID-19 sweeps across the globe, many politicians and news media have adopted war metaphors to describe the challenges we are facing.

In Britain, Queen Elizabeth II delivering a rare speech on Apr.5 said “we will meet again” evoking a Second World War song. On March 9, Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte also invoked the Second World War when he used Winston Churchill’s words to talk about Italy’s “darkest hour.” President Donald Trump has described himself as a “war-time president,” fighting against an invisible enemy.

In New York, as residents face the explosion of new cases and casualties, Governor Andrew Cuomo used the war metaphor extensively during a press conference:

*“The soldiers in this fight are our health care professionals. It’s the doctors, it’s the nurses, it’s the people who are working in the hospitals, it’s the aids. They are the soldiers who are fighting this battle for us.”*

The United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Gutiérrez embraced the comparison during his remarks at a G20 virtual summit on the COVID-19 pandemic:

*“We are at war with a virus – and not winning it. ...This war needs a war-time plan to fight it.”*

Journalists have also been using the metaphor. A recent headline in the *Globe and Mail* read: “We are at war with COVID-19. We need to fight it like a war.”

This is certainly not the first time leaders and policy-makers have used the war metaphor to describe a threat that does not qualify as military. Think the war on poverty, on cancer, on illegal immigration, not to mention the war on drugs or on crime.

While highly appealing as a tool of political rhetoric, the war metaphor hides several pitfalls that, in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, are particularly dangerous. (Costanza Musu, 2020: 8)

Some metaphoric allusions contain anthroponyms and loan words as their elements: “*Blackwell’s reporting of the war, from sitzkrieg to “Schwarzkrieg”, is as upbeat as befits the military outcome*” (Perry M. Smith & Blackwell, J 1991:2). The allusion is to a period at the beginning of World War II (September 1939 – May 1940) in which both sides change positions very slowly or not at all [from German, *sitzen* to sit + *Krieg* war]. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr. (1934 – 2012) was a United States Army general. While serving as Commander-in-Chief, United States Central Command, he led all coalition forces in the Persian Gulf War.

In the next example the metaphoric allusion is to a long hard fight of the Muslims for their religious beliefs: “*There are Russian fighters on the ground who are proud to announce their presence and to discuss their ideas of “holy war”*” (Tim Whewell, T.2014:18). A “holy war” refers to 1) a war waged for what is regarded as a holy purpose as the defense of faith – jihad in Islam, a religious struggle against evil in yourself or in society.

Most allusions are based on the assumption that there is a body of knowledge that is shared by the writer / speaker and the reader / listener and that therefore the reader / listener will understand the writer’s / speaker’s referent. Though the information conveyed beyond the surface form of the metaphoric allusion is not always accessible to the reader / listener. These allusions are made to things and facts which need commentary before they are understood. Decoding allusions requires some background knowledge. Allusions are based on the general level of experience of interlocutors. “Unlike most tricks, the allusion triumphs only when people know precisely how it is done” (Elizabeth D. Samet, 2012: 3). Ignorance of some facts impedes communication.

#### 4. Conclusions

Summarizing our data, we can state the fact that politicians tend to use metaphoric allusions in their argumentation. These semantic phenomena are more than just ornaments. Metaphoric allusions as a form of indirect or figurative language serve to create the subtext, express the writer's / speaker's attitudes, irony, humour, in particular, characterize and symbolize some things.

Our further study aims to investigate the effects the metaphoric allusions have in the political discourse, their role in the form of rhetoric and propaganda, and the functions of military lexicon in the sphere of politics.

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