

The concept of HISTORY in US political news

1. Introduction

1. 1. Politics and language

Politics is part of our everyday lives.¹ For better or for worse, it shapes our decisions, provides us with opportunities, or limits them, and deeply affects the way we think about the world. In modern democratic societies, the media plays a key role in sending political messages. The link between political actors and the media is evident: if a political system becomes more democratic, the need to convince followers about certain policies grows, and this is realized through various media, which political actors “may seek to control, manipulate or influence” (Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric* 6). The importance of persuasive media is heightened by the increasing number of unreliable information, most often found on the internet, which makes people distrustful – for this reason, as Charteris-Black (*Politicians and Rhetoric* 4) points out, politicians and political groups need to focus even more on building trust with their voters and sounding convincing.

For this reason, newspapers are inclined to choose an audience with specific political views and give up some of their objectivity by downplaying the importance of certain topics and favoring others, or by presenting certain political actors as more appealing opposed to others. They can publish articles which are not meant to be objective by their genre, such as political opinion pieces. The support of a political group can get even more direct that: for example, American newspapers can express their support to presidential candidates by public endorsement.

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The growing media, though it utilizes other types of modalities, is still primarily language based. Language is thus claimed to be the “lifeblood of politics” (Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric* 4). Politicians require the assistance of speechwriters more often than before (Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric* 5) – the professionalization of political communication signals its increasing importance. Apart from being right, politicians and political groups also need to sound right to their audiences. For this reason, a large variety of rhetoric and linguistic devices are used, which act in combination to gain greater results in changing the audience’s cognition. (Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric* 10). While these strategies do not work in isolation, for the purposes of scientific analysis, they must be separated and studied in this manner.

1. 2. The concept of HISTORY in political discourse

Political speech, though it often aims to influence, is also influenced by many factors. One of these is history, especially the knowledge shared in a society about past events. Politicians of any party can claim that they are continuing history: by gaining power in the world of politics, they can also influence economic, social and cultural matters, and thus make their mark upon almost every realm that is studied in the field of history. However, history is viewed not only as a prelude to the current events, but also as a tool which aids good political decisions (Faber 36-38). As Schieder (1) puts it: “[h]istorical consciousness is not restricted to retrospective contemplation, but instead draws conclusions from the past and applies them to goals that lie in the future.” To put it another way: much like a precedent in a system of case law, a historic event can be likened to situations in the present, and the right course of action can be determined based on that previous events’ outcome. Nevertheless, people with different political views also differ on the way history can be applied to real life (Faber 37-38).

1. 3. Cultural and Cognitive Linguistics

How political actors understand and implement historic knowledge is important in interpreting their ideology, their preferences, and their way of thinking. More often than not, they are eager to tell others about this; but a crucial problem with this is that self-assessment is rarely accurate. “What people will tell you about their worldview does not necessarily accurately reflect how they reason, how they categorize, how they speak, and how they act” (Lakoff 28).

One can overcome this difficulty with the help of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, a field within the larger studies of Cognitive Linguistics. Adherents of this theory claim that metaphor is not only a literary device, but a cognitive tool – thus if one wishes to understand how people think about an abstract concept, one can analyze the metaphors they use. In my case, the abstract concept will be the same (HISTORY), and the subjects of analysis will be the concrete, tangible concepts which are connected to it on the basis of similarity.

As claimed by Lakoff and Johnson’s Conceptual Metaphor Theory (or CMT for short), first introduced in their co-authored book *Metaphors We Live By*, metaphor permeates everyday speech. They recognize that common human expressions - such as these examples taken from the world of business: *the road to success*, *reaping benefits* and *the head of the department* – are all metaphorical. Adherents of metaphor theory thus claim that metaphors are used by everyone unconsciously, in many communicative situations, and not only by talented poets and writers (Kövecses 2010). The reason for this, in their view, is that metaphors are an essential cognitive device: if a person needs to think about an abstract concept, one often imagines it in terms of another concept, which is more tangible and concrete (Kövecses 2010). This connection is established on likeness, which is why the two concepts create a metaphor, a device based on similarity. The abstract concept which needs to be understood is called the target domain, while the concrete concept is called the source domain (Kövecses, *Practical Introduction* 4). The resulting cognitive device is called a conceptual metaphor. The

correspondences between the two concepts which are similar are called mappings (Kövecses, *Practical Introduction* 7).

The concept of conventional and novel metaphors – which partly follow from this short description – are also established (see Kövecses, *Practical Introduction* 34-35). Conventional metaphors are “invoked so frequently that native speakers consider their linguistic expression to be institutionalized units” (Shie 1322). For this reason, lexicalized metaphors (and other figures of speech, such as metonymies) can even be found in dictionaries at times (Shie 1322). Novel metaphors, on the other hand, are freshly created, and thus their users are still aware that they are metaphors. Contrary to popular belief, they are not created only by people who use language professionally, such as writers and poets, but also by ordinary creative minds (Kövecses 2010). If novel metaphors are apt and popular enough, they can become conventional metaphors.

When Conceptual Metaphor Theory was first described by Lakoff and Johnson, they claimed that conceptual metaphors are rooted in bodily experience which all humans share and thus they have taken “a fundamentally universalist stance” about metaphors (Musolff 2). But another approach, stressed by Kövecses (*Metaphor in Culture; Language, Mind and Culture*) and by Musolff, claims that there is cultural variation in metaphor use. Musolff (2-4) cites the growing number of research which supports this argument. Kövecses (*Metaphor in Culture* 3) claims that “variation in metaphor appears to be just as important and common as universality”. He proposes two modifications to classic CMT theory. One of these is that “[i]t is complex metaphors – not primary metaphors – with which people actually engage in their thought in real cultural contexts”. Primary metaphors are those which emerge from bodily experience – complex metaphors are born from combining primary metaphors together influenced by culture (Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture* 11). The other modification he suggests is that metaphors can have major themes, which he calls the main meaning focus (such as the idea of progress for the

LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor), and these are often culture specific (Kövecses, *Metaphor in Culture* 11-12).

Kövecses (“Context in Cultural Linguistics” 308) consequently argues that culture and cognition are linked. Two separate fields in linguistics, namely Cognitive and Cultural Linguistics are concerned with these two aspects. Cultural Linguistics, in Sharifian’s definition, is focused on “the features of human languages that encode culturally constructed conceptualizations” and thus it examines the relationship between language and cultural conceptualizations. But in Kövecses’s view, this is only a matter of focus: if we are more focused on the cognitive aspect, we are using a cognitive linguistic approach, while if we concentrate on the cultural aspect, we are using the cultural linguistic approach (Kövecses, “Context in Cultural Linguistics” 308). But even if they are separated for scientific purposes, in practice, cognition and culture are in a close relationship with one another. Kövecses’s approach integrates those two main perspectives; therefore, it can provide a more complex view of the discourse that I will be analyzing. For this reason, I have chosen it as the theoretical framework for the purposes of my study.

In the same work in which Kövecses explores the relationship between Cognitive and Cultural Linguistics (Kövecses, “Context and Cultural Linguistics”), he also attempts to describe the contexts that influence the use of metaphors. He identifies four types of contexts: the cognitive-cultural context, the situational context, the discourse context, and the bodily context.

The first, the cultural-cognitive context consists of the conceptual system, ideologies the memory of events and things, and of concepts and interests. He understands the conceptual system as the collection of concepts in the human mind, which are represented as so-called frames or models. Some of these concepts can be likened to one another, and thus they can “stand in a metaphorical relationship to one another” (Kövecses, “Context in Cultural

Linguistics” 309-313). A frame is “a structured mental representation of a conceptual category”, which is used to describe individual concepts, and which is “idealized in several ways” (Kövecses, “Organizing Knowledge” 65-68). Concepts that appear also appear in literature, such as cultural model, domain, schema, idealized cognitive model (ICM), which are approximately the same ideas, will be considered synonyms in this work.

The second context is the situational context, which is also more often called extralinguistic context. It is also connected to culture because it involves knowledge about the cultural situation, but apart from that, it also consists of social situation and the physical setting. The physical setting is used in a rather broad sense here because it can also involve a perceptual experience which is shared between the communicating partners.

The discourse context involves the immediate linguistic context (which is also called cotext). For example, metaphors need to be adjusted to the audience’s level of language proficiency, preferred ways of language use, and other primarily linguistic factors. The discourse context also comprises of previous discourses on the same topic and the knowledge about the main elements of the discourse (Kövecses, “Context in Cultural Linguistics” 314-316).

Kövecses (“Context in Cultural Linguistics” 316-317) also notes that the body “can [...] prime the use of particular metaphors” in local and universal contexts as well. For example, left-handers prefer the use of the MORAL IS LEFT metaphor, while right-handers do the opposite (Casasanto). This metaphor comes from their bodily experience – left-handers can use their left hands better, and this notion of goodness is transferred to the abstract concept of morality. This context is called the bodily context.

According to the theory of Kövecses (“Context in Cultural Linguistics” 317-322), when a person chooses to use metaphor as a device of communication, they go through four cognitive steps. The first step is to choose metaphor out of the available cognitive operations, and dismiss

other options, such as metonymy or the use of mental spaces. The conceptualizer is then met with information and memories of previous experiences from the various context types. Thirdly, one context is selected from these, and it “primes the speaker to use the matching metaphorical expression”. This process is supported by conceptual pathways, which are made of multiple conceptual metaphors and metonymies, and which form a strong connection between the two meanings in the mind.

1. 4. Previous literature on metaphors in political speech

The examination of metaphors in political speech with a cognitive linguistic approach has been a popular and fruitful research subject since the birth of this paradigm. One of the first scholars studying it is a founding father of Cognitive Linguistics, George Lakoff, who authored the book *Moral Politics: How Conservatives and Liberals Think*, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding Republican and Democrat political discourse. He claims that politics is always connected with one’s moral ideals, and that the central concept with which Americans understand the world of politics is the NATION IS A FAMILY metaphor (Lakoff). In this metaphor, people are imagined as children, and the state as a parent. The misunderstandings between Republicans and Democrats, in Lakoff’s view, can be explained by the fact that they imagine two very different parents when they think and reason about the state: Republicans conceptualize it as a STRICT FATHER, and Democrats view it as a NURTURANT PARENT (Lakoff). This division can be seen in the heated arguments over cultural matters, the so-called culture wars. This conflict found its way into education as well (Lakoff 118-121), since the curriculums are representations of what certain groups of American people value, what kind of knowledge about the world they want to pass on to their descendants. And because history curricula deal with a wide range of sensitive issues regarding politics, society, economy, and so on, there is no better subject to have such political debates about than history.

Other researchers have also dealt with metaphors in political discourse. There have been analyses of political discourse in different countries such as Taiwan (Wei) or Nigeria (Taiwo). Stojan and Mijić explored metaphors of the abstract concept POLITICS itself comparing the political discourses of three countries: Croatia, Italy and the USA. Other researchers have been remained closer to American political discourse. Nicholas Howe claims that “[t]he metaphors used in contemporary American political discourse draw heavily and systematically from the terminology of sports and warfare” (Howe 87). Stojan and Mijić agree with that, adding the source domain JOURNEY to this list, and noting that “personification and reification are employed creating ontological metaphors, through which political party is conceived as a person, or the world of politics is conceived through concrete objects” (72).

The research of Charteris-Black (*Politicians and Rhetoric*), which analyzes the speeches of British and American politicians, also lists metaphors connected to history. In his data, JOURNEY metaphors are the most common. He explains this with historical and cultural context, claiming that the historical experiences of migration and space travel lead to the increased frequency of journey metaphors. A subset of JOURNEY metaphors, the metaphor HISTORY IS A JOURNEY also appears in his corpora, for example in Bill Clinton’s and Martin Luther King’s data. It is important to note that both politicians use their metaphor with their own twist – which can also be thought of as a main meaning focus. For example, Martin Luther King’s HISTORY IS A JOURNEY metaphor is used in connection with the struggle for freedom, while Bill Clinton’s metaphor is connected to rebirth and renewal. For nation-cultures, the figure who makes these journeys is often the personified nation, and this idea appears in Bill Clinton’s work as well (Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric*, 82, 96, 198-213).

Other metaphors for history which appear in Charteris-Black’s data are THE HISTORY IS A PERSON metaphor, present in George Bush Junior’s and Winston Churchill’s rhetoric. Personifications are especially persuasive metaphors, because they “create a feeling of identity

between the political leader and the inevitability of events” (Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric*, 261). This device works by painting history as a person, who implies a historic analogy between a previous event and the current situation, and based on that, gives advice to the political community to make a good decision. This advice, of course, is in line with the politician’s own agenda, but does not seem like their own, but rather coming from a more objective and authoritative source.

The third metaphor for history, which is present in Barack Obama’s rhetoric, is the HISTORY IS A BOOK metaphor. As Charteris-Black (*Politicians and Rhetoric*, 299) asserts, it is a conventional metaphor which has originated from a metonymy (HISTORY BOOKS FOR HISTORY) – since history is learnt in school, from teachers and from books.

1. 5. The purpose of metaphors in political speeches

In political discourse, metaphors are used perhaps even more frequently than in everyday speech, because they are a versatile tool to convey meaning, and if they are well-chosen, metaphors can leave a lasting impression. Their shortness also makes them attractive – they can be elements in so-called sound bites, which are defined as “short, memorable and quotable phrases” and which are “effective because they encapsulate arguments by compressing a large idea into a small number of words” (Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric* 9). However, sound bites are not always metaphorical. Examples also include Tony Blair’s phrase “Tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime” or J. F. Kennedy’s quote “ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country” (Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric* 10).

The first function of metaphors is to aid understanding, because it helps the audience comprehend an abstract concept in terms of something more concrete (Shie 1329). For example, in Margaret Thatcher’s metaphors, the budget of a country and the budget of a common household are likened to each other (Charteris-Black *Politicians and Rhetoric* 35-36). Most

people who listened to her speeches had no experience about the system of the national budget, but almost every one of them encountered the problem of trying to balance their own income and expenses. This made them able to imagine how budgeting could work similarly on a larger scale and made them more susceptible to Mrs. Thatcher's argument (that the nation must not spend more than it is able to earn). But this metaphor did not only shed light on an issue, but also hid the differences that arise from comparing household and national budgeting – such as differing income and outcome structures, or conditions of borrowing money. Both mechanisms could be at work when a metaphor is uttered, and both serve to eliminate different views on the matter and present the political actor's solution as the only reasonable one (Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric* 35-36).

Charteris-Black (*Politicians and Rhetoric* 13-15) recounts that since ancient Greek times it has been established that a successful speaker must arouse the emotions of their audience. Metaphors stir up familiar experiences in audiences (often bodily experiences, which are deeply embedded in all our minds), and activate their imagination, creates powerful mental images. This, in turn, can lead to an emotional reaction. Moreover, most metaphors are used unconsciously, which makes it more difficult for anyone taking part in the discourse to truly grasp the effect the metaphor has on them and hinders attempts to resist it.

Metaphors in newspapers often have a specific place: the headlines of articles. This is due to two other features they can have: the foregrounding of a theme in the article, and the ability to grasp the readers' attention (Shie 1329) due to their intriguing quality. Then, in the body of the article, they can enhance coherence (Shie 1329), for example by providing an alternative way of declaring something that has already been said.

The political discourse which I will be attempting to describe in my study has rather specific uses for metaphors. Firstly, as mentioned before, they will often be part of headlines, or the first few lines of the article, which are meant to capture the interest of the reader.

Secondly, they respond to the expectations that the audiences have based on their own life experience (Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric* 13). Metaphor can play a critical role here because they activate those previous experiences. It is crucial that the metaphor, or other rhetorical devices must be tailored to the audience's experience in this regard, so that their trust is gained.

Besides paying attention to context, a third feature is that newspapers will often opt for conventional metaphors rather than novel ones. This choice is more frequent in this discourse type than in other types of speech (Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric*, 31-35). The reason for this is also in connection with ease of understanding. From this it follows that expressions are recycled many times, and the selected metaphors become deeply embedded in political speech. It is frequently noted that once a metaphor is born, it is hard to kill: opponents of a political actor who want to convey a different opinion often will do so by altering the metaphor, not by creating a new one for the same issue (Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric* 36-37). Another study by Charteris-Black ("Metaphor and Gender") also found that experienced politicians will use conventional metaphors to a greater extent.

After having looked at previous research on political news in general, and American political news specifically, one may look at earlier studies on the subject of history metaphors. In this field, only a few works appear. One important among those is the work of Alexander Demandt, a scholar who collected metaphors during his career as a historian from his professional readings. He claims that one of the oldest metaphors is HISTORY IS A CHESS GAME. Brantly elaborates on this idea, stating that the CHESS metaphor has been present throughout history, and is found in the postmodern era as well "in strangely modified forms". She also insists that „[m]etaphors of history and time are closely linked, since time is perceived to be the element in which history unfolds" (Brantly). TIME, according to Cognitive Linguistics research,

is primarily understood with the help of the source domain of SPACE (Boroditsky; Gentner; Margolies and Crawford).

Brantly examines Swedish works of historical fiction and expands the inventory of history metaphors with further examples. One of this is NARRATIVE STRUCTURE, meaning that a past is a story that can be told in many forms. She also warns us that in the view of postmodern historians, the historical narrative is often falsifying. Ball also emphasizes the HISTORY IS A TEXT metaphor. Before describing how Australian nationalism emerged, he makes insightful remarks on history metaphors: „[they] range from Voltaire’s ‘tableau of crimes and misfortunes’ to de Tocqueville’s ‘gallery of pictures’, from Dionysius’s axiom that history is ‘philosophy from examples’ to the jocular truism that it is simply ‘what you can remember’. [...] The most fashionable metaphor of recent years has the quality of also being the simplest: history is a text” (Ball 158). He explains that the HISTORY IS A TEXT metaphor owes its popularity to the linguistic turn in historical research. Brantly adds another metaphor to this list, ARCHAEOLOGY, taken from Michel Foucault’s writing. This metaphor implies that to write about the past is to dig deeper and attempt to reconstruct the buildings and objects (the elements of history in a metaphorical sense) as they once were.

2. Research aims, method and data

2. 1. Research aims and hypotheses

In my study, I would like to investigate the concept of HISTORY in political discourse, and the significant role that history plays in political discourse. For my corpus I have selected articles from contemporary political newspapers in the United States of America, ranging from January 2013 to September 2022. I have chosen to study these metaphors in American English since the general framework for understanding metaphors in American political discourse have already been established, most importantly by George Lakoff. My study uses this framework, but only focuses on one element of it: the conceptualizations of HISTORY. Charteris-Black studied

influential speeches of individual politicians, but he also mentioned that today's politicians must place emphasis on appearing as a prototypical member of the political community, to make the audience feel like the politician is "one of them". Furthermore, he asserted that in digital spaces, which are becoming increasingly dominant, language is on the path of being "socialized to the extent that it challenges and even threatens our sense of individual identity" (Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric* 5). From these claims it seems to follow that the language and metaphors of political groups seem to be just as important, or even more so, than those of individual politicians. I will study these political groups, which I will characterize as cultural groups in a rather loose sense of the word (Musolff 3). I hypothesize a cultural divide between those people whose thinking is more conservative, and vote for the Republican party, and those who are more liberal and vote for the Democrats. Though these cultures have quite a few members, I will only be concerned with political journalists, because they, similarly to politicians, act as rhetors influencing the political opinion of the broader community. Their work is probably even more influential on people's thinking than that of politicians. This is because due to their considerable number, they produce texts with a greater frequency and in a greater quantity, and thus the average person engages with their writing more often than with the speeches of politicians. Another reason for choosing political journalists is that their opinion is often published, and so it is more easily accessible for research than that of non-professional members of the political community. For the same reason, this work will only be concerned with political news that is accessible through the Internet.

2. 2. Reading habits of Democrats and Republicans

As a rule of thumb, I tried to collect data that represented the reading habits of Republicans and Democrats. In the 2014 survey of Pew Research Center, Democrats could "name a wide array of news sources" that they read. The three newspapers whose audiences were mostly Democratic or Democratic leaning were *CNN*, *NPR*, and the *New York Times*. Republicans, on

the other hand, were “tightly clustered around one main news source”: *Fox News* (Mitchell et al.). In 2014, around 47% cited *Fox News* as their main news source. While they were more distrustful of most of the available newspapers than Democrats, 88% of consistent conservatives trusted *Fox News*. (Mitchell et al.). Around half of the Republicans cited other platforms as their main source for news: 11% mentioned the local radio, 5% the local TV, 3% the local newspaper, and 3% *Google News* (Mitchell et al.). These, partly because they were not online newspapers, and partly because they could not be properly traced, were discounted from the present study.

Research conducted in 2016 had a similar conclusion to that of 2014. Only two of their investigated newspapers had more than 50% of readership who voted Republican in the 2016 elections: *Fox News* and *Newsmax* (Flaxman et al.). In this set of data, *Newsmax* had the biggest proportion of Republican-voting readers, with 61% (Flaxman et al.). In the same study, the most Democratic-leaning American newspapers were the *New York Times*, the *Huffington Post*, and the *Washington Post*.

2020 found Republicans even more oriented towards *Fox News*: 70% of consistent conservatives named it as their main news source (Jurkowitz and Mitchell). Other news sources more appealing to a right-wing audience were the *Washington Examiner*, the *Daily Caller*, *Breitbart*, and two radio shows: the *Sean Hannity Show* and *Rush Limbaugh Show* (Jurkowitz and Mitchell). The fact that Republican readers preferred and trusted less news sources was established again, since these six were the minority of all examined media outlets (Jurkowitz and Mitchell). Democrats named a wide range of news sites again, the most popular ones being *New York Times*, *NPR*, *MSNBC* and *CNN*. They were also claimed to trust most of the news they read (Mitchell et al. 2020).

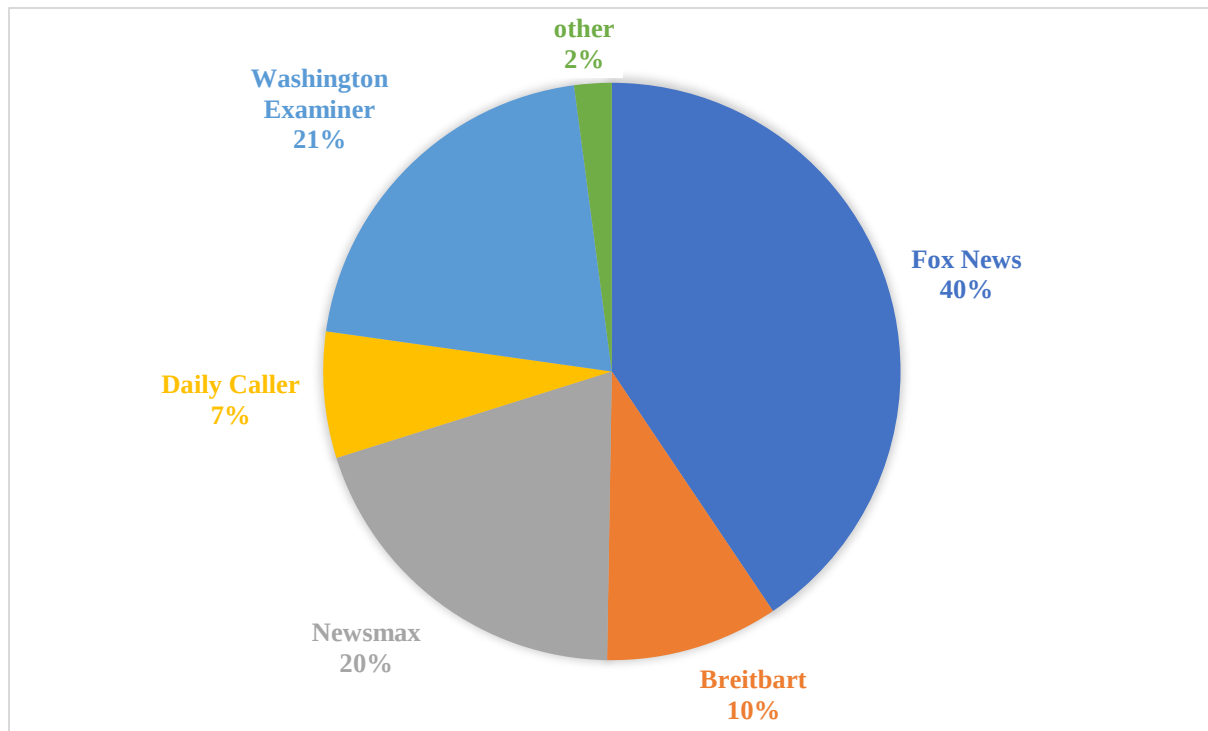


Figure 1: Distribution of Republican data by newspapers

Figure 1 shows the Republicans' great commitment to *Fox News*, which I tried to mirror in my own data. I also included the other mentioned news sources in my study – *Breitbart*, *Newsmax*, *The Washington Examiner* and the *Daily Caller*. The newspapers which are represented by the other category were imported from the Democratic database for reasons that will be explained below. It should be noted at this point that some newspapers preferred metaphoric language while other did not. This can explain, for example, the larger number of data from the *Washington Examiner* than those from *Breitbart* (even though around the same amount of time was devoted to look for metaphors in both of these news sites).

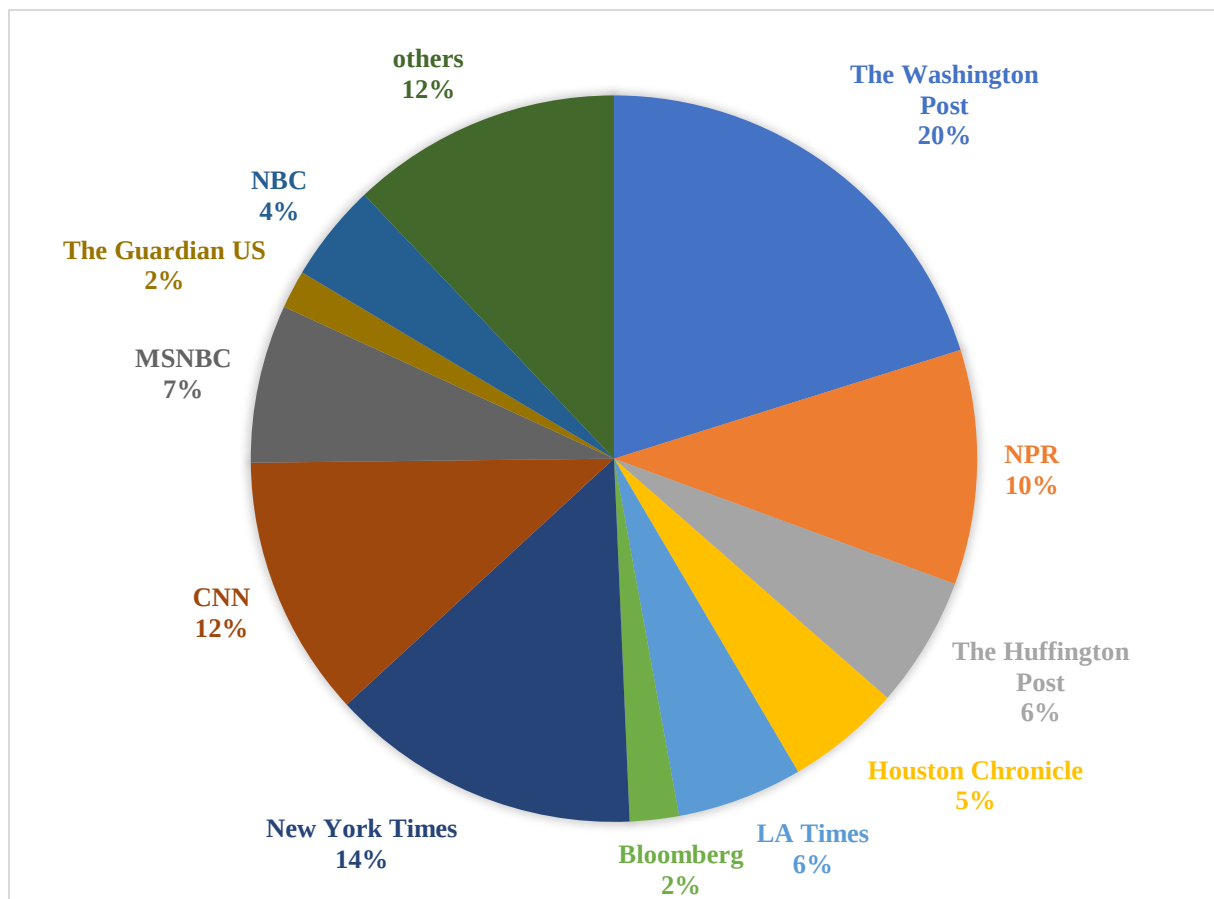


Figure 2: Distribution of Democratic data by newspapers

The Democratic data was constructed from a wide range of sources, as from *CNN*, *NPR*, *MSNBC*, the *Huffington Post* and the *New York Times*. Quotes from the *Washington Post* were in relative majority with 20% – this was also due to their journalists’ preference for metaphoric language. In the Democratic data, to represent the wider range of sources, some local newspapers were also included – for example, the *Houston Chronicle*.

2. 3. Data collection method

I initially collected metaphors by using an online search engine with the keyword *history*. I encountered the problem that due to the search engine’s settings according to which the hits are listed based on how current they are, it brought forward less examples from earlier periods. This is most visible in my Democratic dataset, which has clear spikes around the months when I collected my data. I attempted to alleviate this issue by narrowing down my search to earlier

time periods and looking for examples from those periods, so that the distribution of my data would become more balanced. I tried to bring the distribution of my data closer to the number of search results containing the word *history* on each online news site. After the first few tries, I also added the condition to my search that the article should not contain the word *sport*. This was because sports news used the expressions *x player/x team made history* so frequently that reading through all of them slowed down my work considerably.

During metaphor classification, there is always a subjective element, because not all metaphors will be classified in the same way by different speakers (Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric* 50). This is because conventional metaphors are always in the process of becoming so naturalized that speakers will not even recognize their metaphorical origin. In her work concerning metaphors of the Treaty of Trianon, Orsolya Putz presents the possible methods for metaphor identification that were developed to alleviate this problem (26-29). From these I chose the Metaphor Identification Procedure of the Pragglejaz Group, whose aim was „to create an explicit, reliable, and flexible method for identifying metaphorically used words in spoken and written language” (Pragglejaz Group 2). To follow their steps, the articles were first read and their general meaning was understood. The relevant lexical item, the word *history* was identified. Next, I identified the basic meaning – which was the meaning that was present in other texts as well. To make this step less subjective, I used dictionaries to check the basic meaning. Then the contextual meaning of the word *history* was examined, and if it was different from the basic meaning, the lexical item was deemed to be metaphorical.

After I found a quote, I entered it into my database with the relevant metadata: the relevant sentences, the link to the article, the name of the article writer, the name of the speaker, and the identified metaphor or metaphors. (Each quote contains one metaphor at least, and three at most.) The name of the article writer and the name of the speaker were considered different if the utterance was put in quotation marks. (In all but a few cases, the name of the speaker has

also been mentioned.) It is possible that journalists had taken a fine-sounding metaphor from the original statement but rephrased the rest and thus did not use quotation marks, but this is impossible to determine.

After having found 1000 metaphors, I ordered them into three categories: Republican, Democratic and the 'other' category. This was done to ensure that if a newspaper quoted someone who had the opposing political view, it would not distort the data. Thus, if a Republican newspaper quoted Joe Biden, this quotation along with its metaphors, were re-entered into the Democratic database instead of the Republican one. The third category was reserved for those speakers who were different from the writer of the article, and their political views could not be determined at first glance. To be on the safe side, I had been quite strict in deciding whether a speaker could be accurately deemed Republican or Democratic. Journalists, naturally, were thought to be of the same political opinion as their newspaper, even if they appeared as a speaker in an article. Politicians and leaders of political organizations were also categorized according to their party. The 'other' category contained quite a few historians and officials and clergymen of various churches, who, for the sake of simplicity, were all thought to be mostly objective in their statements. Students and small children, who may not have had a formed a mature political opinion yet were also put into the 'other' category. Further members included the leaders of independent organizations, and a few speakers who were not from the same culture or the same time period, such as Israeli ministers, Abraham Lincoln, or Karl Marx.

By this method, out of the 1000 metaphors, 414 were deemed Republican, 469 were Democratic, and 116 were entered into the 'other' category. Before I have ordered quotations whose speakers had the opposite political view into the opposite database, or into the 'other' database if their political opinion could not be determined, both the Republican and the Democratic database had 500 metaphors. From this it follows that Republicans quoted the

metaphors of Democrats more often than the other way round. (Both Democratic and Republican newspapers contributed to the ‘other’ database to roughly the same extent.)

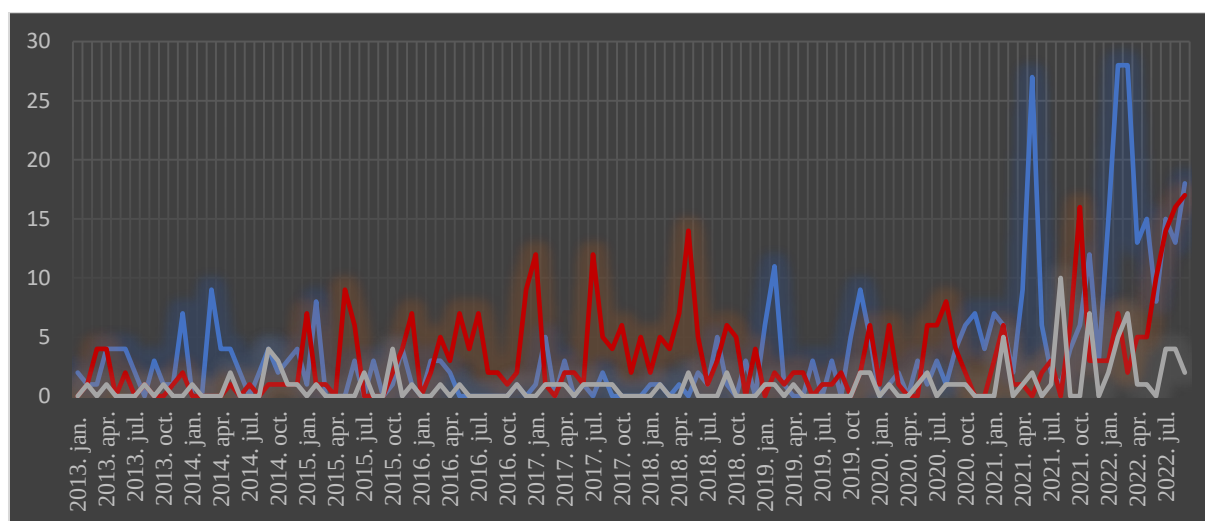


Figure 3: The distribution of data over the researched period (blue: Democrat, red: Republican, grey: other)

This figure shows the distribution of data. The last few spikes in the Democratic data (around May 2021, January 2022 and September 2022), and the last spike in the Republican data (September 2022) were due to the fact that data had been collected in those three periods. All other months of increased metaphor use were deemed relevant.

My first question was whether the data had any seasonality. The only time of the year which could be hypothesized to prompt increased metaphor use was February, Black History Month.

Year	Democratic monthly average of quotes	Republican monthly average of quotes	Democratic quotes in February	Republican quotes in February
2013	2,5	1,25	1	1
2014	2,83	0,5	0	0

2015	1,75	3,08	8	1
2016	0,75	3,67	3	2
2017	1	4,33	5	1
2018	1,25	4,67	1	5
2019	3,58	1,58	11	2
2020	2,67	2,83	1	6
2021	7,08	3,67	6	6
2022	17	8,78	28	7

Figure 4: Democratic and Republican monthly average of quotes by year and quotes in February

As it is visible in the data, there is no clear connection between Black History Month and increased metaphor use.

2. 4. Common topics

I attempted to examine whether political events connected to the common topics of the articles had a metaphor-generating effect. I approached the problem by looking at the spikes and attempting to find explanations for them by looking at the specific topics that they have explored.

Democratic spike around December 2014	Japan's political efforts to cover up a shameful episode in their WWII history, gay men's health crisis (the death of Larry Kramer), death of Saudi King Abdullah
Democratic spike around March 2014	Yale's black history, Crimea's history, Japan's world war history, Putin's history, museums' treatments of history

Democratic spike around February 2015	Black history month, net neutrality, Oklahoma's history education
Democratic spike around February 2019	blackface, Venezuela oil crisis, Black History month, Peter Buttigieg's presidential plans, historical elections of women to lead House committees
Democratic spike around November 2019	Native American history, transgender history, historically significant election of a Black mayor, blackface
Democratic spike between November 2020 and February 2021	historically significant elections of people of color and LGBTQ people, Kamala Harris's election, Black history, women's history, local history, Donald Trump's plan for patriotic education, military history, Trump's impeachment
Democratic spike in November 2021	historically significant elections of people, <i>The 1619 Project</i> , China's history, history of people of color, tearing down Confederate memorials, rising oil prices

Republican spike around January 2015	local history, Michelle Obama, Black history, Israel's history, economic history
Republican spike around May 2015	economic history, history of the Afghan occupation, Black public figures (Barack Obama, Supreme Court Justice Clarence

	Thomas), <i>Time</i> 's Person of the Year, terrorist attacks, presidential history (Theodore Roosevelt)
Republican spike around December 2016	Watergate, Colombian elections, presidential history (Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Barack Obama), historically significant elections, issues of elitism in the Democratic party, the first female marines, local history
Republican spike around July 2017	WWII history, history of the American revolution, history of the 1953 Iranian coup, presidential history (Bill Clinton), tearing down Confederate memorials
Republican spike around May 2018	George Washington university's colonial mascot, Facebook's involvement in the Capitol Hill riot, Nazism and Socialism, Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital, presidential history (Donald Trump), Iran's political situation, tearing down Confederate memorials
Republican spike around October 2021	Native American history, the conflict around the framing of American history, the Capitol Hill riot

As it is visible from both tables, spikes are not prompted by only one topic, but a larger number of topics (the bigger the spike, the higher the number of topics), which are diverse in time,

place, and nature. And even though many topics are present at increased periods of metaphor use in the Democrat data and the Republican data, they cannot be said to be directly interacting with each other.

The previous tables have already shown some of the most recurrent topics in the data. The most popular by far was the history of disadvantaged groups: people of color (especially Black people) women, LGBT people, etc. This problem occupied both Democratic and Republican journalists, and it has also spread into history education: debates had been frequent over how American history should be taught. The writer of the *1619 Project*, *New York Times* journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones, and the responding contributors of the *1776 Project* played an important role here and became the subject of many articles.

A smaller number of articles dealt with the January 6 riot of Capitol Hill, and the subsequent hearings. The conflict between Ukraine and Russia, especially after Russia attacked Ukraine in February 2022, was also a frequent topic. Other recurrent themes were the death of historically significant people (such as Mikhail Gorbachev and Queen Elizabeth II) and the elections which the journalists deemed as historically significant. This most often meant the election of a person from a disadvantaged group for the first time in the position's history.

2. 6. Common metaphors

The number of Democratic metaphors was higher by 49 instances. Thus, to produce a reliable comparison of Republican and Democratic data, I projected the Democratic data to the Republican one – creating a virtual Democratic database that contained the same number of metaphors as the Republican database while keeping the proportions of the original Democratic data. In the following section during comparison, I worked with virtual Democratic and the actual Republican database, so that the greater number of the actual Democratic database would not skew the results. To create the table of the most common metaphors, a few merges of similar metaphors were also undertaken. These included: TEXT, BOOK, and STORY; FILM, PLAY and

SERIES; DARK OBJECT and DARK AREA; DIRTY OBJECT and WALL; and lastly, COUNTRY and BATTLEGROUND.

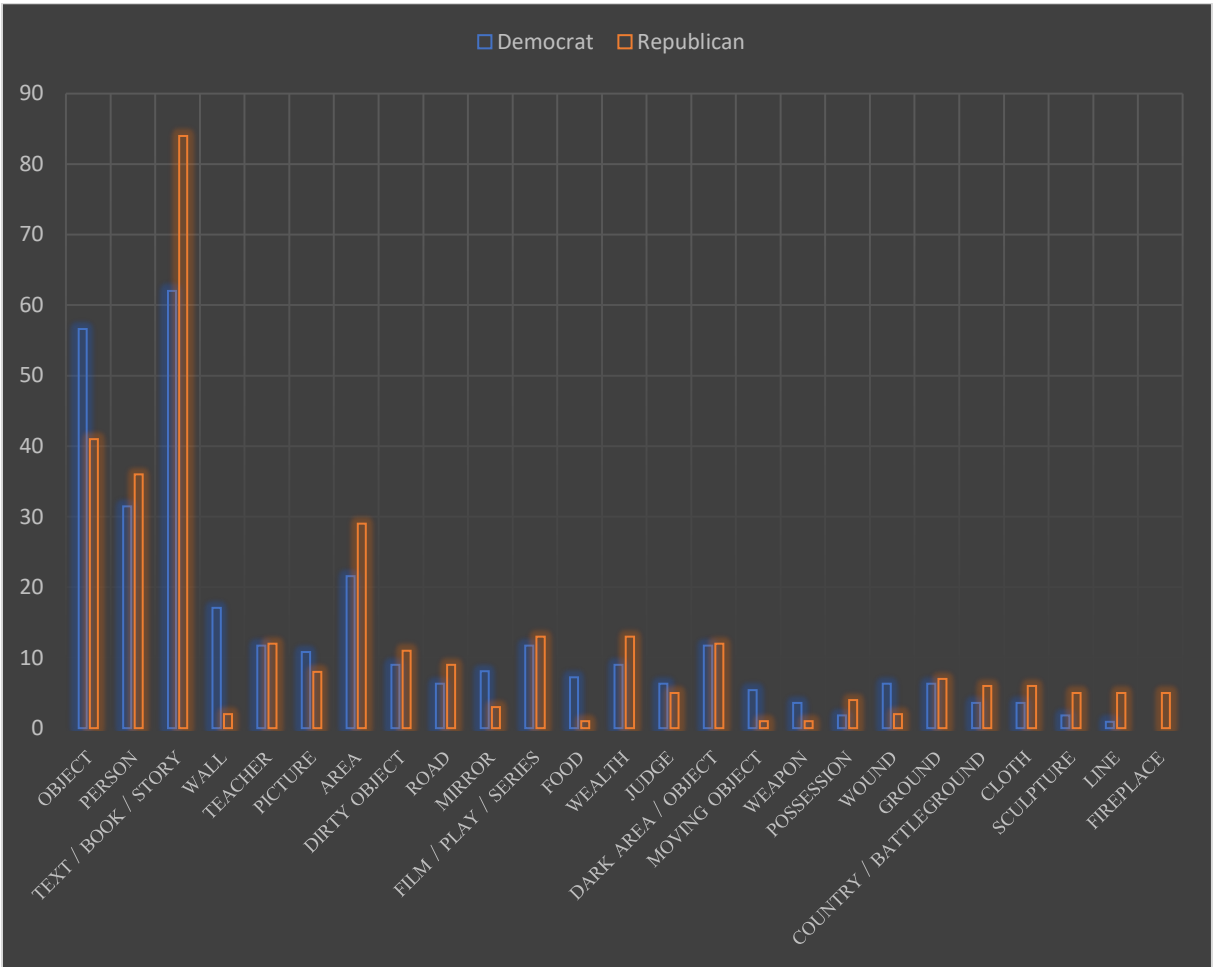


Figure 5: Most common metaphors – metaphors which had at least five instances in either of the databases

As it is seen in the figure, metaphors which were clearly preferred by either Republican or Democratic journalists were rare. Important ones included the HISTORY IS AN OBJECT metaphor and the HISTORY IS A WALL metaphor on the Democratic side, and the HISTORY IS A TEXT / BOOK / STORY metaphor and THE HISTORY IS AN AREA metaphor on the Republican side.

Some tentative explanations for these preferences can also be presented. The HISTORY IS AN OBJECT metaphor was almost exclusively found in the phrase *to make history*, which was often connected to the historically significant elections of people from disadvantaged groups. The larger number of instances in the Democratic data – which is also seen in the larger number

of the metaphor HISTORY IS AN OBJECT – shows that Democratic journalists deemed these events newsworthy more often. The HISTORY IS A TEXT / BOOK / STORY metaphor was often connected to an argument about the changing of the historical narrative. Both Republican and Democratic journalists accused the political opposing side with this, but Republicans seem to have found it more important. Instances of the HISTORY IS AN AREA metaphor (along with the metaphors HISTORY IS A COUNTRY and HISTORY IS A BATTLEGROUND) were also connected to the idea of a culture war because it was often in this area where the metaphorical battle was fought.

2. 7.. Mappings of the most common metaphors

2.7.1. HISTORY IS A TEXT / BOOK / STORY

The most common Republican metaphor, which also had many examples in the Democratic data, was the HISTORY IS A TEXT / BOOK / STORY metaphor. Typical phrases that it occurred in were *to rewrite history*, *the chapters of history* and *the pages of history*. As mentioned in the introduction, this metaphor was born out of a whole-part metonymy (HISTORY FOR HISTORY BOOK) and was strengthened by the everyday experience of American citizens, who encounter history through books. This is presumably even more common for educated journalists, who also possibly need to obtain information about history from books for their job. (A piece of evidence for this is that I encountered quite a lot of book reviews which contained the word *history*, but which had to be dismissed from the study because they were not political in nature.)

The HISTORY IS A TEXT / BOOK / STORY metaphor was quite versatile. The mappings between the source domain of ‘text / book / story’ and the target domain of ‘history can be seen in the table below.

source domain	target domain
Text	a coherent version of history

“But what I have noticed from 2013 to the present is there are so many people now who are interested in this conversation, there’s so many people interested in exploding and dismantling the way that the canon of fashion history has been written.” (D301) ²	
Pages	events of history
“» From Vichy to the war in Algeria , it took decades for France to be able to confront disturbing truths and illuminate dark pages of its history , « said an editorial this week in Le Monde.” (D39)	
Chapters	units of history (e. g. an event, a larger period)
[About the Holodomor:] “ It is a terrible chapter in human history of the 20th century, and the vast majority of young Americans truly know nothing about.” (O89)	
Footnote	an event or person of little importance
“Compared with Trump, demagogues like Huey Long and Joseph McCarthy will become footnotes. ” (D226)	
Writers	the people creating the narrative of history / people who commit historically significant actions
“» Four popes in one ceremony is a fantastic thing to see and to be at, because it is history being written in our sight , « marveled one of the visiting Poles, Dawid Halfar.” (O24)	
to rewrite history	to change the historical narrative, to alter the interpretation or to lie about events
“ Ted Cruz rewrites history by claiming the January 6 insurrectionists were » peacefully protesting , « in contrast with the people demonstrating outside Alito's house.” (O93)	

² References to the database will be made in the following way: D refers to the Democratic database, R to the Republican database and O to the other database. All three are available in the appendix of the study. The exact quote can be reached by the reference number. All the emphasis is mine.

to abbreviate a story	to downplay the importance of an event
to omit a story	to omit an event
“It’s a cultural connection we — Hispanic and Black people — share because our history and our voices are often rewritten, abbreviated or omitted from textbooks. ” (D252)	

Though not always consistently, elements of the text or book (*pages, chapters, footnotes*) can be substituted for certain units of history. The data shows that this metaphor is often used to accuse the opposing political side of changing the historical narrative so that it suits their own purposes. They often emphasize dynamicity: for example, the act of re-writing history is much more common in the databases than the references to an already written, unchanging, coherent version of history. (In fact, the first example of the table is the only one I could find.)

2.7.2. HISTORY IS AN AREA / COUNTRY / BATTLEGROUND

This metaphor is a manifestation of the previously introduced TIME IS SPACE metaphor, which is wide-spread and primal in human thinking. In this metaphor, events, units or fields of history the world are not likened to chapters and pages, but to separate places. *The world* itself can be a metaphor for a collective historic memory, or even the curriculum of history courses in education. The central idea of this metaphor is that certain areas are more important than others. The historical significance of units does not seem to be measured by an absolute standard but is dependent on how important members of a culture judge it to be. If members of a culture pay great attention to a certain part of history, if it is a frequent topic of public discourse, it will occupy a large space in the metaphorical AREA. Journalists believe that certain versions of history can be attached to both their own political side and to the opposing side (for example, Black history is attached to Democrats according to their own interpretation). To change the importance of an event, one can fight a battle – depending on their preferences, attack a version of history that they consider too important, or defend one whose importance they believe in.

The separate spaces can be on the *wrong* or the *right* side of history – the *right side of history* meaning the groups of people who made the moral or beneficial decisions in history.

the world	the collective of historic memory / the history curriculum
“» UVA’s historical landscape must be balanced , « the list of demands announces. » The statue of Jefferson serves as an emblem of white supremacy, and should be re-contextualized with a plaque to include that history. «” (R163)	
separate spaces	separate events / units / fields / versions of history or history of certain groups (e. g. Black people)
“ The stereotype exists in a realm of pop-history , where many believe that France's past is littered with dropped rifles and abandoned posts.” (R88)	
the right side of history	groups of people who made the moral / beneficial decisions of history
“As Shirley put it, » In the end, Casey was proven right -- and on the right side of history . «” (R193)	
the wrong side of history	groups of people who made the immoral / harmful decisions of history
“Mary Cheney quickly shot back, again on Facebook, posting: » Liz — this isn't just an issue on which we disagree — you're just wrong — and on the wrong side of history . «” (R13)	
to attack / wage war against a country	to attack a unit / a certain version of history
“» In order for a country to hold together, you have to have a shared philosophy, a shared culture and shared history, and all of those are under attack , « the host of “The Ben Shapiro Show” said.” (R247)	

to defend a country	to defend a unit / a certain version of history
“And yet the full history of the banner is also richer and stranger than either its defenders or opponents may realize.” (D70)	
war on history	ideological fight for a certain version of history to become the mainstream
“This celebration has taken on new relevance, thanks to the left’s escalating war on history . The protests began last August, when demonstrators filled the streets of Charlottesville, demanding removal of a bronze statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee.” (R137)	

2.7.3. HISTORY IS A DIRTY OBJECT, HISTORY IS A DARK OBJECT / DARK AREA

The HISTORY IS A DIRTY OBJECT metaphor and the HISTORY IS A DARK OBJECT / DARK AREA metaphors express similar notions. The dark or dirty part signifies a period or event in history which is considered shameful by members of the culture. In the studied period, the shameful part was usually slavery and other time periods where Black people were discriminated against. As an opposite of the *dark* or *dirty* part, the *clean* or *light* positive part must also exist, but since the discourse is not focused on that, no metaphors of those were found in the data. As a response to those events, two lines of thinking are possible. One is to research and remember these events as clearly as possible to avoid repeating them. This is metaphorically represented as *illuminating the dark part* of history. Another possibility is to downplay the importance of them or omit them, usually for two reasons: to preserve the culture’s positive self-image, or as a counter-reaction if one feels that public discourse is too centered around the shameful event or period. In some cases, it can also be claimed from a different perspective that a shameful part is not actually shameful. The omittance or the downplaying of a shameful historical event is signified by the act of cleaning the *dark* or *dirty* part of an object or an area. However, this act is often seen as immoral. Both Republicans and Democrats accuse each other with this, which

is why these metaphors are common in both databases. The second possible answer (the emphasis of the generally optimistic nature of American history, the criticism of the overemphasis of shameful events, or the questioning of shameful) is more characteristic of the Republican discourse.

the dirty / dark part	shameful, negative part of history (not necessarily in the conceptualizer's interpretation)
“» Nazism, Marxism and fascism are a stain on our world history and should be regarded as such, and I failed to adequately articulate that in my comments, « he said.” (R305)	
the clean / light part	positive part of history
to illuminate a dark part of history	to learn more about a shameful part of history
“From Vichy to the war in Algeria, it took decades for France to be able to confront disturbing truths and illuminate dark pages of its history ,” said an editorial this week in Le Monde. (D39)	
to clean history	to downplay the importance of or to omit a shameful part of history
“On which side of the political spectrum do Nazis really fall? How have liberals wiped clean the racist history of the term » progressive « and what is that awful history?” (R192)	

2.7.3.1. The evolution of *whitewashing history*

The a subset of the HISTORY IS A DIRTY OBJECT metaphor, HISTORY IS A WALL, is clearly preferred by Democratic journalists. There are 19 instances of it in the Democratic data, and only two in the Republican data (and even these two are in negation). This metaphor is exclusively found in the term *to whitewash history* and its variants. *Whitewash*, in its original sense, is used to mean a solution of lime and water which is used to paint walls white. The second meaning was abstract: the action of *whitewashing* came to mean the act of clearing up evidence about a shameful (historical) event. In this metaphor, whiteness only signified the

ingenuine, forged cleanness. However, *white* quality (and the assumed opposite, *colored* quality) also became associated with race issues. *To paint something white* acquired the meaning of emphasizing the achievements of white people in history over people of color. It is key to note that this version of the metaphor also assumes a degree of culture relativity. To elaborate on this idea, it assumes that in theory, all cultures (and histories of those cultures) are equally valuable and should be given an equal space, but in practice, the history of white people is overemphasized. (Whether the equal space should also depend on the number of members who represent the culture cannot be decided.) In Democratic newspapers, this is clearly an undesirable state of affairs. Republicans do not deem this issue to be as serious as Democrats do, which is visible in their almost complete lack of the *whitewashing history* metaphor, and the negated expressions. The counterargument that they usually make is that Democratic agenda turns races into enemies. Rather, they insist that history teaching should not be separated by races, since “Black history is also American history”.

The evolution of the term *whitewashing history* has likely happened in my studied time period. In 2014 and the beginning of 2015, there are a few instances which are not connected to the topic of race and history education. The first time when the two becomes associated with each other is in July 2020. From then on, the phrase catches on, and appears in more and more quotes alongside the topic as the time goes on.

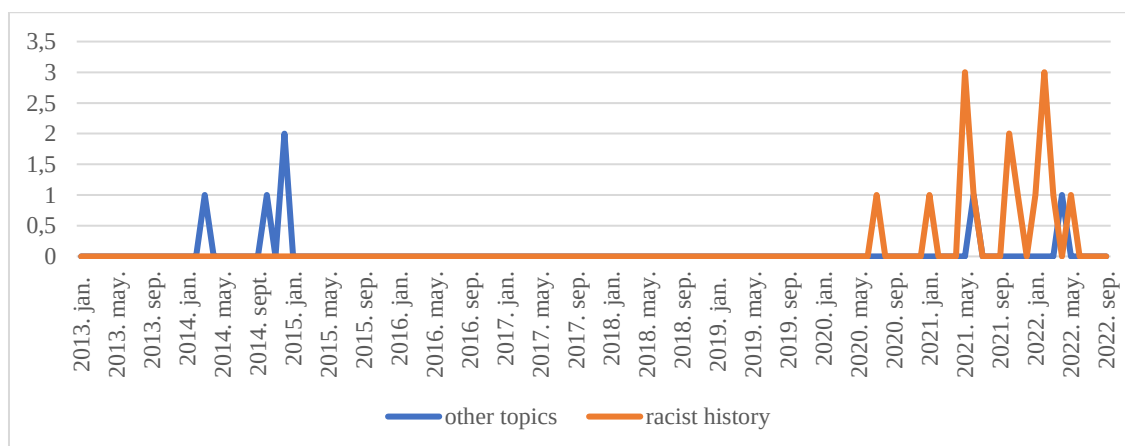


Figure 6: The evolution of the term *whitewashing history*

2.8.4. Personifications

Personifications cannot be characterized as one coherent metaphor with many mappings, but I would also like to present it due to the many forms it can take, and thus, the many ways of thinking it could represent.

In one part of the cases, history is only an average person. It can *show* the parallel past events, and *tell* people things based on these (it should always be kept in mind that these parallels are always drawn in favor of the political side the journalist represents). These parallels can act as predictions with history *prepares* the cultural group for future events that are similar to these past events. History also acts as the representative of the collective historic memory, who *sees* or *looks back* on historic events and *remembers them*. These metaphors can act as a warning for political groups to make the *right* decisions – right according to the interpretation of the journalist –, so that they will be represented favorably in the future history of the culture. If they do so, they will be celebrated by the future members of the community – history will *vindicate* them. If they fail, they can also be *shamed* by history.

History can not only be an average person but someone who takes on a certain role. These roles can be wise figures with much knowledge: such as a *teacher*, an *ancestor*, or a *judge*. But they can also be powerless, helpless figures, such as a *child*, a *dead* or *dying person*, a *traumatized* or *sick person*.

3. Results and ideas for further research

The data that I have gathered has provided important insight into the system of the American political debate around a particular topic. It can be asserted that dialogues around history have become more frequent over time, which points to the fact that interest surrounding the subject has grown in the political realm.

Discourse was especially concerned with the shameful parts of history. Journalists of different newspapers have presented various attitudes towards these. To accuse a political enemy with omitting or downplaying a shameful event was a frequently used rhetoric tactic, and it was often signified by the HISTORY IS A DIRTY OBJECT metaphor. Democrats had a special variant of this, the HISTORY IS A WALL metaphor, which during my data collection period started to acquire a racial undertone, and thus it became a tool to signify the perceived bias towards white people's achievements in American history.

Metaphors often emphasized the dynamic aspect of history, which was partly connected to the problem of shameful events. Many metaphors expressed the idea that history is not something absolute and unchanging, but something that can be shaped, changed, manipulated or even re-created according to a person's or a group's intention. The group who ultimately decides on historical significance seems to be members of the culture itself. Whether other people, such as certain politicians, public figures or political groups, have the authority to change history is a continuing topic of debate. The emphasis on changing history partly follows from the discourse context (because the changing of history is more newsworthy), but also seems to be a more general idea of the discourse. The frequency of the TEXT / BOOK / STORY metaphor reveals a historical worldview that links history closely with its flexible and fluid narrative aspect. At other times, history is presented as a source of absolute truth (most commonly by personifications), but this is also used for political manipulation, since this truth is always in line with the journalist's own political agenda.

In accordance with the previous literature, it can be claimed that conventional metaphors were preferred over novel ones. In the data there is an overt tendency to use the same metaphors and the same phrases repeatedly. This is done to aid the audience's understanding and to strengthen its trust in the newspapers. Various metaphors are at various stages of conventionality – some are very new (such as *to airbrush history*), others have already quite

commonplace (such as the HISTORY IS A JOURNEY metaphor). The HISTORY IS A WALL metaphor, is an example for a phrase that had a conventional and widely used meaning, but which acquired a slightly different connotation over time.

At the beginning of my research, I have hypothesized that the Republican and the Democratic discourse will be vastly different, basing my assumptions of Lakoff's framework in *Moral Politics*. However, in practice, similarities were much more common than differences. The general way in which the two discourses worked were quite similar. Neither of them had seasonality, and neither of them could be said to be influenced greatly by singular events – larger spikes in metaphor use were rather because that specific period had several political topics which were connected to history. Common topics for both Republicans and Democrats included issues of racism in history and history teaching, the Russian-Ukrainian war, January 6 hearings, and elections and deaths which the speakers considered to be historically significant.

In the case of preferred metaphors, only a small difference could be perceived. Clearly preferred Republican metaphors were the HISTORY IS AN AREA and the HISTORY IS A TEXT / BOOK / STORY metaphor. On the Democratic side, journalists favored the HISTORY IS AN OBJECT metaphor. All three of these metaphors were connected to key arguments that one political side made, but the difference was only the proportion – the other political side also had the same metaphor and the same connected key argument, even if it was used less frequently. The only exception from that is the HISTORY IS A WALL metaphor, which was virtually exclusive to Democrats.

The metaphors that I have found were at times similar to the metaphors of previous scholars. The TEXT or BOOK metaphor was found in Charteris-Black's (*Politicians and Rhetoric*) analyses, and so were JOURNEY metaphors. However, while it was the most common item in his data of political metaphors, and he claimed that it was also connected to history, JOURNEY metaphors occupy a much less significant place in my data. In the introduction it was

asserted that TIME is often understood in the source domain SPACE in human thinking. This idea was present in the HISTORY IS AN AREA metaphor, where different units of history (such as time periods) and versions of history occupied different metaphorical spaces according to their significance. Yet one of the most common metaphors, HISTORY IS AN OBJECT, was not predicted by previous literature, and some metaphors that were explored by previous researchers were completely missing from my dataset (such as sports metaphors).

Further research must also focus on the political group – it would be especially useful to look at online comments of the news articles, and thus explore the reactions and metaphors of the audience. Another way to expand research would be to widen the research period back until the first appearance of online news sites, or to include radio shows or printed news as well.

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