

'If you ride a lame horse into a race ...': A Corpus-Based Analysis of Metaphors in John Mahama's Political Speeches

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Abstract

Studies on metaphor in political speeches have gained prominence in recent years, especially in Western political contexts where it has been shown that politicians gain the trust, confidence, and ratification of their audience when they speak persuasively (Charteris-Black, 2011, 2014). However, not much research has focused on the use of metaphors by politicians in non-Western (developing) contexts where political language is shaped by many factors that may account for variations in the use of metaphor across cultures. This paper contributes to the rhetoric of metaphor in political discourse by examining the range of (conceptual) metaphors used in the speeches of an African politician – John Mahama of Ghana. Drawing on discourse and cognitive theories of metaphor, I explore Mahama's use of metaphors in his political speeches, arguing that, as a political speaker, Mahama uses metaphor in a conscious, consistent, and conceptually structured manner that projects his ideological stance on issues of politics and governance. The study reveals that Mahama draws on many conventional metaphors but uses them in creative and unconventional ways to depict culturally relevant situations, and to convey his political ideologies to his audience. The findings in this study do not only contribute towards a better understanding of Mahama's communicative style, but also foreground the persuasive potential of metaphor for audience engagement in political discourse.

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Keywords

Metaphor, Political Speeches, John Mahama, Cognitive Rhetoric, Political Ideology, Corpus-Based Analysis

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Introduction

Political speeches remain a vital genre within political discourse analysis²⁶ and they have, since the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome, been central to the study of rhetoric in language, a field primarily dealing with the art of persuading one's audience. Even today, a political speech is regarded essentially as a rhetorical act, and political actors – most notably political leaders – are aware that to gain the trust, confidence, and ratification of their (potential) followers they must speak persuasively. In this regard, Charteris-Black (Charteris-Black, 2011, 2014) suggests that high linguistic performance does not only represent a crucial means by which politicians can successfully sell a vision, programme or ideology to the masses and electorate, especially during elections, but also serve as a useful measure of assessing their credibility and overall legitimacy.

Several studies on the discourse of political speeches by politicians have already been carried out, exploring one rhetorical/linguistic feature or another to draw attention to what might be considered as the rhetorical style(s) of specific political figures. For example, Klebanov, Diermeier and Beigman (Klebanov, Diermeier and Beigman, 2008) studied lexical cohesion in Margaret Thatcher's speeches; Fløttum and Stenvoll (Fløttum and Stenvoll, 2009) examined some linguistic characteristics in Tony Blair's speeches; Giordano (Giordano, 2010) looked at conflict in Hillary Clinton's speeches; Reyes (Reyes, 2014) explored (in)formality as a persuasive tool in the speeches of George W. Bush and Barack Obama; Savoy (Savoy, 2010) conducted a lexical analysis of speeches by John McCain and Barack Obama; Mazid (Mazid, 2007) studied presuppositions in one of George W. Bush's speeches; Allen (Allen, 2007) explores pronominal choices in the speeches of John Howard and Mark Latham; and Pietrucci (Pietrucci, 2012) looked at strategic maneuvering in one of Silvio Berlusconi's speeches. Such studies have been profound as, through them, the researchers have been able to discover ways that political speakers “construct linguistic selves and create linguistic images of their selves” (Boussofara-Omar, 2006: 330).

One rhetorical resource that has been shown to be central in the analysis of political speeches, and other political genres, is metaphor – a tool which represents one of the first means of understanding “the ways in which political language operates” (Beard, 2000: 19). As Thompson (Thompson, 1996) sees it, not to exploit metaphor in political language is much “like a fish without water”. Semino (Semino, 2008) further argues that metaphorical choices made by politicians have rhetorical and persuasive power, and that they can also underscore certain ideological implications, among other functions.

There are studies that have explored metaphor in the speeches of political leaders, including Hugo Chávez (Moreno, 2008), Barack Obama (Cox, 2012), Silvio Berlusconi (Semino and Masci, 1996), Gordon Brown (Charteris-Black, 2004), and Tony Blair, George W. Bush and Michael Howard (Semino, 2008). Strikingly, most of these studies have centered on Western politicians, not focusing much on politicians in other parts of the world, who also (in similar or unique ways) make ubiquitous use of metaphorical language in their political speeches. Yet insights gleaned from studies on metaphor use by leaders in non-Western contexts, especially in the so-called third world countries, could be useful in understanding the extent to which (Western) theories of metaphor (e.g., the Conceptual Metaphor Theory) are applicable in other

²⁶ Political speeches are seen by some authors (e.g., Charteris-Black, 2014) as the prototypical genre in political discourse, and have a huge stake in deciding the political success or otherwise of politicians.

contexts and cultures. Also, the findings from these studies promise to facilitate comparative analysis of the use of metaphors by politicians in different parts of the world. Such findings could, for instance, throw light on how the use of metaphors by leaders in the Western world reveal ideological variations when compared with leaders in the developing world, Africa included. In this paper, I explore the use of metaphors in the political speeches of the fourth president of the fourth Republic of Ghana, John Dramani Mahama.

1. Ghanaian Politics and John Mahama

Ghana gained independence from British colonial rule in 1957 under the inspired leadership of Kwame Nkrumah who had become the Prime Minister of the new nation and later in 1960 the country's first president. Even before independence Ghana had already started to experience multiparty democracy, but the democratic system was truncated at various times in the political history of Ghana, by several military regimes that rose to political power through coup d'états. It was not until 1992 when Ghana regained considerable stability in multiparty democracy – a situation which has continued to date.

Currently, while several political parties are active in the democratic space and contest elections, Ghana is a two-party democracy, much like the UK and the USA. The two dominant political parties in Ghana now are the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP).²⁷ Relying largely on the traditional mass (and new social) media in Ghana, leading members of these two parties have over a period intensified their engagement with citizens and the electorate through their political activities, campaigns, and rallies so as to win their confidence and votes. John Dramani Mahama, whose rhetorical style as a politician this article discusses, is a well-known politician in the NDC party.

John Mahama was president of Ghana from 24 July 2012 to 7 January 2017. He unexpectedly rose to the presidency following the untimely death of the then incumbent President, John Atta Mills.²⁸ From 1996, prior to serving as president and vice president of Ghana, Mahama had been member of parliament, deputy minister and minister of state. Two reasons explain why I focus on the political rhetoric of John Mahama, specifically on his use of metaphors. The first is that I observe the consistency with which he uses striking (conceptual) metaphors to advance his political arguments, something that seems to suggest his belief in the rhetorical power and persuasiveness of metaphors in political talk. The second is that he comes across as one of Ghana's most successful politicians, being perhaps the only Ghanaian leader to have occupied nearly all the prominent political offices in Ghana – as a member of parliament, deputy minister of state, minister of state, vice president and president. It would appear, then, that his discourse, rhetorical and communication skills, particularly his consistent use of metaphors, are a key contributing factor to his charismatic leadership and political success. As Mio et al. (Mio et al.,

²⁷ These two political parties were formed in the 90s, although they have ancestral roots that can be traced to earlier political formations. Since 1992, when Ghana returned to multiparty democracy, the NDC and the NPP are the only parties that have won the presidency, and in any elections, these two parties take about 95 per cent of all electoral votes.

²⁸ As vice president of Ghana at the time Mills died, Mahama was constitutionally sworn in as president to complete Mills' term which was to end on 7 January 2013. John Mahama became the presidential candidate of the NDC for the next elections which he won and continued to be Ghana's president until 7 January 2017 when he lost the seat to the NPP's Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo Addo.

2005: 288) note, “[t]he charismatic leader can use metaphors as a tool to clarify meaning, to inspire, and to motivate followers”.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Cognitive and Discourse-Based Approaches to Metaphor

Given that the present study examines metaphors in the discourse context of political speeches, it draws on both cognitive and discourse-based theories of metaphor for its conceptualisation and analysis. Each of these two broad perspectives to metaphor analysis contributes to our understanding of the use of metaphor in political discourse texts, such as is demonstrated in this article with political speeches.

I draw specifically on the one hand, on Lakoff and Johnson’s (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), which offers explanations that account for how discourse and thought are conceptually structured; and how both abstract and concrete ideas are important for the formation of conventional metaphors in the human thought process. On the other hand, I draw on the ‘real-world’ discourse approach to metaphor (Cameron and Low, 1999; Low, Todd, Deignan and Cameron, 2010), which aims to generally highlight the contextual real use of metaphor in discourse, and in the specific analysis offered here, to show the creative and persuasive use of metaphor in the context of political speeches. Thus, in the present paper, I perceive metaphor as a phenomenon relevant to both the process of thought and the use of language in real contexts.

CMT is the pioneering work of Lakoff and Johnson (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) which argues for the value of metaphor use beyond (literary) texts to every facet of our daily life. As Lakoff and Johnson (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 4) note, “[o]ur ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature”. They go on to say that “metaphorical expressions in our language are tied to metaphorical concepts in a systematic way (Ibid: 8). This has led to the distinction between *linguistic* and *conceptual* metaphors – the former being metaphors in specific instances of language use in the form of words, phrases, and even visual images, while the latter refer to the structured thought patterns underlying linguistic metaphors. Therefore, when people produce metaphors in their talk or writing, such expressions emanate from or are based on their conceptual system.

A conceptual metaphor has a conceptual structure made up of two domains mapping onto each other, namely the ‘source’ domain and the ‘target’ domain (Kövecses, 2002; Semino, 2008, 2017). An oft-quoted example of a conceptual metaphor in Lakoff and Johnson (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 5) is ARGUMENT IS WAR which is used to illustrate how in most Western cultural situations an argument is systematically structured in terms of war in a series of expressions as follows:

ARGUMENT IS WAR

Your claims are *indefensible*.

He *attacked every weak point* in my argument. His criticisms were *right on target*.

I *demolished* his argument.

I've never *won* an argument with him.

You disagree? Okay, *shoot!*

If you use that *strategy*, he'll *wipe you out*. He *shot down* all of *my* arguments.

We see how in each of these expressions, uttered in the context of the conceptual metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR, the more abstract notion or concept of ARGUMENT ('target' domain) which is associated with the words *claims*, *argument*, *criticisms* and *disagree*, is systematically talked about in connection with the more concrete idea of (military) WAR ('source' domain) – evidenced in the words and expressions *indefensible*, *attacked*, *every weak point*, *right on target*, *demolished*, *won* and *shoot*. Kövecses (Kövecses, 2002: 4) explains that “[t]he conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain is called *source domain*, while the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the *target domain*”. Thus, as Krennmayr (Krennmayr, 2015: 530) puts it, “metaphor in language reflects conventional thought structures in our minds”.

In Lakoff and Johnson's CMT, there is also a sense in which culture plays a major role in the way a conceptual metaphor is structured – the sociocultural context in which language is used might often shape not only what source domain is chosen to explain the target domain, but also the kinds of understanding, meaning and interpretation to be derived from the mappings of the two domains. The thrust of CMT therefore is that metaphors go beyond their manifestation in our linguistic expressions. They underline our thought processing and patterning, and very often we rely on (and use) concrete concepts that are grounded in our cultural knowledge to understand the meanings constructed in more abstract concepts.

A discourse-oriented approach to metaphor is also relevant for the present study and the analysis carried out here. Metaphor researchers recognise the discourse-oriented perspective as a language-in-use theory of metaphor. Social and contextual aspects of the use of metaphor have typically not been addressed by cognitive linguists like Lakoff and Johnson. The use of metaphor in a social context ought to be described in light of “the social aspect of human behaviours” and how “the language resources available to a language user in a particular context [tends to] influence how metaphor is formulated and what can be done with it” (Low, Todd, Deignan and Cameron, 2010: vii). This means that metaphor use in a particular discourse context might not be systemic, conventional, or tied to specific (already-known) conceptual source-target mappings but can be interpreted based on the contextual information within a specific discourse community. This makes room for sound metaphorical uses and applications by speakers [and writers] that are based on creativity and cultural awareness rather than on established conceptual conventions. It is expected that studying metaphor in political discourse from a language-in-use perspective stands to uncover nuanced, interesting, and relevant uses of metaphor by a political speaker.

The relevance of a language-in-use theory further resonates with the fact that the analysis of metaphor presented here is based on naturally occurring pieces of texts (a corpus of political speeches). The corpus methods used will not only enable us to explore how Mahama uses metaphor but will also guide us in arriving at informed conclusions and culture-specific metaphorical meanings that are ideologically sound, which hopefully will prove the originality of Mahama's political discourse.

I hope to show, then, that an applied cognitive linguistic model (a joint discourse and cognitive approach to metaphor) provides a sound basis for understanding Mahama's metaphor use in his political speeches. John Mahama's use of metaphor in his speeches is consistent, conceptually structured, and contextually apt, and he combines these to highlight a rhetorical strategy that legitimises his persona as an authentic political speaker whose ideals prioritise the masses and

their concerns (Charteris-Black, 2011). He uses interesting metaphors to explain the political issues he presents to his audience. I further argue, in this article, that Mahama’s use of metaphors aims to project a key aspect of his political ideology, which is that the field of politics – specifically democratic principles, ideals and practices – is not very easily discernible to the ordinary or lay person, and that credible politicians have a responsibility to make their followers and the electorate appreciate fully the practices and nuances associated with democratic politics and political action. It follows, then, that, as Neagu (Neagu, 2013: 10) argues, “metaphors [in political discourse in particular] surpass their role as simple rhetorical devices and become part of human conceptualization”.

3. Methodology

3.1 The Corpus

A specialised corpus of John Mahama’s political speeches, which I call the JMPS, was compiled purposely to study his use of (conceptual) metaphors. In corpus linguistics, a specialised corpus is understood to be one that targets a particular genre, text type, author or speaker, so that a corpus of political speeches delivered by a known political leader (here, John Mahama) is a good example. Because, as far as I can tell, there was no existing ‘processed’ corpus of Mahama’s speeches (although most of his speeches were accessible on-line), it was necessary to build the corpus for the present study.

The JMPS corpus is made up of 22 of Mahama’s political speeches which were collected and digitalised. The speeches were on different themes, delivered to both local and international audiences during and after his reign as president of Ghana. The speeches were collected mainly from on-line websites including John Mahama’s own website.²⁹ One of the speeches was also orthographically transcribed as it was obtained only as a video/audio transcript. In total, the JMPS is made up of 69, 922-word tokens. Even as a specialised corpus the JMPS might be seen to be a very small corpus; yet it has proven big enough to reveal interesting patterns of metaphor use by John Mahama in varied contexts, as discussed in this article. Besides, I share in the view of Koester (Koester, 2010: 67) who argues that an advantage of small, specialised corpora is that “they allow a much closer link between the corpus and the contexts in which the texts in the corpus were produced”, noting further that with such corpora an analyst tends to have “a high degree of familiarity with the context”. Table 1 is a summary of the main features of the speeches that make up JMPS.

Table 1: Summary of the features of the JMPS corpus.

Speech File	Occasion Delivered	Date	Word Tokens
JMPS01	UN Climate Change Conference	Nov. 30, 2015	699
JMPS02	71 ST Session of UN Assembly	Sept. 21, 2016	3526
JMPS03	2012 Election Victory Speech	Dec. 11, 2012	1522
JMPS04	June 3 Disaster Memorial Service	June 3, 2017	1868
JMPS05	Presidential Inaugural Address	Jan. 7, 2013	1803
JMPS06	24 th Anniversary of NDC	Mar. 1, 2017	4203
JMPS07	Nationwide Address	Aug. 15, 2012	1526

²⁹ <https://www.johnmahama.org/>

JMPS08	20 TH AU Summit Speech	Jan. 27, 2013	953
JMPS09	Senchi Economic Forum Speech	May 13, 2014	3427
JMPS10	Anti-Corruption Day Speech	Dec. 10, 2015	3454
JMPS11	Flagbearer Endorsement 2016	Nov. 22, 2015	2161
JMPS12	Mindspeak Safaricom Speech	Feb. 18, 2017	2832
JMPS13	59 th Independence Day Address	Mar. 6, 2016	1668
JMPS14	New Cape Coast Stadium Address	May 4, 2016	1041
JMPS15	2013 SONA	Feb. 21, 2013	10946
JMPS16	Last SONA	Jan. 5, 2017	3929
JMPS17	2014 SONA	Feb. 25, 2014	10212
JMPS18	Speech at Democracy and Dev. in Africa meeting	Nov. 2, 2017	5528
JMPS19	ALM Person Keynote Address	Feb. 23, 2017	2185
JMPS20	Address on Africa's Self-reliance in Security	Apr. 19, 2018	2818
JMPS21	Address to Former Appointees and other Top Party People	Apr. 2017	2349
JMPS22	NDC Manifesto Launch 2020	Sept. 2020	1272

3.2 Identification of Metaphors in the JMPS Corpus

The analysis for this study started off with the identification of metaphors and metaphorical expressions in the JMPS corpus. In studies that have explored metaphor in texts, two main types of data – corpus data and discourse data – have often been used, each of which has seen researchers develop robust metaphor extraction principles over time. So, for example, notable corpus procedures for metaphor identification have been offered by Deignan (Deignan, 1999, 2005), Charteris-Black (Charteris-Black, 2011), Stefanowitsch (Stefanowitsch, 2006), Berber Sardinha (Berber Sardinha, 2012), among others.

On the other hand, there are well-tested discourse data procedures for metaphor extraction and identification, including Steen (Steen, 2002, 2007), Cameron (Cameron, 1999, 2003), Pragglejazz Group (Pragglejazz Group, 2007), and Steen et al. (Steen et al., 2010). In this article, I use techniques in both data types, making use of corpus explication strategies suggested in Berber Sardinha (Berber Sardinha, 2012) and complementing it with aspects of what seems to be the most widely used metaphor explication procedure in the discourse data tradition – i.e., the MIP and its elaborated MIPVU version, developed by the Pragglejazz Group (Pragglejazz Group, 2007) and Steen et al. (Steen et al., 2010) respectively.

I started the search for lexical units in the JMPS corpus that could potentially be used metaphorically, relying on two strategies suggested by Berber Sardinha (Berber Sardinha, 2012) (i.e., first manually reading excerpts of the corpus, and, second, running two, three and four lexical bundle searches in the corpus). At this initial stage, I was not yet particularly focusing on the identification and classification of metaphor and non-metaphorical uses of lexical units. I was using these strategies to list metaphorically potential lexical units, although the process was already throwing up some metaphor uses in the corpus. This process was also guided by and based on words and phrases previously identified to be strong words/units to be used metaphorically (Deignan, 1995, 2005; Lazar, 2003, Semino, 2017). This initial step accords with Semino's (Semino, 2017: 3) view that an important strategy to extract metaphors

in a corpus “involves searching the data for words or phrases that are likely to be used metaphorically or to occur in close proximity to relevant uses of metaphor”.

Following this first step, I concordanced each lexical unit to identify and classify metaphor uses in the corpus using the corpus analysis tool *AntConc* (version 3.4.3) (Anthony, 2005). For each concordance query carried out on a lexical unit, the MIPVU metaphor identification procedure (Steen et al., 2010) was followed to decide whether the use of a lexical unit is metaphorical or literal. Each concordance output (of a potentially metaphorical word) was closely examined – looking at the co-text in the concordance as well as most times getting down to the text file to observe the extended context of use. A key principle in the use of the MIPVU to identify metaphors is to be certain that lexical units exhibit a disruption of semantic coherence, where the contextual meaning of a unit is clearly different from its basic sense. In order not to overly rely on my intuition regarding contextual and basic meanings of lexical units, I checked to be sure by using a corpus-based dictionary, the *Collins Cobuild Advanced Dictionary of English* (7th edition), as a reference guide. Despite that simile, metonymy and personification are tropes that share close relationships and interact with metaphor (Steen et al. 2010), they were left out of the analysis for the present paper as the scope covered here did not allow for their full treatment.

On metaphors, I originally decided to exclude the literal uses of the lexical units analyzed, but an intriguing pattern I began to observe with *build*, in particular, led me to record the literal (basic) uses as well. So, both the frequencies of clear cases of metaphor uses and the basic, literal senses of lexical units were recorded. As indicated, *build*, as used by Mahama in his speeches, recorded considerable occurrences in both its metaphorical and literal uses (with all its variants – *builds*, *built*, *building*, *buildings* recording examples). It returned a total of 61 hits (uses), out of which 40 were used metaphorically and 21 literally, as excerpts 1 to 4 show:

Excerpt 1

Over the next four years we will *build* an economy that rewards hard work and nurtures Ghanaian entrepreneurs ... (**metaphorical**). [JMPS13]

Excerpt 2

We have gone about the task of nation *building* in a serious manner placing the wellbeing of the people on top of our list of priorities (**metaphorical**). [JMPS06]

Excerpt 3

Government will *build* similar facilities in the Brong Ahafo, Eastern, Upper East, Upper West and Volta regions (**literal**). [JMPS14]

Excerpt 4

This stadium was *built* as a symbol to mark 50 years of Ghana-China diplomatic relations ... (**literal**). [JMPS14]

While I do not discuss in detail the non-metaphor uses in this article, I return to focus on the collaboration between metaphorical and literal uses of units like *build*, *grow*, and *road* in John Mahama’s speeches, as such a collaboration seems to project a certain reality that I find quite notable. Generally, the corpus analysis procedure deployed to extract metaphor uses and identify conceptual patterns in the JMPS offers support to the view held by Deignan (Deignan, 2005: 5) that “a corpus linguistic approach can contribute importantly to our understanding of metaphor”.

3.3 Concordance, Collocation, and Metaphor Variation

Beyond the linguistic analysis of metaphorical uses of lexical units in the JMPS, I also focus on a classification of the conceptual (source/target domain) mappings that specific linguistic metaphors represent.

A close analysis of concordances and collocations of specific metaphorical lexical units revealed interesting patterns of metaphor variation in different contexts. For example, different issues of concern to Mahama as a politician get metaphorically framed in different ways. The kinds of variations enabled by concordances and collocations help to reveal the defining features of Mahama’s metaphor use, his political rhetoric and his ideology on specific issues around politics. Concordance and collocation queries in corpus linguistics have the potential to highlight patterns and variations that might be missed if the analyses were to be carried out manually.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Metaphor and Literal Uses of Lexical Units in the Speeches

The analysis of the use of linguistic metaphors in the JMPS corpus, and of the conceptual metaphors the specific linguistic metaphors represent, shows that metaphors are ubiquitous in Mahama’s political speeches. Mahama systematically and pervasively deploys metaphors as a rhetorical tool to structure his arguments as a politician, often using them to explain, evaluate, and clarify the issues he speaks about. The ubiquitous use of metaphor by Mahama may suggest he is conscious of the integral role of this device in successful political talk.

Chilton (Chilton, 2004) has explained that, in political discourse, politicians often rely on metaphors as a legitimizing tool to make their audience see them as sounding right and to articulate good intentions. To begin with, Table 2 displays the lexical units with metaphorical uses in the JMPS, the frequencies of metaphorical uses for these units, and the frequencies of non-metaphor/literal uses. It should be mentioned that lexical units which were originally included in the list to be searched for but did not record any metaphor uses, or did not occur at all in the JMPS, became irrelevant to the analysis and were therefore left out.

Table 2: Lexical resources and metaphor/non metaphor uses in the corpus.

Lexical Units Searched	Freq. of Metaphor Uses (%)	Freq. of non-metaphor/literal uses
<i>accelerate</i>	3 (0.7%)	0
<i>afford</i>	5 (1.1%)	2
<i>afloat</i>	2 (0.5%)	0
<i>ailing</i>	1 (0.2%)	0
<i>baton</i>	3 (0.7%)	0
<i>battle</i>	7 (1.6%)	0
<i>birth</i>	2 (0.5%)	4
<i>body</i>	8 (1.8%)	1
<i>bow</i>	1 (0.2%)	0
<i>branch</i>	4 (0.9%)	0
<i>build</i>	40 (9.0%)	21

<i>burden</i>	5 (1.1%)	3
<i>chase</i>	1 (0.2%)	1
<i>clean-up</i>	1 (0.2%)	0
<i>colour</i>	1 (0.2%)	0
<i>combat</i>	4 (0.9%)	0
<i>cross lines</i>	1 (0.2%)	0
<i>cure</i>	3 (0.7%)	0
<i>dark</i>	3 (0.7%)	0
<i>dawn</i>	5 (1.1%)	0
<i>die</i>	1 (0.2%)	0
<i>divide</i>	12 (2.7%)	0
<i>doorstep</i>	3 (0.7%)	0
<i>erode</i>	2 (0.5%)	1
<i>eye</i>	1 (0.2%)	0
<i>face</i>	7 (1.6%)	10
<i>fall</i>	15 (3.4%)	0
<i>family</i>	4 (0.9%)	22
<i>fight</i>	19 (4.3%)	0
<i>foundation</i>	7 (1.6%)	0
<i>fruition</i>	2 (0.5%)	0
<i>gap</i>	5 (1.1%)	0
<i>grow</i>	111 (25.0%)	4
<i>hand</i>	7 (1.6%)	2
<i>head</i>	21 (4.7%)	0
<i>health</i>	3 (0.7%)	0
<i>heart</i>	8 (1.8%)	0
<i>horse</i>	6 (1.4%)	0
<i>infant</i>	1 (0.2%)	1
<i>in tatters</i>	1 (0.2%)	0
<i>invest</i>	2 (0.5%)	5
<i>lame</i>	4 (0.9%)	0
<i>light</i>	2 (0.5%)	0
<i>line up</i>	1 (0.2%)	0
<i>maturity</i>	2 (0.5%)	0
<i>nurture</i>	1 (0.2%)	1
<i>on track</i>	10 (2.3%)	6
<i>path</i>	19 (4.3%)	0
<i>pay</i>	3 (0.7%)	10
<i>player</i>	5 (1.1%)	2
<i>race</i>	2 (0.5%)	0
<i>recover</i>	3 (0.7%)	4
<i>rebound</i>	1 (0.2%)	0
<i>relay</i>	3 (0.7%)	0
<i>road</i>	10 (2.3%)	44
<i>root</i>	4 (0.9%)	0
<i>seed</i>	2 (0.5%)	7
<i>shoulder</i>	2 (0.5%)	0
<i>shut our doors</i>	2 (0.5%)	0

<i>sick</i>	1 (0.2%)	0
<i>soul</i>	1 (0.2%)	1
<i>sow</i>	1 (0.2%)	0
<i>spirit</i>	12 (2.7%)	1
<i>struggle</i>	6 (1.4%)	5
<i>walk</i>	4 (0.9%)	0
<i>yield</i>	5 (1.1%)	1
Total	444	159

It emerges from the frequency analysis, as can be seen in Table 2, that the lexical units Mahama uses quite often to communicate metaphorical meanings in his speeches are GROW, BUILD, HEAD, FIGHT, and PATH, each of which records more than 4% of the total occurrences of metaphor uses found with the 66 lexical units analyzed.

Interestingly, GROW and BUILD (which also record many literal/non-metaphorical uses in his speeches, but far fewer) are the words Mahama uses most frequently to construct metaphors in his speeches. Another word, ROAD, also occurs quite frequently with both metaphor and literal uses although its metaphor uses (2.3%), compared with those of GROW and BUILD, are far less. But the pattern of metaphor and literal/non-metaphor uses of these units by Mahama, especially those occurring in the same speeches, seems intriguing and interesting. The pervasive metaphorical uses of GROW, BUILD and ROAD easily make them appear more conventional rather than creative (or novel) metaphors, thereby suggesting they may not be framing anything contextually interesting.

However, the point of interest arises in what appears to be a conscious and calculated combination of both metaphor and literal uses of these units by Mahama, as several of such combined uses occur in the same speech. They seem to characterize a unique rhetorical style adopted by Mahama to foreground the close associations between physical reality and visual perception of the political issues of concern to him. With regards to GROW specifically, as seen in Excerpts 5 and 6, Mahama literally uses it to highlight the need for people in a nation to go through the physical process of human growth happily (Excerpt 5) and then, in the same speech, he relies on the conceptual metaphor ECONOMY IS AN ORGANISM to metaphorically frame the need to visualize the bigger picture of economic progress by talking about the economy in terms of how it can achieve accelerated growth (Excerpt 6).

Excerpt 5

My vision for this country is to create a conducive national environment in which our children grow happily into responsible adults ... (**literal**) [JMPS15]

Excerpt 6

In partnership with the private sector, we will expand our infrastructure in a manner that will accelerate economic growth (**metaphorical**) [JMPS15]

Excerpt 7

Another policy introduced by Col. Acheampong was Operation Feed Yourself, which encouraged Ghanaians to grow what they consumed (**literal**) [JMPS12]

Excerpt 8

From seemingly out of nowhere several African countries were among the top ten fastest *growing* economies in the world (**metaphorical**) [JMPS12]

Mahama achieves a similar rhetorical effect with the lexical units BUILD and ROAD, as exemplified in Excerpts 9 to 12. In the specific case of BUILD, we can see that both its literal and metaphorical uses convey a sense of the need to not just build physical structures (literal – Excerpt 9) but also to build on successes already achieved with regards to reducing poverty (metaphorical – Excerpt 10)), both of which are crucial for advancing societal needs.

This feature of combining metaphor and literal uses of specific lexical units to discuss political issues comes across as a creative rhetorical style in Mahama’s speeches not previously discussed. Previous metaphor studies in political discourse (e.g., Koller and Semino/Semino and Koller, 2009a, 2009b; Charteris-Black, 2014; Musolff, 2017; Ahrens, 2019) have all tended to focus solely on metaphor uses – the kinds of metaphor used by politicians, and how different contextual situations might trigger the use of different metaphors.

Excerpt 9

Building domestic and regional infrastructure stimulates economic and activity and in turn spurs growth (**literal**) [JMPS19]

Excerpt 10

It is possible for Africa to *build* on the tremendous success achieved in halving poverty under the MDGs to achieve this SDG goal (**metaphorical**) [JMPS19]

Excerpt 11

We will embark on a regional *roads* improvement programme that will see significant upgrades in critical *road* infrastructure in the major agriculture regions ... (**literal**) [JMPS15]

Excerpt 12

In addition, we will begin the *road* map for converting our existing 10 public polytechnics into fully fledged technical universities (**metaphorical**) [JMPS15]

Apart from these five lexical units (i.e., GROW, BUILD, HEAD, FIGHT and PATH) whose metaphor and literal uses were very prominent in Mahama’s speeches, and which tended to account for many of the conceptual metaphors discussed in this article, the remaining 61 units on the list in Table 2 had relatively fewer metaphorical uses in the speeches. For most of these units, Mahama used them metaphorically only as no literal uses were recorded.

Although these 61 lexical units record very low metaphorical uses in the speeches, Mahama uses them in unique, culturally oriented ways that highlight how his rhetorical style uncovers aspects of his political ideology. As Neagu (Neagu, 2013: 23) has pointed out, within political discourse and in other contexts, “[s]tyles represent the discursive manifestation of identity, of individuality, of personality”. If we take, as an example, the horse race excerpt in the primary title of this paper, which is taken from a speech Mahama delivered to top party members/officials in April 2017 after his party lost the 2016 national elections, we see that Mahama was talking and thinking of electoral competition (target domain) in terms of a horse race (source domain). The words ‘horse’ and ‘race’ occur 8 times overall in the JMPS, and all the uses are in relation to the ‘electoral competition – horse race’ conceptual metaphorical mapping (no literal uses).

I will discuss the details of the ‘horse race’ metaphor in the next section, but it is important to draw attention here to its resonating value in the way Mahama uses it to connect with his audience in the context of his speech. In contemporary Ghana, the horse features in many activities including, for example, sporting activities, recreational purposes, politics, and military training and parades. In the 4th Republic of Ghanaian politics since 1992, horses have become a symbol of authority in Ghana: they are used to usher in the convoy of the head of state at very important national events such as Independence Day parades. Horse racing has also gained momentum in Ghana during this period. It would make sense, then, to assume that Mahama exploits the horse race metaphor to advance his political argument, knowing that Ghanaians are aware of the concrete activities that make use of the horse.

4.2 Conceptual Metaphors Identified in Mahama's Speeches

The linguistic expressions of metaphorical uses in Mahama’s political speeches are instantiations that provide a basis for the identification of many conceptual (target-source) mappings. These conceptual (mental) structures became apparent upon a close inspection and analysis of the patterns emerging from concordance lines of lexical units used metaphorically. Table 3 lists the conceptual metaphors identified in the Mahama speeches according to specific themes (and sub themes in some cases).

Table 3: Conceptual metaphors in the JMPS corpus.

Conceptual Metaphors in the Mahama Speeches

- POLITICS/POLITICAL ACTIVITY IS WAR
 - ELECTION IS A BATTLE
 - SOCIAL ISSUES AS WAR
 - POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AS ATHLETICS
 - POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IS A RELAY RACE
 - ELECTORAL COMPETITION IS A HORSE RACE
 - NATION-BUILDING IS A RACE
 - ACHIEVING SUCCESS AS A PLANT
 - REALISING A VISION IS A PLANT
 - WINNING POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE IS A PLANT
 - GHANA IS A PERSON
 - DEVELOPING A NATION IS A JOURNEY
 - A NON-PROGRESSIVE MIND IS EXPENSIVE/COSTLY
 - POLITICS IS BUSINESS
 - POLITICS IS AN ORGANISM
 - DEMOCRACY IS A PLANT
 - DEMOCRACY IS A TEAM SPORT
 - ECONOMY IS A BALL
 - ECONOMY IS A BUILDING
 - ECONOMY IS A PLANT
 - ECONOMY IS AN ORGANISM
 - ECONOMY IS A VEHICLE
 - A WORTHWHILE ACTIVITY IS A BUILDING
-

While some of the conceptual mappings are based on several linguistic instantiations of metaphor use, others emerge from just one or two examples of metaphor use. But my concern here is not to really demonstrate that a certain number of (or all the potential) metaphorical

linguistic expressions should be counted in order to recognise a conceptual mapping (Stefanowitsch, 2006). This first study of Mahama’s use of metaphor is aimed at focusing on the vast array of conceptual metaphors underlying his use of linguistic metaphors. As I will show, and as Table 3 makes clear, Mahama makes use of a variety of source domains to talk about specific local, regional, national, and international issues or experiences (i.e., target domains) that might require political action or authority.

A cursory look at Table 3 shows that Mahama’s use of metaphor is predominant in the areas of politics and the economy, and specifically uses metaphor quite often to talk about Ghana as a nation and democracy as a system of government embraced by Ghana and many other nations globally.

The specific linguistic metaphors he uses that create these mental structures have the potential to uncover the discourses surrounding phenomena of all kinds as well as how individuals or groups of people might be perceived. Semino (Semino, 2008: 34) has suggested that texts containing metaphor uses “that are discursively systematic are particularly significant” and that “they can be seen as the reflection of the shared beliefs and assumptions of the members of particular social groups”.

Mahama’s consistent use of metaphors reflects certain ideologies that he conveys of politics, of elections, of the economy, of social life, of nation-building, and of many aspects of how politics ought to bring about prosperity and economic transformation to countries. In the remainder of this section, I offer a more detailed analysis of some of Mahama’s conceptual metaphors, with relevant corpus examples, to show how he talks and thinks of these pressing issues that confront his country and those of the international community.

4.2.1 METAPHORS FOR ELECTORAL POLITICS

The role of electoral politics in democracy is central and represents one aspect which is often marked in the talk of politicians. Metaphors are used to frame electoral success, or defeat or nuance situations that need to calm nerves and that need to be used to preserve the persuasive power politicians enjoy from the followers or electorate.

When John Mahama lost the 2016 presidential elections in Ghana, the loss came not only as a surprise but also with considerable disbelief and misunderstanding, especially among the many supporters and followers of his NDC party. It was difficult for the Party to understand why an incumbent president seeking a second term should lose the elections, as it has always been the case that first time presidents win the votes of Ghanaians to form a second term government. What followed was a general blame game in the party on who caused the political defeat of John Mahama. There was also extensive commentary and talk around who the next flagbearer of the party should be. In the heat of the arguments, Mahama (in April 2017) organised and held a meeting with top party officials, offering his own understanding of the defeat but aimed more towards calming nerves and keeping the party united. The excerpt in the title of this article, out of which the conceptual metaphor ELECTORAL COMPETITION IS A HORSE RACE is formed, is part of the speech Mahama delivered at this gathering. Mahama says:

Excerpt 13

If you *ride a lame horse* into a *race* and you *lose the race*, your priority must be to *cure the lameness of the horse* and not about who will *ride the horse* again. You have to *cure the horse* and make sure it's no longer *lame*, and once you have a *fit, healthy horse* it will throw up who the *jockey* should be [JMSP 21]

In Excerpt 13, Mahama is talking and thinking of the 2016 elections in which the NDC had participated and lost (the TARGET domain) in terms of a horse race (the SOURCE domain). Mahama suggests that the NDC went into the competition ('race') with a weak party machinery, metaphorically framed as 'a lame horse', and as a result everyone's concern, at the time he was delivering his speech, should have been directed at first curing the lameness of the horse rather than at looking for or focusing on who the next flagbearer ('the jockey') should be.

However, subsequently in the same speech, Mahama seemed to accept responsibility for the electoral defeat since he led his party into the elections. Unsurprisingly, this acceptance of responsibility also draws on a conceptual metaphor (ELECTION IS A BATTLE) that seemed to further resonate with his audience and to project him as a political leader who knows what it means to take responsibility.

Excerpt 14

Of course, as *the general who led us into battle*, I take ultimate responsibility for our losing the election, and so if it will satisfy those people *blame* me for the *loss* [JPMS 21]

In Excerpts 13 and 14, Mahama strategically draws on the source domains A HORSE RACE and A BATTLE to explain the electoral loss. He uses these domains to stir up in the minds of his audience a positive mental representation, which not only deepens the audience's understanding of the loss, but also exonerates him as not really the cause of the loss, in spite of what, in Excerpt 14, seems to suggest he accepted blame for the loss.

Indeed, Excerpt 14 only has the discourse function of calming nerves and subduing, or possibly ending, the blame game rather than really indicating true acceptance of blame for the defeat. If anything at all, the metaphor ELECTION IS A BATTLE contributes to portraying Mahama as a credible and mature leader who concedes defeat, at least in the eyes of his audience. It is the reason the conceptual (metaphorical) mapping in Excerpt 13 offers a more thorough and mentally stimulating explanation for the electoral loss, skillfully shifting the blame away from Mahama and placing it within the NDC's electoral machinery or campaign team. Here the ELECTORAL COMPETITION IS A HORSE RACE metaphor most likely wins over the hearts and minds of Mahama's audience and depicts him as a persuasive politician.

Within the context of the same 2017 speech, after using the horse race metaphor to highlight the need for the NDC's electoral machinery to be reorganized and strengthened, Mahama goes a step further. He tries to heal the wounds of the loss his Party had suffered and to enhance confidence in the NDC political fraternity. He therefore suggests that the 2016 electoral loss could be viewed as a blessing in disguise – one that has the potential to revive and reposition the party for an exciting and a victorious come back in the next election. He uses a more detailed but different framing strategy of the ELECTION IS A BATTLE conceptual metaphor we have already seen in Excerpt 14 to achieve this, as can be seen in Excerpt 15.

Excerpt 15

But often in life, outcomes like this are important to allow any organization to *regroup, refocus*, and *go back into battle*. If you *go into battle* and the *battle* is continuous and you don't have a

little break to step back and look at your *strategy* and see how to make yourself *more effective in battle*, often than not you are not as effective as you should be. [JMPS 21]

The specific use of the phrases ‘regroup’, ‘refocus’, ‘battle’, ‘strategy’, ‘little break’, ‘step back’ and ‘effective in battle’ by Mahama has the force of intuitively constructing, in the minds of his audience, a retentive awareness of the essential strategies for success in war or battle, and how they can anticipate their party’s success when this source concept is applied to the target concept of POLITICS generally or ELECTIONS in particular. Overall, Mahama’s choice of conceptual source domains, in this April 2017 speech, may seem apt and offers a useful reasoning which brings enormous clarity to the somewhat ‘ill understood’ and ‘controversial’ target political issue of the 2016 electoral loss and the matters arising from it (Chilton 2004: 67). While generally the metaphors deployed here by Mahama to discuss their loss in the 2016 elections may be seen as conventional, we see a sense in which he uses them in contextually creative and unconventional ways to project a political persona whose credibility can be vouched for by his audiences.

4.2.2 FRAMING POLITICS/POLITICAL LEADERSHIP METAPHORICALLY

Mahama metaphorically frames politics as a human being (POLITICS IS AN ORGANISM), expecting people who venture into it to be mindful of what is involved, especially in terms of how to position oneself with political opponents, and how to have a vision of politics that aims to deliver the people’s aspirations. The linguistic manifestations of this conceptual metaphor are highlighted in some of his speeches. One of these manifestations, as seen in Excerpt 16, relates to maturation in politics, as is true of humans, plants and other creatures to grow and mature.

Excerpt 16

... we have ultimately avoided violence and we should congratulate ourselves for demonstrating our *political maturity* and our clear commitment to the path of peace. [JMPS 03]

Mahama tries to demonstrate rhetorical competence and to engage his audience on the subject of political maturation by telling the Ghanaian people that they have come of age politically and must be proud of their role in the political and social systems they have helped to create. He goes on to foreground the metaphor of a growing democracy and to articulate his evaluation of his nation’s political progress to his audience.

This is a highly persuasive strategy adopted by Mahama, especially in gaining the support of the people. Mahama sounds very real and non-manipulative here and assigns his audience what seems to be a very active and participatory role. He communicates good intentions of his nation’s modest political progress which he believes constitutes the people’s own progress and therefore attributes it to them rather than to himself and to his fellow politicians despite that they (politicians) are leading the whole process. As Charteris-Black (Charteris-Black, 2011) argues, when the audience recognise that a speaker’s use of metaphors complies or resonates with their own best interests, they tend to believe in the intentions of the speaker.

Excerpt 17

We have managed to instill the respect for democratic governance into *our political and civil life* so well that, an entire generation of Ghanaians have come of age in *our* political system knowing nothing else and expecting nothing else. I believe that this will continue for

generations to come and as your president I wish to reiterate my commitment to *the growth and further consolidation of our democracy and its key institutions*. [JMPS 03]

Apart from the metaphorical framings, it is important to observe how Mahama projects the people as the owners of their political system through the repeated use of the inclusive personal pronoun 'our', thereby legitimatizing their role as key actors in the politics of the country.

There is a further metaphorical reference to POLITICS AS A GAME/BOXING by Mahama. He refers particularly to the 'political arena' which triggers a vision of the huge space within the sporting/boxing arena, encouraging the positive spirit of competition and the competition of ideas in the political governance and leadership of a country. This is encapsulated in the kind of atmosphere expected for political rivalry and competition to thrive, as Mahama hopes for in Excerpt 18. The use of the words 'decency' and 'dignity' to refer to the kind of political atmosphere he wants to see further provides a basis for his view that politics ought to be viewed more positively if political systems are the true agents of governance and development. In Excerpt 18, Mahama reminds us that, at least in the context of African politics, there is a lot that motivates people (of all walks of life) to negatively evaluate and ideologize politics as 'dirty', 'divisive', 'non progressive' 'corrupt', 'disruptive', 'dishonest', 'self-serving', etc., all of which are underlined by the conceptual metaphor of POLITICS IS A DIRTY GAME. Fortunately, he places the problem at the doorstep of the conduct and attitude of politicians rather than on the profession itself, as Excerpt 18 shows ('it is us politicians who make it so').

Excerpt 18

I believe there is space in the *political arena* to compete for political leadership in *an atmosphere of decency and dignity*. It is said that *politics is a dirty game*. I daresay, *it is us politicians who make it so*. [JMPS 07]

One more metaphorical depiction of politics by Mahama finds expression in source domain metaphors of business – POLITICS IS BUSINESS, a conventional metaphor that is quite common in his political speeches. Politicians are often aware of their primary role of availing enhanced social services and generating, as well as distributing, the (limited) resources and wealth of a nation to provide for the needs of the people. There is a greater sense of urgency to this in especially less developed or third world countries.

Mahama's use of the POLITICS IS BUSINESS metaphor echoes this dimension of politics, uncovered in the way his talk about political activity, such as the provision of healthcare, education, infrastructure, roads, etc., by the government to the masses, is conceived in terms of 'investment' and the 'yielding of dividends', as exemplified in Excerpts 19 and 20.

Excerpt 19

Investments in healthcare, education, power, water, roads, and sports are *yielding significant dividends* for us and are creating more employment opportunities. [JMPS02]

Excerpt 20

In August of 2013, government hosted a forum of all stakeholders in Ho in the Volta Region to deliberate on strategies for sanitising the wage bill in order to *free resources for other critical investments*, such as education, health and infrastructure. [JMPS09]

The metaphor of politics as business captures a reflective understanding which Mahama hopes will provoke the minds of his audience. This highlights a way of thinking about the kinds of

return political actors expect to see when they commit to offering social services to the people. Mahama communicates the vision that, as investments in business are expected to yield benefits in the form of profits and dividends, so are investments in healthcare, education, power, roads, infrastructure, etc. expected to yield such returns as freedom, safety, security, and a generally enhanced condition of life for the people. This expectation also finds expression in the ECONOMY IS A VEHICLE metaphor, as Mahama also talks of a vision of ‘*the acceleration of our economy ...*’ [JMPS 15] which might be considered a prerequisite for such investment returns to be achieved.

The application of this acceleration metaphor supports the investment return expectation and thus adds to Mahama’s persuasive discourse, as it is one that might easily resonate with his followers whose expectations of their leader – to improve the socioeconomic standards of the people – cannot be compromised.

4.2.3 FRAMING SOCIAL ISSUES AS WAR

In several of his political speeches Mahama draws on the widely applied conventional concept of A WAR (SOURCE domain) and maps it onto vital, concrete social issues (TARGET domains) that need political action. Here, the source domain is linguistically expressed mainly with the word ‘fight’ although other forms like ‘combat’ and ‘battle’ capture the notion. Right from the outset, we get a sense of how Mahama, as a political leader, wants social problems affecting his fellow Ghanaians, and Africans in general, to be tackled.

There seems to be a clear conviction and indication, on his part, that any serious social issue impeding the development and progress of Ghana and Africa requires the kind of ‘aggressive’ or even ‘violent’ response anyone would imagine in a fight or war situation and must therefore be confronted head on. A close inspection of the sorted concordance lines for ‘fight’ in Figure 1. brings into sharp view some of the social issues confronting Ghana and Africa, and for which Mahama talks and thinks about in his speeches using violent metaphors.

Concordance Hits 19		File
Hit	KWIC	
1	ing Corruption. We will give impetus to the fight against corruption by strengthening the anti	JM15
2	ent Act, which strengthens our hands in the fight against corruption. I must however say that	JM16
3	ur internal and international partners in the fight against corruption. Mr. Chairman, I am encou	JM10
4	2s Department. Our greatest success in the fight against corruption must be based on preventi	JM10
5	able. Systems and legislation to deepen the fight against corruption must be established. How	JM19
6	sed by Parliament. Our commitment to the fight against corruption remains unshakeable. We w	JM15
7	for the provision of humanitarian aid in the fight against Ebola. \xA0The name \x93Ghana\x94	JM13
8	tion with relevant international agencies, to fight against international terrorism, money laund	JM15
9	a moral duty to empower all Ghanaians, to fight against prejudice, poverty and inequality, a	JM11
10	cal turmoil.\xA0 But today Kenya is thriving, fighting back against all that would stand in the	JM13
11	an produce would give African agriculture a fighting chance. Mr. President, Some of the young	JM02
12	indeed want to succeed as a country in fighting corruption and crime. Just last week, Tra	JM10
13	indeed aspire to collectively and sustainably fight corruption. As a government, I assure you th	JM10
14	rruption (UNCAC) as a global instrument to fight corruption. Obviously, the significance of t	JM10
15	fearless enough to fulfil their dreams, or to fight for the liberation of their people, or to	JM05
16	rnment runs in facing up to corruption and fighting it. And in the past even though we	JM10
17	sociated with the alienation of public lands. FIGHTING NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING AND CONSUMPTION Mr.	JM15
18	by going into the infection zone to assist fight the disease. Ghana remains proud of its cont	JM02
19	our national interests. I recall the decision to fight\xA0galamsy\xA0(illegal, small scale mining)	JM18

Figure 1: Screenshot of concordance lines for ‘fight’.

The most visible and common is the fight over ‘corruption’ but also the need to fight such ills as ‘Ebola’, ‘international terrorism’, ‘poverty’, ‘crime’, ‘prejudice’, ‘inequality’, ‘narcotics’ ‘disease’, ‘galamsay’ (i.e., illegal mining), etc. In other speeches, Mahama specifically uses ‘combat’ and ‘battle’ to characterize the war against ‘narcotics’, ‘corruption’, ‘drug trafficking’ and ‘HIV/AIDS’, as exemplified in Excerpts 21 and 22.

Excerpt 21

... I request all officials engaged in tackling this menace [drug trafficking] to maintain a high sense of integrity in order to *win this battle*. [JMPS15]

Excerpt 22

It has always been a pleasure for me ... to reflect on the implementation of our national strategy and the plan that we adopted *to combat* corruption ... [JMPS10]

Mahama’s use of violent metaphors to talk about social issues, reflected and evidenced, for example, in the conceptual idea of SOCIAL ISSUES AS WAR, provides a sufficient basis for one to argue that such issues require urgent political action and need to be tackled in a confrontational manner. After all, for Mahama, the socio-economic problems in Ghana and/or on the continent are the kind that must be fought, especially when one considers that Africa is often talked about in terms of being one of the least developed and most deprived regions of the world (see, Lewis, 2008). And this might, interestingly, explain a notable contrast that can be observed between the African context and elsewhere in the use and application of confrontational/violent source metaphors. For example, research on metaphors in language in most Western cultures (see for example, Sontag, 1979; Kövecses, 2000; Gibbs and Franks, 2002; Demmen et al., 2015) has shown that violent metaphors, framed specifically in terms of Military, War, or Battle metaphors, are particularly common in the context of terminal illness experiences, most notably cancer.

That is not to say that such metaphors do not occur in other contexts of use in Western cultures but that they may be more handy and readily applicable in health communication. The kind of contrast I underscore here suggests that certain conceptual metaphors may be shared between or across cultures, and yet vary according to specific contexts of application, especially in terms of elaboration and relevance (Kövecses, 2000).

4.2.4 METAPHORS FOR THE ECONOMY

Every good politician places priority on the economy of her/his nation and their talk about this aspect of their political leadership often gives a sense of the kinds of economic institutions and incentives they hope to be able to establish to address issues of living standards. As Burgers and Ahrens (Burgers and Ahrens, 2020: 260) note, “one area of discourse especially relevant to politicians is the status of a country’s economy, as the economy is the driving factor in a country’s prosperity, and thus critical to politicians’ fates as leaders”.

Talk about the economy in developing countries such as Ghana is even more profound and relevant. Political leaders are expected to conceive of the economy in very intelligent and rhetorically appropriate ways to gain the confidence and trust of their people. In Mahama’s political discourse and rhetoric, the economy is given a prominent place and is talked about in various metaphorical ways that justify its centrality in politics, as Burgers and Ahrens remind us. In different discourse contexts, Mahama employs a variety of source domain metaphors to characterize his ideology and vision of the economy, including ECONOMY IS A PLANT, ECONOMY IS A BUILDING, ECONOMY IS A BALL, ECONOMY IS A VEHICLE and ECONOMY IS AN ORGANISM.

Mahama’s metaphorical framings for the economy are conventional but they combine to highlight his focus on what national economies must deliver to the citizens. The source domain metaphors Mahama uses to describe the economy – ‘plant’, ‘building’, ‘ball’, ‘vehicle’, and ‘organism’ – together succeed in triggering relevant and well-understood knowledge in the minds of Mahama’s audience to make them better appreciate what is expected of a national economy (and the issues around it).

The use of multiple source mappings may also suggest that Mahama perceives the economic system to be so complex yet central to the business of politics. As his usual rhetorical style, he makes use of concrete and culturally relevant metaphors for effective audience engagement. Let me discuss in some detail how some of these metaphors to describe the economy project Mahama as a conscious political speaker who appreciates the role of metaphor in providing a basis for rationally thinking of the crucial issues at stake.

For instance, the metaphor ECONOMY IS A PLANT brings into mind the biological process of growth associated with plants and the benefits resulting from maturation in the growth, including food, fiber, clean air, fuels, medicines, etc. Thus, Mahama’s choice of a plant metaphor to talk about the economy, in Ghana and elsewhere, is intended to invoke a sense of economic hope – one that ultimately is expected to deliver relief in several areas. In that process, as seen in Excerpts 23 and 24, Mahama may also be seeking to sell the idea that the right strategies and steps must be followed to achieve the desired outcomes, much the same way that extreme care and appropriate nurturing procedures are necessary for plants to grow well.

Excerpt 23

We must continue to *invest* in our agricultural sector, and *grow* our economy so that it lifts the bulk of our most *crippling* financial burdens ... [JMPS05]

Excerpt 24

In partnership with the private sector, we will expand our infrastructure in a manner that will accelerate economic *growth*. [JMPS15]

The ECONOMY IS A BUILDING metaphor is also quite popular in Mahama's discourse. Here the process of ensuring that the economy succeeds to the benefit of all is presented as a physical building which brings together materials that assure a strong foundation and a solid structure in the end. In our minds, such a building should offer endless comfort to its occupants. Thus, Mahama's use of this metaphor is likely to create in the minds of his audience the image of a politician whose effort, as far as the economy is concerned, is to give Ghana a strong, robust and resilient economy to elevate the living conditions of the people, as depicted in Excerpt 25.

Excerpt 25

Over the next four years, we will *build* an economy that rewards hard work and nurtures Ghanaian entrepreneurs and businesses ... [JMPS15]

The notion of collective effort for economic success is also highlighted by the building metaphor, especially as a physical building often requires several people who might use manual and technological applications to accomplish the task, without which the building is likely to collapse in no time. If we consider that once a building collapses it suddenly disappears, we would appreciate better the need to collectively 'build' an economy that cannot collapse easily. Thus, here, Mahama rhetorically invites his audience to evaluate the whole political system in terms of how strong and resilient the economy is.

The final example I refer to here is the ECONOMY IS A BALL metaphor, derived from Excerpt 26, which is part of a keynote speech Mahama delivered in March, 2017 at the 24th Anniversary celebration of the NDC.

Excerpt 26

On 12th April, 2016 the World Bank stated that Ghana's real gross domestic product (GDP) is projected to *rebound* to 5.2% in 2016 from 3.4% in 2015, reflecting the positive impact of a more stable energy and increased contribution from the oil and gas and agricultural sectors. [JMPS06]

An 'expected economic rebound' is not so straightforward – it may eventually signal either an enhanced economy or a diminished one, although the former is the more likely. This idea of the (potential) economic rebound is underscored in the way a rebound occurs in popular sports, such as in baseball where a rebound does not necessarily result in a scoring point but a good chance for that to occur. Charteris-Black (Charteris-Black, 2000: 20) has discussed this sort of economic unpredictability in terms of the notions of 'transitoriness' and 'instability'.

In Excerpt 26, Mahama's use of 'projected', just before the metaphor, is rhetorically appropriate – it serves as a safeguard measure he adopts to be less categorical. If the expected 'rebound' does not occur, the blame, one would argue, goes to the instability of the market economy, not to Mahama. Clearly, Mahama's use of economy metaphors reveal his intentions and perceptions

of the economy in politics and uses these metaphors to capture the shared experiences with his audience.

4.3 UNCOVERING MAHAMA'S IDEOLOGIES THROUGH METAPHOR

John Mahama is a politician whose speeches are characterized by considerable metaphorical framings of the key political issues he talks about. As Table 3 depicts, he uses a vast array of (conceptual) metaphors to get his political messages across to his audience. The pervasive deployment of metaphors in his speeches underscores the fact that metaphors are an important rhetorical strategy Mahama consistently uses in his political discourse for audience engagement and persuasion.

The conventional or even creative use of (certain kinds of) metaphors, especially by politicians and political actors, has the crucial tendency of revealing important ideologies they might convey. Such ideological functions emerging from the use of metaphorical expressions have already been highlighted in earlier studies (Chilton, 2004; Semino, 2008; Díaz-Peralta, 2018). For example, Semino (Semino, 2008: 33/4) has talked about “[t]he ideological dimension of conventional patterns of metaphor” and how the use of “conventional conceptual metaphors can be seen as an important part of the shared sets of beliefs or ‘ideology’” held by the users. And according to Díaz-Peralta (Díaz-Peralta, 2018: 129), metaphors are “an important ideological instrument” in political discourse.

As can be seen in the discourse analysis of Mahama’s political speeches, presented in this paper, the way he positions himself and frames the top issues of politics he discusses foregrounds his ideological stance on these issues, which is often shared with his audience. Ideology, as van Dijk (van Dijk, 2006) points out, is a socially shared phenomenon that offers a basis for any politician to establish a collective understanding of values between themselves and their audience at any given point in time. One or two examples of how Mahama’s use of metaphors projects a conscious ideology and a bond between himself and his audience would suffice.

The metaphors of the economy, discussed quite elaborately in this paper, are a good example. Mahama’s metaphorical uses of GROW and BUILD – to specifically talk about the economy – seems to foreground his view that the economy is at the heart of any political system, especially as he visualizes it within the Ghanaian and African contexts. While economies everywhere have their own peculiar challenges, it is well known that African economies have for a long time been identified as one of the least thriving economies within the global economic system, lagging behind in the provision of infrastructure, welfare systems, social services and public goods – all of which are needed for economic development. In their place, dictatorial leadership, corruption and perverse poverty abound. Lewis (Lewis, 2008) points out that, even in new African democracies, experiences of macroeconomic growth have not yielded the much-needed prosperity and economic emancipation in these countries. Lewis (Lewis, 2008: 97) mentions Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Tanzania, among others, and notes that in these countries “economic expansion has not been accompanied by rising incomes or popular welfare” while “indicators of public well-being lag far behind strong economic performance”. It is perhaps in light of this negative representation of

African economies that Mahama’s metaphorical uses of GROW and BUILD to positively construct the Ghanaian and African economies remain ideologically relevant. His political

discourse thus evokes his strong belief that the economy is the heart and engine of national growth and prosperity.

Another of Mahama's reality, which emanates from the use of conceptual metaphors in his political speeches, is on the topic of corruption. It can be argued that Mahama constructs corruption in his political discourse as one that impedes socio-economic development and must therefore be tackled. It is the perspective he takes on corruption, through his dominant use of 'confrontational' or 'violent' conceptual metaphors, that makes his ideological position on the corruption menace apparent. These metaphors are coded linguistically in words like 'combat' (as in Excerpt 22 above), 'fight', 'battle' and 'war', and the metaphorical descriptions reinforce the kinds of action expected to be taken to tackle the matter and who are expected to take that action. Mahama's political attitude towards tackling corruption can thus be said to be underlined by a strong aggressive approach, informed by his use of these metaphors.

Importantly also, an overarching ideology that discursively manifests itself in Mahama's political speeches – one may argue – is his belief that national, regional or global politics and the issues addressed in these different contexts are extremely complex, and politicians and political leaders have a responsibility to simplify the issues and present them in vivid, clear and accessible terms to the electorate and citizens who expect to be carried along in the governance process. The wide variety of source domains Mahama (consciously) deploys in his speeches, including 'war', 'athletics', 'business', 'plant', 'relay race', 'horse race', 'ball', among others, leads to the construction of a discourse that supports this ideology. The source domain choices are also culturally relevant and thus resonate well with the expectations of the audience who, through these metaphors, are able to relate to the issues Mahama articulates in his speeches. All of this seems crucial in reducing "the rhetorical distance" (Charteris-Black, 2005: 146) between Mahama as a political speaker and his "mass audience" which in turn enhances the persuasive power of his rhetorical style. According to Walter and Helmig (Walter and Helmig, 2008), choosing contextually appropriate source domains has a great influence on the way a speaker's audience construct reality.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to argue that a key rhetorical strategy John Mahama uses in his political speeches to gain ratification from his audience is his use of metaphor. Drawing on discourse and cognitive metaphor theories, I have shown that Mahama's rhetorical style is dominated by the use of (conceptual) metaphors, which not only serve as an ammunition for his persuasive political talk, but also offers him a useful discourse strategy for effective audience engagement. Mahama's use of metaphors is conscious, consistent and conceptually structured, but more importantly has cultural and situational relevance as he often deploys conventional metaphors in unconventional and creative ways to achieve his rhetorical goals.

This study, on Mahama's use of metaphors, should open up avenues for comparative analysis of metaphor use, especially between politicians in different contexts, and to determine what factors might influence variation in the use of metaphors by different politicians, for example. While methodologically the JMPS corpus (which is approximately 70, 000 words) may be considered small, it has proven large enough to highlight and reveal patterns of metaphorical uses in the speeches of John Mahama. The analysis of Mahama's use of recurring patterns of (conceptual) metaphors presented here has provided insights into his preferred ways of framing

political issues metaphorically, his rhetorical style, political ideologies, and communicative competence, all of which may have partly contributed to his success as a Ghanaian politician.

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