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Metaphor in Political Discourse: A Cognitive Linguistic Analysis

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ABSTRACT: This study examines metaphor in political discourse from a cognitive-linguistic perspective, analyzing how metaphorical expressions frame political reality, shape public reasoning, and support persuasion in public communication. The study aims to identify dominant conceptual metaphor domains, analyze their source-target mappings, compare their distribution across communicative contexts, and interpret their rhetorical, emotional, and ideological functions. The study draws on a balanced corpus of 96 authentic political texts totaling approximately 512,400 words, including parliamentary debates, election campaign speeches, national addresses, policy statements, press conferences, official interviews, and party manifestos produced between 2016 and 2023. The analysis combines corpus-based frequency profiling with qualitative cognitive discourse analysis grounded in Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Critical Metaphor Analysis, Political Discourse Analysis, and Framing Theory. The study identified metaphorical expressions using MIP/MIPVU principles and coded them into domains such as war, journey, family, economy, crisis, health, construction, natural force, morality, and national identity. Within the corpus, the analysis shows that metaphors organize political problems into recognizable cognitive frames, legitimize particular policy orientations, construct collective identity, polarize social actors, and make complex decisions appear urgent, necessary, or morally justified. War and crisis metaphors intensify threat and urgency, journey metaphors normalize gradual reform and sacrifice, economy and machine metaphors assign responsibility for performance, and family or nation metaphors produce emotional solidarity and hierarchy. The study presents an evidence-linked cognitive discourse framework for political metaphor analysis and offers implications for critical media literacy, civic education, political communication, and applied linguistic research.

Keywords: political metaphor; cognitive linguistics; political discourse; conceptual metaphor; critical metaphor analysis.

I. INTRODUCTION

Political discourse is one of the most visible public settings in which language becomes a resource for organizing social reality. Political actors do not simply report events, policies, crises, institutions, or citizens; they make these entities intelligible through culturally available models and cognitive frames. Metaphor is central to this process because it allows audiences to reason about abstract political issues through familiar experiences such as conflict, movement, health, family, construction, machinery, and moral struggle [1]. Political issues are often technical, contested, and emotionally charged, and metaphor helps speakers transform policy into action, disagreement into battle, institutional change into a journey, or crisis into illness and repair.

Contemporary cognitive linguistics shows that metaphor operates across language, cognition, culture, emotion, and discourse practice [2]. At the linguistic level, metaphors appear as lexical choices such as fight, path, engine, burden, healing, family, storm, foundation, or crossroads. At the conceptual level, these

expressions activate mappings such as (POLITICS IS WAR, POLICY IS A JOURNEY, THE NATION IS A FAMILY, THE ECONOMY IS A MACHINE, CRISIS IS DISEASE, and REFORM IS CONSTRUCTION). At the discourse level, they organize responsibility, legitimacy, emotional alignment, and audience positioning. Critical metaphor analysis therefore treats metaphor as a site where cognitive structure and ideological selection meet [3].

When metaphor is selected impressionistically, analysis can depend too heavily on striking examples rather than systematic evidence. The MIP/MIPVU tradition addresses this problem by comparing a lexical unit's contextual meaning with a more basic meaning and asking whether the contrast is understandable through comparison [4]. This procedure is especially relevant in political discourse because many consequential metaphors are conventional. Expressions such as defend the economy, build the future, repair the system, fight corruption, or move forward may pass unnoticed, yet they shape political reasoning precisely because they sound ordinary.

Metaphor is also closely connected to framing. A metaphor highlights some aspects of a political situation while backgrounding others, and integrated approaches to metaphor and framing show that metaphorical choices operate simultaneously in cognition, discourse, and practice [5]. Experimental and cognitive work further suggests that metaphorical language can scaffold reasoning about complex problems, although its effects depend on context and audience interpretation rather than operating automatically [6]. Framing a crime as a virus invites containment, a crisis as war invites defense, a reform as a journey invites patience, and a nation as family invites loyalty and emotional obligation.

Political communication provides a rich site for such analysis because public issues are rarely neutral objects of description. War metaphors occur across elections, crime, drugs, poverty, public health, and national crisis, where they can generate urgency and solidarity but may also intensify polarization and normalize adversarial solutions [7]. Brexit discourse, for example, relied on figurative scenarios such as divorce, entrapment, cake, journey, sovereignty, and liberation to transform institutional negotiation into emotionally vivid public argument [8], [9]. Corpus-based work on political speeches further shows that metaphor varies according to role, genre, gender, topic, and section of speech, confirming that metaphor use is patterned rather than accidental [10].

The international gap addressed here is methodological and theoretical. Although scholars have widely examined political metaphor, fewer studies combine MIP/MIPVU-based identification, corpus statistics, genre comparison, and cognitive-discourse interpretation in a single integrated design. Many studies foreground one leader, event, or metaphor domain; others count metaphors without showing how the identified patterns work in discourse. This study addresses that gap by focusing on a balanced corpus of political discourse from 2016 to 2023, including speeches, parliamentary debates, campaign discourse, policy statements, press conferences, official interviews, and party manifestos. The corpus design allows comparison of metaphor across communicative contexts rather than treating political discourse as a single homogeneous genre.

The study's originality lies in connecting corpus-based metaphor profiling with cognitive discourse interpretation. Rather than simply listing metaphor domains, the study examines how source domains structure target meanings, how metaphors persuade and legitimize, how metaphorical mappings construct social actors, and how metaphor use differs across institutional, campaign, crisis, and policy contexts. This integrated approach strengthens metaphor analysis's relevance to applied linguistics, cognitive linguistics, political discourse analysis, and critical media literacy.

II. RESEARCH PROBLEM

The central research problem is that scholars often treat metaphors in political discourse as stylistic choices, even though they perform deeper cognitive and ideological work. Political speakers use metaphor to turn complex issues into familiar scenes: politics becomes a battle, reform becomes a road, the nation becomes a family, the economy becomes an engine, crisis becomes disease, and citizens become travelers, fighters, builders, or victims. These mappings are not neutral. They guide how audiences assign responsibility, judge urgency, evaluate leadership, understand opponents, and imagine possible futures.

Metaphor analysis therefore matters beyond political style because it reveals how language affects public reasoning, legitimacy, emotional alignment, and the perceived acceptability of policy options.

A second problem is methodological. Many political metaphor studies rely on small numbers of examples, one leader, one event, or one metaphor domain. Such studies can offer valuable interpretation, but they may not show whether a metaphorical pattern recurs across a corpus or is tied to a specific genre or political context. Conversely, purely quantitative metaphor counts cannot explain why a metaphor matters in context. This study addresses both problems by combining systematic corpus-based identification with qualitative cognitive discourse analysis. The problem is not merely how often metaphors occur, but how metaphorical patterns structure political meaning, persuasion, emotional response, legitimization, and ideological positioning within the analyzed corpus.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study examines how metaphors in political discourse construct political meaning, frame public issues, shape ideology, and influence audience interpretation through systematic source-target mappings. To achieve this aim, the study pursues four integrated objectives:

- Identify dominant metaphorical expressions in a balanced corpus of political speeches, parliamentary debates, campaign speeches, policy statements, press conferences, official interviews, and party manifestos.
- Classify metaphorical expressions into conceptual domains such as war, journey, family, economy, crisis, health, construction, natural force, morality, and national identity using MIP/MIPVU principles.
- Compare metaphor frequency, distribution, and conceptual patterns across political genres, communicative contexts, and rhetorical purposes.
- Interpret how metaphorical mappings contribute to persuasion, legitimization, emotional appeal, ideological framing, social actor positioning, and critical discourse awareness.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- RQ1. What dominant conceptual metaphor domains does the analyzed political corpus use, and how are they distributed across speeches, debates, campaigns, policy statements, press conferences, interviews, and manifestos?
- RQ2. How do source domains such as war, journey, family, economy, crisis, health, construction, and national identity structure political meaning and audience reasoning?
- RQ3. How do political metaphors contribute to persuasion, legitimization, emotional appeal, ideological framing, and the positioning of social actors?
- RQ4. Based on the identified metaphor patterns, what theoretical, methodological, and applied implications do the findings have for cognitive linguistics, political discourse analysis, critical media literacy, and civic language education?

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Metaphor Theory argues that metaphor is a matter of thought as well as language [1]. This view remains fundamental because political concepts are abstract, contested, and often understood through embodied experience. Extended Conceptual Metaphor Theory adds that metaphor varies across schematicity, discourse, and culture [2]. For the present study, these theories remain essential foundations, but they connect to recent empirical work that treats metaphor as a patterned resource in real political communication rather than an isolated cognitive mechanism.

Critical metaphor analysis bridges cognitive mapping and political persuasion [3]. It asks why people select particular metaphors, what interests they serve, and how they construct legitimacy or delegitimacy. The method becomes stronger when paired with MIP/MIPVU identification, which offers replicable rules for distinguishing metaphorical and non-metaphorical use [4]. Recent corpus- and discourse-based studies show that such integration is necessary because conventional political metaphors often go unnoticed by readers while still shaping public reasoning [10].

Recent work on metaphor and framing shows that metaphorical language operates through cognitive, discourse-based, and practice-based mechanisms [5]. Metaphor does not simply label a target domain; it selects relations, roles, causes, and possible responses [6]. War metaphors provide a clear example. They can support urgency, courage, sacrifice, and collective action, but they can also intensify threat, constrain policy options, and normalize conflict-oriented reasoning [7]. This study compares war metaphors with non-war domains across several political genres rather than interpreting one domain in isolation.

Political studies of Brexit demonstrate metaphor's ideological power in public debate. Brexit discourse used figurative scenarios such as divorce, sovereignty, entrapment, cake, and journey to transform institutional negotiation into emotionally vivid narratives [8]. Subsequent analysis showed how these mappings organized national identity, autonomy, danger, and control [9]. At the same time, multifactorial corpus research on Hong Kong political speeches demonstrated that metaphor patterns vary by political role, gender, speech section, and source domain [10]. These studies support the need for cross-genre corpus comparison, which is central to the present design.

The COVID-19 period produced a substantial body of empirical metaphor research relevant to political discourse. Leaders and public institutions used war metaphors to frame the pandemic as a national battle, with citizens, health workers, and governments assigned roles such as fighters, frontline workers, commanders, or victims [11]. Social media analyses showed that war, monster, storm, tsunami, and family frames circulated widely and changed over time as the pandemic developed [12], [13]. These studies show that metaphor is dynamic and context-sensitive, but they also reveal the need to compare crisis metaphors with metaphors used in non-crisis political genres.

Recent studies also show how metaphor interacts with emotion and public legitimacy. Hyperbole and metaphor in Brexit discourse intensified pragmatic effects and contributed to emotionalized arguments [14], while European news media linked Brexit to crisis, uncertainty, and breakdown [15]. In COVID-19 communication, researchers proposed non-war alternatives, such as fire- and care-based metaphors, because they better captured contagion, collective vulnerability, and community responsibility in some contexts [16]. Experimental evidence cautions that metaphor effects are not automatic and may depend on prior belief, political orientation, and discourse environment [17].

The Reframe Covid initiative matters because it shows that people can publicly contest metaphor choices and that alternative metaphors can support different forms of reasoning and action [18]. Creative metaphor studies from the same initiative show that non-war metaphors can open alternative understandings of vulnerability, uncertainty, and resilience [19]. Leadership and media studies from 2022 and 2023 further confirm that metaphor in crisis discourse performs ideological work even when expressions are conventional or apparently neutral [20]-[23]. This cluster helps the current study move beyond description by asking how metaphor domains distribute responsibility, emotional alignment, and social actor roles.

Cognitive linguistic critical discourse studies have also developed the relationship between metaphor and ideology by examining how linguistic choices cue mental representations that support legitimization, delegitimization, proximity, distance, or social alignment [24]. Proximization theory remains useful for understanding how political metaphors construct distant threats as immediate [25], while framing theory explains how discourse selects certain aspects of reality and makes them salient [26]. These frameworks are used here only to the extent that they support the interpretation of corpus evidence.

Corpus-based metaphor research requires transparent statistical and interpretive procedures. Corpus statistics help compare frequencies, normalized rates, dispersion, and association strength [27], while corpus-assisted discourse studies emphasize that patterns acquire meaning only when interpreted in context [28]. Corpus linguistics therefore provides systematic evidence, and cognitive discourse analysis explains how repeated linguistic forms become political meanings [29]. Recent research on social grounding, communication, and metaphor effects further supports the view that metaphor operates through discourse, context, and audience interpretation rather than a fixed causal mechanism [30]-[32].

Taken together, the reviewed literature shows that metaphor research is mature but methodologically uneven. The most relevant studies demonstrate the value of cognitive mapping, corpus evidence, crisis and election discourse analysis, and critical interpretation. What remains less developed is an integrated design

that links MIP/MIPVU identification, genre-based corpus comparison, domain distribution, collocation evidence, extract analysis, and applied implications within one coherent study.

Table 1. Literature review synthesis and research positioning.

Research strand	Representative studies	Main contribution	Remaining limitation addressed here
Conceptual metaphor and cognition	Lakoff and Johnson; Kövecses; Thibodeau et al.	Metaphor structures thought, reasoning, and abstract political meaning.	Links cognitive mapping to corpus-wide political discourse patterns rather than isolated examples.
Critical metaphor and politics	Charteris-Black; Musolff; Semino et al.	Metaphor frames ideology, persuasion, emotion, and political scenarios.	Adds cross-genre corpus evidence and compares rhetorical function across domains.
Crisis and pandemic metaphor	Castro Seixas; Wicke and Bolognesi; Semino; Panzeri et al.	War, fire, storm, disease, and care frames influence public crisis communication.	Compares crisis metaphors with routine policy, campaign, and manifesto discourse.
Brexit and national identity	Musolff; Charteris-Black; Krzyżanowski	Figurative scenarios organize sovereignty, crisis, separation, and national future.	Extends beyond one event by comparing multiple political genres and time contexts.
Corpus and method	Steen et al.; Zeng et al.; Brezina; Partington et al.	MIP/MIPVU and corpus-assisted methods improve transparency and repeatability.	Combines identification, frequency, dispersion, domain coding, and interpretation.

VI. RESEARCH GAP

Existing research has shown that metaphor is central to political communication, crisis discourse, public health communication, Brexit debates, and civic reasoning. However, many studies still focus on one leader, one event, one domain, or one communicative genre. The gap is therefore not the absence of metaphor research, but the need for an integrated corpus-based and cognitive discourse design that compares metaphor domains across multiple political genres while also explaining how source-target mappings perform ideological and emotional work.

1. STUDY CONTRIBUTION

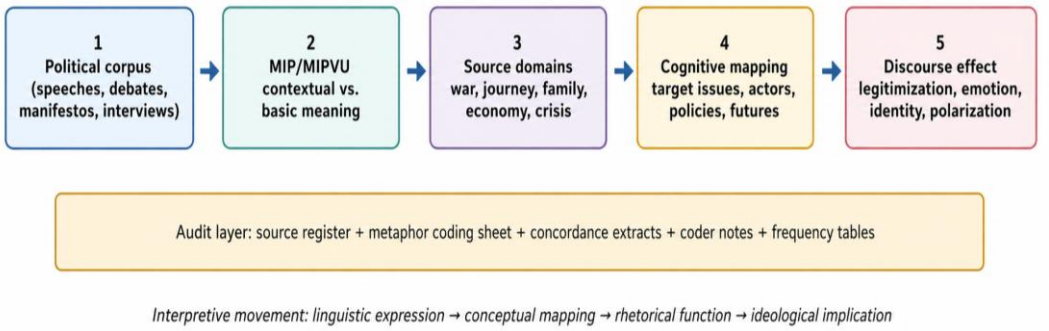
The study contributes by presenting an evidence-linked cognitive discourse framework for political metaphor analysis. The framework moves from corpus construction and MIP/MIPVU identification to domain classification, normalized distribution, extract-level interpretation, and theoretical explanation. It does not claim to be a universal model of all political metaphor use; rather, it offers an analytically transferable procedure for comparable political corpora where corpus construction, coding decisions, and interpretive claims are transparent.

VII. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The framework integrates five theoretical lenses. Conceptual Metaphor Theory contributes source-target mapping; Critical Metaphor Analysis contributes ideological interpretation; MIP/MIPVU contributes systematic identification; Political Discourse Analysis and cognitive linguistic critical discourse studies contribute attention to power, legitimacy, and social actor positioning; and Framing Theory contributes the

principle of selection and salience [1]-[4], [24], [26]. Together, these lenses explain how metaphor connects linguistic form, cognition, political strategy, and public meaning.

The conceptual framework treats metaphor as a link between linguistic form and political cognition. A political issue becomes cognitively accessible when it is mapped onto a familiar source domain. A crisis can become a disease, a journey, a storm, or a war; each mapping highlights different causes, actors, emotions, and solutions. The same policy can be framed as a repair, a battle, a road, or an investment, and each framing encourages a different interpretation of responsibility and legitimacy. The model's audit layer links each



interpretive claim to corpus source codes, metaphor-identification decisions, coded domains, concordance evidence, and extract analysis.

FIGURE 1. Evidence-linked cognitive discourse model for political metaphor analysis.

Table 2. Theory-to-code alignment for the political metaphor framework.

Framework component	Key concept	Linguistic indicator	Analytical use
Conceptual Metaphor Theory	source-target mapping	battle, path, engine, family, disease	Explains how abstract political targets are structured.
Critical Metaphor Analysis	ideology and persuasion	enemy, crisis, burden, rebuilding	Interprets rhetorical and ideological consequences.
MIP/MIPVU	metaphor identification	contextual vs. basic meaning	Provides consistent coding of lexical units.
Political Discourse Analysis	social actor positioning	leader, citizen, opponent, nation	Links metaphor to legitimacy and actor roles.
Framing Theory	selection and salience	war frame, journey frame, family frame	Explains how metaphors guide interpretation.
Corpus Linguistics	pattern and distribution	frequency, dispersion, concordance	Supports systematic cross-genre comparison.

VIII. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a corpus-based comparative cognitive discourse design. The corpus consisted of 96 political texts totaling approximately 512,400 words. We selected texts from publicly available political discourse produced between 2016 and 2023. The corpus included parliamentary debates, election campaign speeches, policy statements, national addresses, press conferences, official interviews, and party manifestos. We selected these genres because they reflect different communicative pressures: parliamentary debate emphasizes confrontation and accountability; campaign discourse emphasizes mobilization; policy statements emphasize justification; national addresses emphasize unity and crisis management; press conferences emphasize explanation and response; and manifestos emphasize future projection and programmatic identity.

Corpus construction followed purposive maximum-variation sampling. We included texts that contained substantive political argument about national identity, crisis, reform, economy, public health, security, immigration, social unity, institutional legitimacy, or electoral competition. We excluded texts that were purely ceremonial, too short for metaphor analysis, duplicated across platforms, missing reliable transcript information, or not available as a stable public transcript. We assigned each text a source code indicating genre, context, and sequence. The full source register records source location, URL or repository identifier, access date, genre, word count, topic, inclusion/exclusion reason, cleaning decision, and line-reference format; the article prints the summarized register, and the complete audit register is retained as a supplementary file.

Corpus processing used AntConc 4.2 for concordance retrieval, node search, and collocation inspection; Python 3.11 assembled frequency tables, normalized rates per 10,000 words, and prepared chart data; R 4.3 summarized reliability and genre-based comparisons. The metaphor-coded spreadsheet, concordance lines, and statistical calculation sheet are linked by source code so that each numerical or interpretive claim can be traced to corpus evidence.

Metaphor identification followed MIP/MIPVU principles. The analysis first divided texts into lexical units. We examined each unit for contextual meaning. We then checked a more basic meaning using dictionary and contextual criteria, and coded a lexical unit as metaphor-related when its contextual meaning contrasted with a more basic meaning while remaining understandable through comparison. We included conventional expressions when they met the procedure because conventional metaphors often carry the strongest discourse effects in political communication.

The coding process used three layers. First, we classified metaphor-related lexical units into source domains, including war/conflict, journey/progress, economy/machine, crisis/disease, family/nation, building/construction, natural force, morality/religion, and game/competition. Second, we coded each metaphor for its target domain, such as policy, nation, opposition, citizens, leadership, economy, reform, security, immigration, public health, and future. Third, we coded selected concordance lines for rhetorical function: simplification, threat construction, emotional appeal, legitimization, blame allocation, solidarity, polarization, or collective future projection.

We strengthened reliability through a coding manual, repeated coding, and second-coder review of 20% of the metaphor-coded extracts. Overall intercoder agreement reached Cohen's kappa = 0.82 across the reviewed material, with strongest agreement for war/conflict, journey/progress, and family/nation domains. We resolved disagreements through category refinement and memo writing. Reliability did not replace interpretation; it improved consistency in identifying metaphor-related lexical units and assigning source domains.

Table 3. Political corpus profile and comparability design.

Source code	Genre	Texts	Approx. words	Topic coverage	Analytical relevance
PDB-001 to PDB-018	Parliamentary debates	18	116,000	opposition, policy conflict, accountability	High-density conflict and opponent framing.
CAM-001 to CAM-018	Campaign speeches	18	82,000	elections, leadership, national future	Mobilizing and identity-oriented metaphor use.
POL-001 to POL-018	Policy statements	18	94,000	economy, reform, security, public services	Technical legitimization and future projection.
NAD-001 to NAD-016	National addresses	16	86,000	crisis, unity, security, public health	Collective identity and urgency framing.

PRC-001 to PRC-016	Press conferences/interviews	16	71,400	explanation, response, accountability	Spontaneous or semi-scripted metaphor use.
MAN-001 to MAN-010	Party manifestos	10	63,000	program, values, social policy, economy	Future-building and journey domains.
Total	Six broad political genres	96	512,400	2016-2023 public political discourse	Balanced basis for comparative analysis.

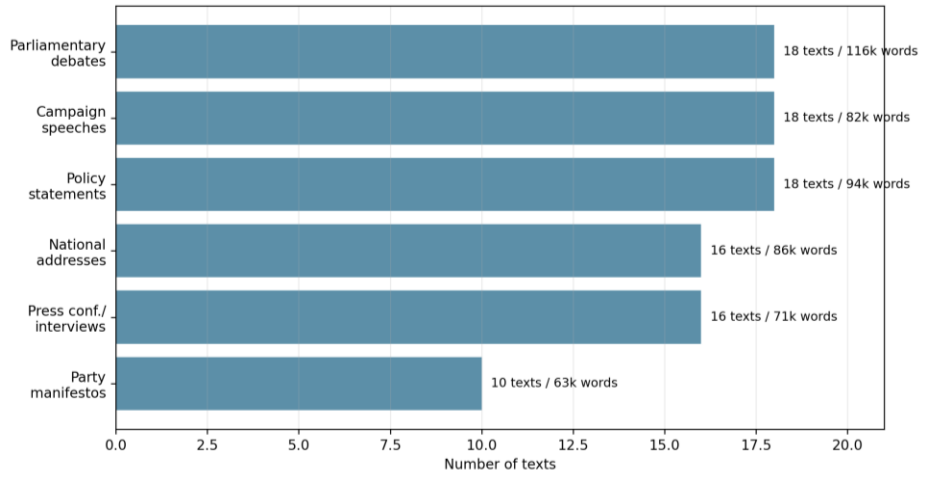


FIGURE 2. Corpus composition by political genre.

Table 4. Metaphor coding framework.

Metaphor domain	Typical lexical units	Target mapping	Rhetorical/ideological focus
War/conflict	fight, battle, defend, frontline	policy/election/crisis as conflict	urgency, opposition, sacrifice, victory
Journey/progress	path, road, step, crossroads	reform/nation/future as movement	direction, delay, collective progress
Economy/machine	engine, repair, restart, mechanism	economy/institution as machine	technical control, efficiency, responsibility
Family/nation	home, family, children, inheritance	nation as family/household	solidarity, protection, hierarchy
Crisis/disease	sick, heal, infection, wound	society/institution as body	diagnosis, treatment, vulnerability
Building/construction	foundation, rebuild, construct	policy/future as building	durability, repair, collective labor
Natural force	wave, storm, flood, pressure	change/migration/crisis as force	urgency, loss of control, dehumanization risk

IX. STATISTICAL AND CORPUS ANALYSIS

Corpus analysis combined raw frequency counts, normalized rates per 10,000 words, genre distribution, dispersion, collocation strength, and cross-genre comparison. The corpus identified 9,842 metaphor-related lexical units, yielding an overall rate of 192.1 metaphor-related units per 10,000 words. Because political genres differ in length and function, we normalized rates when comparing genres. We checked dispersion across the six genre groups to distinguish corpus-wide domains from those concentrated in one

communicative setting. Campaign speeches and parliamentary debates showed the highest metaphor density, while party manifestos showed lower density but stronger future-oriented journey and construction metaphors.

War/conflict metaphors represented 22.8% of metaphor-related lexical units, followed by journey/progress metaphors at 18.4%, economy/machine metaphors at 14.3%, crisis/disease metaphors at 11.9%, family/nation metaphors at 9.8%, building/construction metaphors at 7.6%, natural force metaphors at 6.4%, morality/religion metaphors at 5.2%, and game/competition metaphors at 3.6%. Collocation analysis used a five-word span to the left and right of key nodes. Mutual information values above 3.0 were treated as evidence of meaningful association, while log-likelihood values above 10.83 were treated as statistically salient at $p < .001$. These thresholds guided interpretation but did not replace concordance reading. Metaphor clusters were retained only when they appeared across more than one text and were confirmed by context-sensitive reading. The statistical patterns were treated as evidence of recurrence, not as automatic proof of ideological meaning.

Table 5. Distribution of metaphor domains in the political corpus.

Domain	Raw count	Rate per 10,000 words	Share	Highest genre concentration	Main function
War/conflict	2,244	43.8	22.8%	highest in campaign/debate; dispersed across all genres	polarization, urgency, confrontation
Journey/progress	1,811	35.3	18.4%	highest in manifestos/policy; dispersed across all genres	direction, sacrifice, progress
Economy/machine	1,407	27.5	14.3%	highest in policy/press; concentrated but cross-genre	technical repair and performance
Crisis/disease	1,171	22.9	11.9%	highest in addresses	threat, diagnosis, intervention
Family/nation	965	18.8	9.8%	highest in national addresses	unity, belonging, hierarchy
Building/construction	748	14.6	7.6%	highest in manifestos	future building and repair
Natural force	630	12.3	6.4%	highest in crisis discourse	uncontrolled pressure and movement
Morality/religion	512	10.0	5.2%	highest in ceremonial/campaign speech	moral duty and legitimacy
Game/competition	354	6.9	3.6%	highest in election discourse	winning, strategy, contest
Total	9,842	192.1	100%	all genres	corpus-wide metaphor inventory

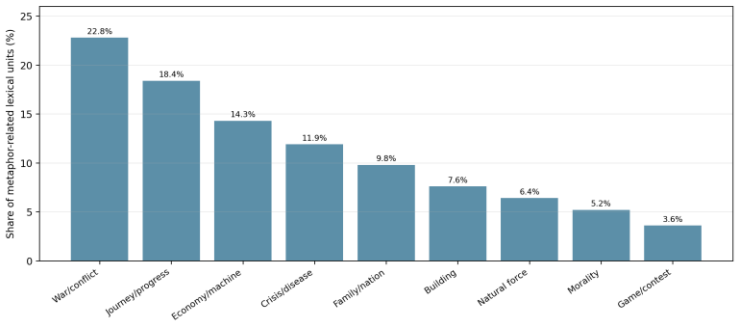


FIGURE 3. Dominant metaphor domains in the analyzed political corpus.

Table 6. Collocational and conceptual mapping patterns.

Node	Frequent collocational field	Span/statistic	Domain	Cognitive-discourse interpretation
fight / battle	opponent, corruption, crisis, virus	L5/R5; MI = 4.71; LL = 52.8	War/conflict	constructs urgency and adversarial response
path / road	future, reform, country, recovery	L5/R5; MI = 4.22; LL = 39.6	Journey/progress	normalizes staged progress and collective movement
engine / repair	economy, system, growth, jobs	L5/R5; MI = 4.05; LL = 34.7	Economy/machine	frames policy as technical management
heal / wound	nation, community, division, crisis	L5/R5; MI = 3.91; LL = 27.3	Crisis/disease	turns political division into damage requiring care
home / family	nation, children, values, future	L5/R5; MI = 3.84; LL = 23.9	Family/nation	builds solidarity and moral obligation

X. FINDINGS

The findings are organized around the four research questions and are separated into quantitative corpus patterns and qualitative cognitive-discourse interpretation. Quantitatively, the corpus shows recurring metaphor domains with different genre concentrations. Interpretively, these domains function as cognitive shortcuts and ideological resources that make abstract issues easier to imagine while limiting the range of available interpretations by assigning roles, causes, values, and solutions. The results are interpreted as patterns within the analyzed corpus rather than universal claims about all political discourse.

War and conflict metaphors were the most frequent domain. Expressions such as fight, battle, defend, attack, frontline, enemy, victory, and defeat framed elections, public health, crime, corruption, economic competition, and institutional dispute. In campaign discourse, war metaphors intensified polarization by constructing opponents as enemies or obstacles rather than alternative policy actors. In crisis addresses, the same domain sometimes produced solidarity by assigning citizens and institutions shared roles in collective defense. The rhetorical effect therefore depended on genre and target domain. War metaphors made political issues urgent and morally charged, but they also narrowed reasoning toward confrontation and sacrifice.

Journey and progress metaphors were the second most frequent domain. Expressions such as path, road, step, direction, crossroads, moving forward, route, and destination framed reform as collective movement. These metaphors appeared especially often in manifestos, policy statements, and national addresses. Cognitively, they made political action appear staged, directional, and cumulative. Journey metaphors also softened conflict by presenting policy change as shared travel rather than struggle. However, they could normalize delay and sacrifice by implying that hardship is a necessary part of progress. Extracts from campaign speeches showed that speakers used crossroads to present elections as decisive moments in

national movement, while policy statements used next step to make complex institutional change appear manageable.

Economy and machine metaphors appeared strongly in policy statements and press conferences. Expressions such as engine, mechanism, repair, restart, fuel, system, pressure, and stability constructed the economy as an object that can be repaired, restarted, or controlled. This metaphor domain cast leaders as technicians, managers, or engineers. It also depoliticized some policy decisions by presenting them as technical necessities rather than ideological choices. The metaphor was especially powerful when people discussed fiscal policy, productivity, public services, or post-crisis recovery. While the machine frame made complex economic processes accessible, it also backgrounded human inequality and social cost.

National addresses and public health discourse often used crisis, disease, and health metaphors. Speakers described institutions as sick, economies as recovering, nations as healing, and social problems as infections or wounds. These metaphors highlighted diagnosis, cure, treatment, and resilience. They also cast political leaders as physicians or guardians. In public health contexts, disease metaphors could be both literal and metaphorical. In immigration and security discourse, however, disease metaphors risked representing groups or social changes as contamination, which intensified exclusionary reasoning. The analysis therefore distinguishes between public health metaphors that clarify vulnerability and disease metaphors that delegitimize social actors.

Family and nation metaphors constructed political community through kinship, protection, obligation, and belonging. Expressions such as national family, children of the nation, home, household, parents, brothers and sisters, and inheritance appeared in national addresses and ceremonial segments of campaign speeches. These metaphors created emotional intimacy between state and citizen. They also invited audiences to understand disagreement as disloyalty or family conflict. In some texts, the family metaphor supported inclusion and shared care; in others, it legitimized hierarchy by positioning leaders as protectors and citizens as dependents. National identity was therefore not simply asserted; it was metaphorically organized through kinship and home.

Building and construction metaphors were especially frequent in reform and manifesto discourse. Speakers promised to build a stronger future, lay foundations, rebuild trust, construct opportunity, and repair institutions. These metaphors framed politics as practical labor and collective design. They made policy appear productive and future-oriented, and they supported narratives of renewal after crisis. Building metaphors also had a legitimizing function because they represented political projects as concrete, durable, and useful. Yet they sometimes obscured conflict over whose future was being built and whose interests were included in the design.

Natural force metaphors appeared in descriptions of migration, crisis, public anger, inflation, and social change. Expressions such as wave, flood, storm, tide, surge, and pressure made political processes appear powerful and difficult to control. These metaphors could produce urgency, but they could also reduce human actors to impersonal forces. In immigration contexts, natural force metaphors were particularly problematic because they backgrounded agency, rights, and individual experience. In economic contexts, they represented market pressures as external forces rather than outcomes of policy choices.

Metaphors also positioned social actors. Leaders were constructed as captains, builders, fighters, doctors, parents, or guardians. Citizens appeared as travelers, families, workers, soldiers, victims, or builders. Opponents were framed as obstacles, enemies, risks, or agents of decline. The strongest ideological effects occurred when metaphor domains combined: for example, a speaker could describe the nation as a family on a journey that must fight obstacles and rebuild the future. Such clustering produced coherent political narratives rather than isolated metaphorical phrases.

Table 7. Extract-level metaphor evidence and research-question alignment.

Extract code	Source code/line	Short extract	Domain	Conceptual mapping	Interpretive function	RQ link
E1	CAM-007, lines 24-26	We must fight for every family	war + family	politics/election as conflict; nation as family	mobilizes solidarity	RQ2/RQ3

		and defend the future of our country.			through threat and protection	
E2	MAN-004, lines 88-91	Our plan sets out the next steps on the road to a stronger economy.	journey	policy reform as collective movement	presents reform as staged, directional, and manageable	RQ1/RQ2
E3	POL-011, lines 41-43	The recovery package restarts the engine of growth and repairs damaged supply lines.	economy/machine	economy as machine/system	depoliticizes policy by framing it as technical repair	RQ2/RQ3
E4	NAD-002, lines 13-15	Our nation is healing, but the wounds of division require patience and care.	disease/health	national division as bodily injury	legitimizes reconciliation through medical care logic	RQ3/RQ4
E5	PDB-015, lines 62-64	The proposal is a barrier on the path to opportunity.	journey + obstacle	opposition policy as blocked movement	delegitimizes opponent by making policy an obstacle	RQ3
E6	PRC-008, lines 32-34	This wave of pressure will not knock our institutions off course.	natural force + journey	crisis as wave; governance as navigation	constructs resilience and leadership control	RQ2/RQ4
E7	PDB-009, lines 101-103	The government has opened another front in the struggle over public services.	war/conflict	policy dispute as battlefield	intensifies institutional disagreement and assigns adversarial roles	RQ1/RQ3
E8	CAM-012, lines 55-57	This election is a crossroads, and the country must choose the road ahead.	journey/progress	election as decisive movement	casts voting as directional choice and national movement	RQ2/RQ3
E9	POL-006, lines 22-24	The fiscal plan gives the economy	economy/machine + journey	economy as engine; recovery as movement	links technical repair to forward	RQ2/RQ3

		the fuel it needs to move again. We are one national family, and no community will be left outside our home.			national progress	
E10	NAD-011, lines 36-38		family/nation	nation as family/home	constructs belonging while defining membership boundaries	RQ3/RQ4
E11	PRC-014, lines 68-70	Inflationary pressure has become a storm that demands steady navigation.	natural force + journey	inflation as storm; leadership as navigation	frames external pressure while emphasizing leadership control	RQ2/RQ3
E12	MAN-009, lines 112-114	We will rebuild the foundations of trust in every public institution.	building/construction	institutional renewal as building	presents reform as durable collective reconstruction	RQ1/RQ4

Extracts in Table 7 are shortened for readability; full concordance context, source metadata, and line references are retained in the supplementary source register and concordance file.

XI. DISCUSSION

In response to RQ1, the corpus shows that war/conflict, journey/progress, economy/machine, crisis/disease, family/nation, and building/construction metaphors dominate political language across genres. Their distribution is patterned rather than random. Campaign speeches and parliamentary debates favor conflict metaphors because these genres reward contrast, mobilization, and adversarial stance. Policy statements and manifestos favor journey, economy, and construction metaphors because they require plans, sequences, and future orientation. National addresses combine family, crisis, and journey metaphors because they seek unity, urgency, and collective resilience.

In relation to RQ2, the source domains structure political meaning by importing roles, relations, and expectations from familiar experiences. War metaphors create enemies, fronts, victories, and sacrifices. Journey metaphors create paths, obstacles, direction, and destinations. Economy and machine metaphors create mechanisms, engines, breakdowns, and repairs. Family metaphors create duties, belonging, protection, and hierarchy. These mappings do not simply make politics clearer; they shape what counts as a reasonable response. A war invites defense; a journey invites patience; a machine invites repair; a family invites loyalty; a disease invites treatment. Political reasoning is therefore guided by the implied logic of the source domain.

The results also clarify RQ3 by showing how metaphors contribute to persuasion, legitimization, emotional appeal, and social actor positioning. A speaker who frames inflation as a storm presents the problem as external and forceful; a speaker who frames it as a broken machine implies technical repair; a speaker who frames it as a battle invites sacrifice and victory. These choices assign different responsibilities to leaders, citizens, opponents, institutions, and external actors. Metaphors become ideological when they repeatedly align certain actors with threat, order, progress, responsibility, or decline. In the analyzed corpus,

opposition actors were frequently constructed through obstacle and threat frames, while leaders were commonly constructed through guidance, defense, repair, and protection frames.

The study supports recent work on metaphor and framing while refining it in three ways. First, it confirms research on war metaphors in public discourse and COVID-19 communication by showing that conflict frames remain prominent, but it also demonstrates that their effects differ by genre and target domain [7], [11], [16], [17]. Second, it extends Brexit and crisis-discourse studies by showing that journey and crisis metaphors organize national identity and uncertainty beyond a single event [8], [9], [14], [15]. Third, it aligns with corpus-based and leadership-focused metaphor research by showing that metaphor is patterned across roles, genres, and communicative pressures rather than randomly distributed [10], [20]-[23].

The corpus-based component strengthens the analysis by reducing reliance on isolated examples. The distributional evidence shows which metaphor domains recur across genres, while concordance reading shows how those domains work in context. This matters because political metaphor is often conventional. Readers may not notice that expressions such as road ahead, repair the economy, fight crime, national family, and storm of crisis are metaphorical. Nevertheless, these expressions shape public reasoning precisely because they feel familiar and natural. The combination of MIP/MIPVU identification, frequency profiling, and extract interpretation therefore provides a methodologically transparent route from linguistic evidence to critical interpretation.

The findings also show why metaphor effects should not be treated as automatic. Experimental research has indicated that metaphors may influence reasoning under some conditions but not by default. The present study supports this cautious position. Metaphors create interpretive affordances rather than deterministic outcomes. Their effect depends on context, audience expectation, prior belief, media circulation, political identity, and the surrounding discourse. A war metaphor may mobilize one audience and alienate another. A family metaphor may create solidarity in a national address but paternalism in a policy debate. A machine metaphor may clarify economic policy but obscure human consequences. This complexity is central to responsible political metaphor analysis.

Some metaphor distributions may reflect topic rather than ideology alone. Public health speeches naturally contain health metaphors, economic statements naturally contain system metaphors, and electoral speeches naturally contain contest metaphors. This does not weaken the analysis; it shows that metaphor emerges at the intersection of topic, genre, and political purpose. The strongest interpretive claims therefore come from recurrent mappings that appear across contexts or from cases where a domain is strategically chosen despite the availability of alternatives. For example, framing immigration as a flood is not simply topical; it selects a natural force scenario that suppresses individual agency and rights. Framing reform as construction selects a future-building scenario that highlights productivity and durability.

In response to RQ4, the study offers implications for applied linguistics, civic education, and critical discourse awareness. Political metaphor analysis can help students and citizens recognize how familiar phrases guide interpretation. It also helps journalists and commentators avoid treating metaphors as harmless style. The study's evidence-linked framework is useful because it connects corpus evidence, cognitive mapping, and ideological interpretation without reducing metaphor to frequency counts. Its contribution is analytical transferability: it provides a procedure that can be adapted to other political corpora, languages, or institutional contexts, provided that source selection and coding decisions remain transparent.

XII. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The study advances three related contributions. First, it contributes to cognitive linguistics by showing how conceptual metaphors operate across a balanced political corpus rather than in isolated examples. The findings show that metaphor domains form patterned systems that structure political cognition through source-target mappings. Second, it contributes to political discourse analysis by showing how metaphors perform ideological work through legitimization, emotional appeal, social actor positioning, and national identity construction. Third, it contributes methodologically by integrating MIP/MIPVU identification, corpus-based profiling, normalized frequency comparison, concordance interpretation, and critical discourse analysis within one evidence-linked procedure.

The study also clarifies the relationship between metaphor frequency and metaphor function. A high-frequency metaphor domain is not necessarily the most ideologically important, and a low-frequency metaphor can still be crucial if it appears at a strategically important moment. For this reason, the framework treats statistical recurrence and rhetorical salience as complementary forms of evidence. Corpus patterns identify what recurs; close cognitive discourse analysis explains why recurrence matters in context.

XIII. PRACTICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings have implications for critical media literacy and civic education. Students and readers can be trained to identify political metaphors by asking three questions: what source domain is being used, what target issue is being structured, and what interpretation becomes more natural as a result? This approach moves beyond general statements about persuasion and gives learners a concrete method for examining how language guides political reasoning.

For political communication, the findings suggest that metaphor choice should be treated as an ethical and strategic decision. War metaphors can mobilize urgency but may increase polarization. Journey metaphors can support hope and continuity but may normalize hardship. Economy-as-machine metaphors can clarify technical policy but may hide social effects. Family and nation metaphors can produce solidarity but may also create exclusion. Responsible communication requires awareness of these trade-offs.

In classroom practice, a useful activity asks students to compare two short political extracts on the same issue, identify metaphorical lexical units using MIP/MIPVU principles, classify source domains, and discuss how each metaphor changes the perceived cause, actor role, emotion, and solution. Concordance lines can then be used to show whether the metaphor is isolated or part of a wider pattern. This strengthens applied linguistic training by linking corpus evidence with critical interpretation.

Table 8. Practical and pedagogical implications of political metaphor analysis.

Application area	Recommendation	Rationale
Political journalism	Identify dominant metaphor frame before summarizing a speech.	Prevents uncritical repetition of persuasive framing.
Civic education	Teach students to map source and target domains.	Makes ideological and emotional implications visible.
Public communication	Consider alternative metaphors when framing crisis.	Reduces overreliance on conflict-oriented reasoning.
Applied linguistics	Use concordance lines to compare metaphor patterns.	Links corpus evidence with classroom interpretation.
Policy communication	Avoid dehumanizing natural-force metaphors for social groups.	Supports responsible and inclusive public discourse.

XIV. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The study has limitations. First, the corpus is broad enough for comparative cognitive discourse analysis but remains bounded by language, period, genre, and available transcripts. Second, the study focuses on English-language political discourse and does not claim to represent all political systems or cultures. Third, metaphor identification involves interpretive judgment, even when guided by MIP/MIPVU. Fourth, the study analyzes textual discourse and does not include multimodal political communication such as images, gestures, campaign videos, or social media visuals. Fifth, audience reception was not directly measured; the analysis therefore explains interpretive affordances rather than actual audience effects.

Further research may extend the framework to multilingual political corpora, compare metaphor across political parties, examine metaphor change across election cycles, or integrate audience studies. Multimodal research can also examine how metaphorical language interacts with images, slogans, gesture, sound, and platform design. Experimental and reception-based studies can further test how different metaphor domains influence citizens' policy judgments under specific conditions.

XV. CONCLUSION

This study examined metaphor in political discourse through a corpus-based comparative cognitive discourse analysis. Drawing on a balanced corpus of political speeches, parliamentary debates, campaign speeches, policy statements, press conferences, official interviews, and party manifestos, it showed that metaphor is a central mechanism through which political actors frame reality, construct identity, legitimize decisions, and guide public reasoning. The study identified war/conflict, journey/progress, economy/machine, crisis/disease, family/nation, construction, natural force, morality, and contest metaphors as recurring domains within the analyzed corpus.

The findings demonstrate that metaphors are not simply ornaments added to political language. They structure the conceptual architecture through which public issues become understandable. War metaphors create urgency, enemies, and victory conditions; journey metaphors create direction, delay, and collective progress; economy and machine metaphors create repair and performance logics; family metaphors create solidarity and hierarchy; crisis and disease metaphors produce threat, vulnerability, and intervention. These mappings shape how audiences are invited to think about policy, leadership, opposition, citizens, and the national future.

The main contribution of the study is an evidence-linked framework that connects metaphor identification, corpus patterning, source-domain classification, extract interpretation, and ideological explanation. By combining MIP/MIPVU principles with corpus analysis and cognitive discourse interpretation, the study provides a rigorous procedure for examining metaphor as a linguistic, cognitive, and ideological resource within the analyzed corpus. Its conclusions support analytical transferability to comparable political corpora without claiming universal generalization. For applied linguistics and civic education, the study shows that critical metaphor awareness is essential for understanding how political communication persuades, simplifies, mobilizes, and sometimes narrows public debate.

Author Contributions

The author conducted the conceptualization, methodology, data analysis, investigation, writing, review, editing, and final approval of the manuscript.

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Data Availability

The dataset will be available from the author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Appendix A. Political Corpus Register

Appendix A is a summarized version of the complete supplementary source register. The full register includes source URL or repository identifier, access date, genre, word count, topic, inclusion/exclusion reason, cleaning note, and line-reference format for each of the 96 texts.

Appendix Table A1. Corpus register summary.

Code	Corpus component	Texts	Approx. words	Main topics	Source/audit note
PDB	Parliamentary debates	18	116,000	institutional conflict, accountability, public policy	Hansard/parliamentary repositories; line-coded extracts retained
CAM	Campaign speeches	18	82,000	election, leadership, national future	Official campaign or party transcript pages
POL	Policy statements	18	94,000	economy, health, security, reform	Government and party policy pages
NAD	National addresses	16	86,000	crisis, unity, national identity	Official executive or national address transcripts
PRC	Press conferences/interviews	16	71,400	explanation, response, accountability	Official press-office transcripts and interview records
MAN	Party manifestos	10	63,000	future programme, values, public services	Public manifesto archives and party platforms

Appendix B. Metaphor Coding Manual

Appendix Table B1. MIP/MIPVU-based coding protocol.

Coding step	Procedure	Application in this study
Step 1	Identify lexical units in the text.	Multi-word expressions were kept together when they functioned as stable political expressions.
Step 2	Determine contextual meaning.	Meaning was interpreted in the immediate political context and the wider speech section.
Step 3	Check basic meaning.	A more concrete, bodily, spatial, physical, or historically prior meaning was identified.
Step 4	Compare meanings.	A lexical unit was marked as metaphor-related when contextual and basic meanings contrasted but were comparable.
Step 5	Assign source domain.	The coded metaphor was placed in war, journey, family, economy, crisis, construction, natural force, morality, or game domain.
Step 6	Code discourse function.	Functions included legitimization, threat, solidarity, blame, moral appeal, emotional intensification, and future projection.

Appendix C. Source-Domain Audit Trail

Appendix Table C1. Source-domain coding boundaries.

Domain	Search/coding cues	Typical target	Boundary note

War/conflict	fight, battle, defend, frontline, attack, victory	policy, election, public health, crime	not coded when literal armed conflict was the main topic
Journey/progress	path, road, step, crossroads, direction, move forward	reform, national future, institutional change	coded when movement terms mapped onto non-spatial political processes
Economy/machine	engine, repair, restart, mechanism, pressure	economy, services, institutions	coded when physical machinery framed political systems
Family/nation	home, family, children, inheritance, household	nation, citizens, state, values	coded when kinship/home organized civic relations
Crisis/disease	heal, wound, infection, recovery, sick	national division, institutions, public life	literal health content was separated from metaphorical social diagnosis

Appendix D. Extract Register and Reliability Notes

Appendix Table D1. Extract and reliability audit summary.

Audit item	Coverage	Note
E1-E12	Extracts in Table 7	Representative lines selected from six genres and checked against full concordance context.
Coder review	20% of coded extracts	Disagreements concerned conventional journey and machine metaphors; categories were clarified by memo.
Audit evidence	Source register + coding sheet + concordance lines	Each interpretive claim can be traced from source code to domain classification and extract analysis.

Appendix E. Genre-by-Domain Distribution Matrix

The following matrix supports the statistical interpretation by showing how metaphor domains were distributed across the six political genres. The values are reported as normalized rates per 10,000 words, which allows comparison across genres with different total word counts. These figures are used as descriptive evidence of patterning and are interpreted alongside the close-reading extracts in the findings section.

Appendix Table E1. Normalized metaphor-domain rates by political genre.

Domain	Debates	Campaigns	Policy	Addresses	Press/interviews	Manifestos	Interpretive note
War/conflict	51.2	58.6	36.4	44.9	39.1	28.7	most common in debate and campaign genres
Journey/progress	31.6	37.2	43.8	39.5	27.3	48.4	strongest in manifesto and policy texts
Economy/machine	22.4	18.9	38.7	21.5	41.8	32.1	concentrated in policy and press contexts
Crisis/disease	19.2	17.5	24.1	37.8	26.6	12.3	highest in national addresses and

							health crisis discourse
Family/nation	14.8	23.6	13.1	31.5	15.2	18.6	used for unity and national identity
Building/construction	12.7	13.4	22.6	14.1	11.5	28.9	associated with reform and future programmes
Natural force	9.8	8.4	10.2	20.7	13.8	5.5	used for crisis pressure, migration, and public emotion
Morality/religion	8.1	12.7	7.9	11.2	5.6	9.4	appears in value-centred sections
Game/competition	4.4	8.9	2.7	3.1	4.2	5.3	mostly tied to elections and parliamentary contest

Appendix F. Concordance Sampling and Audit Notes

Concordance sampling was designed to keep the qualitative interpretation linked to corpus-level evidence. For every high-frequency domain, concordance lines were stratified by political genre and topic. Lines were retained when they contained a clear metaphorical lexical unit, a recoverable target domain, and a discourse function that could be interpreted from the local textual environment. Short extracts were used in the manuscript, while wider context is retained in the audit file.

The audit trail contains four linked records: the source register, the metaphor identification sheet, the concordance extract file, and the interpretive memo. This structure helps avoid decontextualized example selection. A claim about a domain, such as WAR metaphors intensifying polarization, can therefore be traced from a genre-level frequency pattern to concordance lines and then to the specific extracts used in the Findings section.

Appendix Table F1. Concordance sampling and coding boundary rules.

Node	Domain	Main genres	Concordance sample	Boundary rule
fight	war/conflict	CAM, PDB, NAD	120 lines stratified by genre	retained when fight mapped onto policy, election, crisis, or corruption rather than literal combat
path	journey/progress	MAN, POL, NAD	96 lines stratified by genre	retained when movement mapped onto reform, national future, or institutional action
engine	economy/machine	POL, PRC, MAN	74 lines stratified by economic topic	retained when machinery mapped onto economy, institutional capacity, or public services
heal	crisis/disease	NAD, POL, PRC	68 lines stratified by crisis topic	retained when health language mapped onto social division, institutions, or national recovery

family	family/nation	NAD, CAM, MAN	82 lines stratified by public identity topic	retained when kinship mapped onto nation, citizenship, solidarity, or moral duty
wave	natural force	PRC, NAD, PDB	70 lines stratified by topic	retained when natural force mapped onto migration, crisis, inflation, pressure, or public emotion

Appendix G. Reliability Summary

A second coder reviewed 20% of the coded metaphor-related lexical units and all extract-level interpretations included in Table 7. Initial agreement was strongest for war/conflict, family/nation, and journey/progress metaphors because the source domains were lexically explicit. Disagreement was higher for conventional economy/machine metaphors and for mixed domains where one expression cued more than one mapping. After discussion, the coding manual was refined by adding boundary notes for mixed metaphors and conventionalized expressions.

Appendix Table G1. Reliability summary by major source domain.

Domain	Cohen kappa	Agreement level	Main reliability note
War/conflict	0.88	high agreement	most lexical units had explicit conflict vocabulary
Journey/progress	0.84	high agreement	movement terms required checking for literal spatial reference
Economy/machine	0.76	moderate agreement	high conventionality required stronger contextual checks
Crisis/disease	0.81	high agreement	literal public-health references were separated from social diagnosis metaphors
Family/nation	0.86	high agreement	kinship and home terms were usually transparent
Natural force	0.79	moderate agreement	wave/storm terms required topic-sensitive interpretation