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## Specific Features of Metaphorical Models in Pakistani, Russian and American Political Discourse (2018–2024)

**ABSTRACT.** *The aim of the article is to analyze metaphorical models in the political discourse of Pakistan, Russia and the United States that form national ideologies and foreign policy narratives. The practical research material includes a corpus of 102 metaphors selected over the period from 2018 to 2024. It was found that Pakistan's leaders use metaphors related to the source domains "architecture", "disaster", "animals", "kinship ties" and "military affairs"; Russian politicians prefer military, historical, zoomorphic and mythological metaphors to represent the geopolitical strategy and economic power of the country; American leaders employ the metaphors with the source domains "biology", "medicine" and "crisis" to activate pre-election debates and evoke an emotional response from American society. The metaphors function as dynamic rhetorical tools in the contexts, turning complex issues into easily understandable concepts for constructing a political narrative.*

**KEYWORDS:** *political metaphorology, metaphorical modeling, metaphorical models, political metaphors, metaphorical units, cognitive linguistics, language units, political discourse, geopolitics, geopolitical strategies, politicians, national ideology, journalism, media linguistics, mass media, media discourse, media texts, mass media language, language means, Pakistani media, Russian media, American media.*

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## Особенности метафорических моделей в пакистанском, российском и американском политическом дискурсе (2018–2024)

**АННОТАЦИЯ.** *Цель статьи — анализ метафорических моделей в политическом дискурсе Пакистана, России и США, формирующих национальные идеологии и внешнеполитические нарративы. В качестве материала был составлен корпус из 102 метафор за период с 2018 по 2024 г. Было обнаружено, что пакистанские лидеры используют метафоры, относящиеся к сферам-источникам «архитектура», «стихийные бедствия», «животные», «родственные связи» и «военное дело»; российские политики предпочитают военные, исторические, зооморфные и мифологические метафоры для представления геополитической стратегии и экономической мощи страны; американские лидеры используют метафоры, относящиеся к сферам-источникам «биология», «медицина» и «кризис» для активизации предвыборных дебатов и эмоциональной реакции американского общества. Метафоры функционируют как динамичные риторические инструменты в контекстах, превращая сложные явления в легко понятные концепции для конструирования политического нарратива.*

**КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА:** *политическая метафорология, метафорическое моделирование, метафорические модели, политические метафоры, метафорические единицы, когнитивная лингвистика, языковые единицы, политический дискурс, геополитика, геополитические стратегии, политические деятели, национальная идеология, журналистика, медиалингвистика, СМИ, средства массовой информации, медиадискурс, медиатексты, язык СМИ, языковые средства, пакистанские СМИ, российские СМИ, американские СМИ.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Political discourse is a complex and strategic form of communication that shapes public opinion, legitimizes power, and emphasizes ideological narratives [Chudinov 2006; Ruzhentseva 2019; Budaev 2020, 2023]. The relevance of this research article is explained by necessity to select appropriate speeches in political linguistics, discourse analysis, and international relations. By conducting a cross-cultural comparison of political metaphors, it fills a gap in existing literature, which often focuses on Western contexts, by incorporating understudied perspectives from Pakistan and Russia alongside the U.S.A. T. A. Van Dijk describes it as «a class of genres defined by a social domain, namely that of politics, and thus by a specific group of actors (politicians) and a specific kind of institutional setting (government, parliament, political media)» [Van Dijk 1997: 34]. N. Fairclough further argues that it is «a mode of language use embedded in power relations» [Fairclough 2003: 45], while P. Chilton emphasizes its strategic role in «managing public perception» [Chilton 2004: 12].

Metaphors serve as fundamental elements for political debate in such circumstances. Political metaphors function as intellectual tools which create powerful emotions while simplifying complex political dynamics and framing problems according to specific ideological frameworks [Chudinov 2001]. The use of metaphors functions both as rhetorical tools and shapes public perceptions about world relations along with state identity and government systems.

The application of metaphors throughout political discussion leads to several negative consequences. Public perception becomes manipulated through oversimplified presentation of complex issues and through binary thought structures which establish “*us vs. them*” and “*good vs evil*” divisions. Metaphors, as G. Lakoff and M. Johnson demonstrate, are not mere ornaments but «fundamental structures of thought» that shape ideological frameworks [Lakoff, Johnson 1980: 156].

Cognitive linguistics uses the original research of G. Lakoff and M. Johnson to understand metaphorical models through their definition of metaphors as key mental structures rather than ornamental language [Lakoff, Johnson 1980: 156]. Research in Critical Discourse Analysis (according to N. Fairclough and T. A. Van Dijk) shows political metaphors operate as fundamental instruments that both create ideological frameworks and preserve social power dynamics and construct public understanding of reality [Fairclough 2003; Van Dijk 1997]. Pakistani political metaphors have received limited academic investigation [Shah 2022] despite thorough

examinations of Western metaphors in the U.S. space. S. Ahmed, A. Khan identify Pakistani political metaphors as merging religious («State of Madina») and militaristic («economic jihad») elements, reflecting the nation's socio-political fabric [Ahmed 2020; Khan 2021]. The Russian discourse, according to V. Ozyumenko, relies heavily on militaristic and historical metaphors to frame geopolitical conflicts [Ozyumenko, Larina 2021].

J. Charteris-Black notes that metaphors «persuade by simplifying complex realities» [Charteris-Black 2011: 67], while A. Musolff highlights their role in constructing «discursive scenarios» [Musolff 2016: 112]. The distinct metaphorical patterns reflect the nation's distinctive societal structure. The available studies reveal an important scholarly need to explore political metaphor analyses between Pakistan and Russia and the United States while investigating the impact of native cultural and geopolitical environments on political phrasing. The research evaluates ideological functions alongside manipulative capabilities of dominant metaphorical models across Pakistani, Russian and U.S. political discourse from 2018 to 2024.

The aim of this article is to analyze the dominant metaphorical models in the political discourses of Pakistan, Russian, and the USA and to reveal how they reflect and shape national ideologies and foreign policy narratives.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The political texts of both printed and electronic Pakistani, Russian and American media containing metaphorical word usage were used as materials for the study. 102 metaphorical word usages were considered (approximately an equal number in Pakistani, Russian and American sources). The article analyzed the metaphors used by Pakistani political leaders: Imran Khan, Hina Khair, Shehbaz Sharif, Bilawal Bhutto, Ishaq Dar; the Russian politicians: Vladimir Putin, Sergei Lavrov, Anton Siluanov, Dmitry Medvedev; the politicians of the USA: Donald Trump, Kamala Harris, Barack Obama.

The methodology of this research is based on the theory of conceptual metaphor (G. Lakoff, M. Johnson) and the theory of metaphorical modeling based on the cognitive-discursive paradigm (E. V. Budaev, A. P. Chudinov and others), and is also based on discourse analysis (V. I. Karasik, E. S. Kubryakova, A. P. Chudinov and others).

The methodology of metaphor research in the discourse of the subject of political activity is used in the article. When using this technique, we try to identify the metaphorical models that are characteristic of the discourse of a particular subject of political communication.

It should be noted that metaphors carry a certain pragmatic potential that transform people's priority systems and their behavior, since metaphors are based on a linguistic and pragmatic orientation. The leaders of different countries impose their own metaphors both in national politics and in the daily routine of life. Within the framework of this methodology, we attempt to find practical confirmation of how metaphors in the speech of politics affect the mass consciousness and encourage the adoption of certain political decisions.

The following methods were used in the course of the work: cognitive-discursive analysis, contextual analysis, comparative analysis where the linguistic and cultural characteristics of the phenomena were taken into account.

Let's consider the metaphors of Pakistani politicians.

1) *Pakistan is a fortress of Islam that must stand strong against storms of extremism* [The Express Tribune 20.03.2021].

It frames Pakistan as a defensive boundary against extremism («storms»), appealing to religious nationalism. This was said by Imran Khan, the former prime minister of Pakistan and chairman of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI). It is a political party of Pakistan which is very popular there. I. Khan's statement employs an architectural metaphor («fortress») and a natural disaster metaphor («storms»). I. Khan uses «fortress» to describe Pakistan's dual role as a boundary between external forces and sacred Islamic territory whereas «storms» depict extremism as incoming attacks from outside sources. Through this metaphor I. Khan seeks to generate religious nationalism by targeting conservative voters while uniting Islam with national identity. Through these metaphors, the military action receives justification because it presents counterterrorism as defensive rather than aggressive while simultaneously directing public attention toward non-domestic threats.

2) *Foreign debt is a python squeezing the breath out of our development* [Dawn, 15.06.2024].

This statement has been given by Hina Khair, the former minister of state for foreign Affairs & senior politician (Pakistan People's Party). The example combines an animal metaphor «python» with a violence metaphor «squeezing breath». It clearly illustrates the suffocating and voracious nature of the national debt crisis. It is reported by major news outlets like Dawn and Geo News. With the help of the metaphor *Python squeezing the breath of out of our development* H. Khair critiques the debt policies through visceral imagery. Through the metaphor «python», the politician depicts financial debt as an oppressive predator which slowly but steadily chokes off economic advancement to the reader.

The politician criticizes statesmanlike borrowing practices which include the rival political opponents by symbolism of debt as a dangerous python which crushes the life out of its victims via «squeezing breath». Through the thematic imagery, the leader positions the PPP (Pakistan People's Party) as financially wise by warning audience about debt-related problems that emerge from exuberant borrowing.

3) *China is our iron brother; their support is the backbone of CPEC*. [The Diplomat, 20.07.2024].

This example employs a kinship metaphor «iron brother» combined with an anatomical metaphor «backbone». This is stated by S. Sharif, the Prime Minister of Pakistan & President of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). He stressed this during a speech or meeting related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to reaffirm the strong, unbreakable strategic alliance with China and highlight its critical importance to Pakistan's infrastructure and economic future. It was posted on the official PML-N website, the Prime Minister's Office website and reported by all major Pakistani media. The «iron brother» description represents China's position as Pakistan's strongest dependable friend because iron symbolizes an unbreakable connection between the nations. The metaphor describes Chinese support as the critical backbone behind the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) so that the project would experience complete failure without it. Through this metaphor, S. Sharif validates China as Pakistan's lead strategic alliance partner while facing economic challenges while explaining why the country should maintain Chinese investments despite debt concerns. The metaphor helps Pakistan to demonstrate stable bilateral ties against Western interference in its foreign policy framework.

4) *The nation is a ship; if we row in different directions, we will drown together* [Geo News, March 2024].

It is said by B. Bhutto, the current foreign minister of Pakistan in Public rally in Rawalpindi, reported by Geo News. B. Bhutto's statement employs a cohesive nautical metaphor to frame the nation's political situation. The metaphor describes Pakistan as the lone ship on a bad journey with a rowing in opposite directions meaning the destructive political disunity and partisanship of the two opposing parties, and the ominous and frightening result of the motionless sinking as a unit which the nation would suffer as a result of an economic meltdown or a failed state would leave no one behind. This bright metaphor was mainly employed as a way of fostering unity of the country by giving a strong warning to the political wrangling to an extent that his party (PPP) would be the glue

above the fray. Moreover, the visuals were made to create a sense of danger and immediacy, so that the abstract threat of political unrest would become immediate and concrete to the masses, and to reduce a complex political crisis to a story that the general public could easily relate to, that of collective survival, and one immune to partisan politics.

5) *We are all soldiers in the battle for Pakistan's economic survival* [PML-N Twitter/X, May 2024].

This is the televised address to the nation by S. Sharif, the current Prime minister of Pakistan after the budget presentation. S. Sharif's statement uses a military metaphor to frame the nation's economic crisis. The metaphor casts the severe economic challenges as a "battle," a life-or-death struggle requiring a wartime mentality and recasts all citizens as «soldiers», implying that their role is one of discipline, sacrifice, and obedience to a central command in the national effort. The politician employs this metaphor with a clear purpose to mobilize the public by creating a sense of urgency and shared duty and also to justify the implementation of difficult and potentially unpopular economic reforms, such as severity measures and tax hikes by presenting them as necessary wartime orders, and to foster a sense of collective responsibility, shifting the focus from government action to a universal call for sacrifice from every citizen.

6) *India's aggression is a wildfire; we must build firewalls with diplomacy* [the United Nations General Assembly, Dawn News, September 2023].

The example is connected with Ishaq Dar, former Foreign Minister & Senior Politician (PML-N). He said this in response to a specific act of Indian aggression (cross-border shelling, the controversial statement from Delhi) to frame the threat as rapid and destructive while positioning Pakistan's diplomatic response as a necessary and strategic defense. A news report from Dawn also directly quotes the line used a hybrid metaphor that begins with a natural disaster metaphor («wildfire») and concludes with a technological metaphor («firewalls»). The «wildfire» imagery characterizes India's actions as a rapidly spreading, destructive, and dangerous force that is difficult to control, suggesting an immediate and escalating threat. In response, the «firewalls» component shifts the framing, proposing a modern, strategic, and controlled barrier built not with technology but with «diplomacy» to contain the threat. I. Dar uses this metaphor to achieve several key objectives: firstly, to clearly assign the role of aggressor to India by painting its actions as an uncontrollable force of nature; secondly, to position Pakistan as a rational and strategic actor in seeking sophisticated, non-military solutions to de-escalate tensions and finally, to ad-

vocate for a specific policy approach (diplomacy) by making it seem like the most logical and effective «firewall» against a potentially catastrophic confrontation.

So, Pakistani politicians use metaphors with the source spheres: architecture, disaster, animals, kinship, nautical and military to show complicated political confrontation in the country.

Let's analyze the examples of Russian politicians' metaphors.

1) *Russia is an unbreakable shield protecting multipolar world order from Western aggression* [Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 04.02.2022].

This example is connected with S. Lavrov, Russian Foreign Minister and said in February 2022 to frame the war as a defensive and necessary action against a hegemonic West. It positions Russia as a global protector of sovereign nations. The metaphor states Russia as a shield which intends to present protective nation status while avoiding the label of aggressor. It sparks Russian Patriotism through appealing to historical perceptions about Western threats. This geopolitical metaphor succeeds because it transforms complicated international relationships into compelling visual representations which strengthen unity among citizens and draw support from the other nations.

2) *These unconscious hamsters, serving a foreign policy agenda, are leading their own countries to a total collapse. They are like mindless rodents running towards a cliff* [Dmitry Medvedev's official Telegram channel, November 2023].

The statement by Dmitry Medvedev employs the example of zoomorphic metaphor that compares Western politicians to «unconscious hamsters» and «mindless rodents». The metaphor describes the western leaders as servile animals which blindly go over a pre-programmed course (serving a foreign policy agenda) towards a self-destructive end (running towards a cliff). The metaphor discloses that Western political elites are stripped of their agency and rationality which make them dehumanized and belittled. D. Medvedev's comparison tends to discredit their rule by making them mere rodents, reject the validity of their foreign policy, and demonstrate the West not as a strategic threat but as a group of untalented actors that are doomed to failure. The metaphor is used to strengthen the domestic morale of Russians because it implies that opponents of Russia are weak and irrational, at the same time reminding an international audience to question the foreign policy of Western politicians leading to self-destruction.

3) *Our economy is a phoenix rising from sanctions' ashes* [TASS, 25.03.2022].

This statement was given by A. Siluanov, Russian Finance Minister. He stated in March

2022, after the imposition of severe Western sanctions. The purpose was to project confidence and resilience, assuring the Russian public that the economy would not only survive but be reborn stronger.

It employs a powerful mythological metaphor drawn from the phoenix legend, combined with a destruction-rebirth metaphor («rising from ashes»). Russia possesses transformative abilities like the phoenix thus the Western sanctions have yielded an environment where the nation can reemerge stronger than before. Through his description of sanctions as «ashes» A. Siluanov redefines their harmful effects into a period which precedes economic rebirth so the economy will manifest strength beyond its original form.

4) *Russia's sovereignty is a mighty oak with deep historical roots* [Rossiyskaya Gazeta, October, 2024].

The example was said by V. Putin, the President of Russian Federation during his presidential address to the federal assembly. In order to frame the country's political identity, V. Putin uses a potent organic metaphor. The «deep historical roots» clearly anchor this strength in a lengthy, unbroken, and unalterable national history, while the «mighty oak» represents Russia's sovereignty as something old, strong, resilient. V. Putin uses this metaphor to serve a clear ideological purpose of promoting an anti-Western narrative. The politician normalizes Russia's current political system by equating it with a massive tree, implying that it is an organic, unavoidable, and permanent entity by evoking a timeless connection to the land and history, this imagery states him as the defender of this enduring legacy.

5) *The West, in its desire to dominate, is acting like a cancerous tumor in international relations. It is metastasizing, trying to absorb and subordinate everything to its will* [Speech and Q&A at the Gorchakov Fund, January 18, 2024].

The statement by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, delivered during a speech and Q&A at the Gorchakov Fund employs a potent medical-pathological metaphor. On the one hand, S. Lavrov describes the West as a cancerous tumor metastasizing in global relations portraying the western foreign policy not as a contesting force in politics but as a disease full of cancerous cells and threatening to the survival of the host. The connotation of this metaphor is that the influence of the West is necessarily destructive and out of control and aims to feed on and take hold of healthy tissues (sovereign nations). This metaphor was used by S. Lavrov to demonize the Western geopolitical ambitions, which gives a moral rationale to the confrontational position taken by Russia. It is used to put the conflict not in the context of a war but a necessary response in self-defense of the global body

politic marshalling both domestic and international support by making Russia look like a surgeon combating a fatal disease. The medical imagery of the metaphor is intended to instill fear and a sense of urgency as an acceptable treatment to prevent the transmission of a deadly ideological disease.

6) *Sanctions are barbed wire trying to cage the Russian bear — but bears break cages* [Izvestia, April, 2024].

This metaphorical statement was given by Dmitry Medvedev, Deputy Chairman of the Russian Security Council. It frames sanctions as a cruel but flimsy attempt at containment, while invoking the national symbol of the bear to portray Russia as inherently powerful. The metaphor constructs a vivid narrative where the «Russian bear» symbolizes the nation's raw, untamable power and primal strength, while the «barbed wire» of sanctions is portrayed as a cruel but flimsy attempt by the West to imprison and control it. D. Medvedev employs this metaphor with the obvious goal of propagandizing, defending Russia's economic tenacity and portraying an unavoidable triumph. He dismisses the severe economic pain of sanctions as a temporary inconvenience by claiming that Russia's strength will ultimately shatter any Western constraints. He presents the conflict as a natural struggle between a powerful bear and a man-made cage.

So, Russian politicians prefer to use zoomorphic, mythological, organic and animal metaphors in order to show the true goals of the geopolitical ideology aimed at building and protecting the country from the destructive and perverse narrative of Western states.

Let us see the examples of American politicians' metaphors.

1) *America is a rotting carcass being picked apart by vultures* [The New York Times, March 19, 2018].

The statement was given by Donald Trump employing a biological metaphor («rotting carcass») combined with an animal metaphor («vultures») to create an image of the national decline. Through «rotting carcass» imagery, D. Trump depicts America as a fatal national entity whose irreversible decomposition parallels the «vultures» characterization of undocumented immigrants who feed on national desolation. Through the symbolism the metaphor turns immigration policy into a powerful emotional symbol which represents an attack against the national identity.

2) *MAGA extremists are termites eating democracy's foundation* (the Editorial column, 23.07.2022).

The statement was given by the former American President Joe Biden. J. Biden's

statement employs an entomological metaphor («termites») combined with an architectural metaphor («democracy's foundation») to characterize the threat posed by far-right political movements. J. Biden's «termites eating democracy's foundation» frames MAGA as systemic threat, leveraging architectural imagery [Charteris-Black, 2011: 91]. The «foundation» metaphor demonstrates how core democratic elements like electoral transparency and judicial freedom remain at risk of destruction. J. Biden adopts this analogy to demonstrate how the MAGA movement endangers democracy through persistent harm to its fundamental structure and he uses this approach to prevent vilifying MAGA supporters.

3) *Trump's lies are poison in the bloodstream of our nation* [The New York Times, 22.08.2021].

Kamala Harris's statement employs a medical metaphor that frames disinformation as a toxic biological threat. D. Trump's false statements function as dangerous contaminants that attack the whole body politic through a system that penetrates like an immediate toxic substance. Using national identification with an infected organism K. Harris explains that D. Trump's false statements endanger the entire population in an equal manner regardless of political background. The medical analogy enables her to condemn risky language while speaking in a controlled manner, to express serious worries.

4) *The GOP has become a hostage situation led by extremists* [the interview with *The Atlantic*, October, 2024].

The statement was given by Barack Hussein Obama, American politician who served as the 44th president of the United States from 2009 to 2017. B. Obama uses a crisis metaphor to describe the state of the Republican Party as a violent crime. The metaphor describes the party as a «hostage», which means that its traditional institutions, members, and principles are being held against their will. The «extremists» are the armed captors who have taken control through force. B. Obama employs this metaphor to reach some political goals: to criticize the GOP's direction by saying that it is no longer a functioning political party; to turn moderate conservatives and independents against the Republican party by painting it as dangerously overtaken by radicals, and to get Democratic and centrist voters to take action by making them feel like they need to «rescue» American politics from dangerous extremism.

5) *This American carnage stops right here and stops right now... From this day forward, a new vision will govern our land. From this moment on, it's going to be only America First*

[Donald Trump's Inaugural Address, January 20, 2017].

Donald Trump's statement, delivered during his Inaugural Address on January 20, 2017, at the U.S. Capitol, employs a violent disaster metaphor («American carnage»). This metaphor frames the socio-economic and political condition of the nation prior to his presidency not merely as a period of difficulty, but as a scene of bloody, widespread slaughter and physical devastation, evoking imagery of a battlefield or a catastrophic accident. Trump, as the newly inaugurated president, used this stark and shocking metaphor to achieve several core objectives central to his political identity. Firstly, it serves to dramatically criticize the preceding political era and its leadership, painting the recent past as a failure of historic proportions. Secondly, it creates a powerful sense of crisis and urgency that justified his promised radical break from established policies, encapsulated in the slogan «America First.» Finally, by presenting himself as the singular force who can stop this «carnage,» the metaphor positioned his inauguration as a moment of national salvation, appealing directly to the grievances of his base and establishing a narrative of the restoration against a backdrop of imagined chaos and decay.

6) *Gun violence is an epidemic tearing community apart* [Kamala Harris's speech in C-SPAN, June, 2022].

Kamala Harris uses a powerful medical metaphor to frame the issue of gun violence. She defines gun violence as a contagious, rapidly spreading, and widespread public health crisis that necessitates a systemic, science-based response similar to disease containment by calling it «an epidemic», rather than a collection of isolated crimes or a fixed problem. K. Harris employs this metaphor to accomplish some goals: firstly, to move the issue out of the political sphere and reframe it as a nonpartisan public health emergency; secondly, to draw attention to the significant social harm caused by gun violence, illustrating the destruction of the social fabric, just as a disease ravages a body.

So, the metaphors with the various source spheres (biology, medicine, crisis, horticulture) used by the American politicians are aimed at imposing their ideological postulates to achieve their contradictory narratives.

## CONCLUSION

This cross-cultural analysis of political metaphors in Pakistan, Russia, and the United States reveals that metaphor is far more than a rhetorical device; it is a fundamental cognitive tool for constructing political reality. Despite their vastly different political systems and cultural contexts, political elites in all three nations consistently

employ metaphorical models to simplify complex issues, legitimize power, delegitimize opponents, and mobilize public sentiment.

The study demonstrates that each country exhibits distinct metaphorical preferences rooted in its unique geopolitical and socio-cultural landscape. Pakistani discourse is characterized by a blend of religious, organic and crisis-based metaphors, reflecting its identity as a post-colonial state navigating complex alliances and internal divisions. The Russian rhetoric, in contrast, relies heavily on militaristic, zoomorphic, historical-mythological, medical and pathological and organic-sovereignty metaphors, projecting an image of eternal strength, historical destiny, and resilience against a hostile West. The American political language, while diverse, frequently utilizes medical-biological, architectural-systemic and horticultural metaphors to debate the health of its democracy and the nature of internal threats.

Ultimately, this research confirms that political metaphors are potent instruments of ideology. They frame problems in a way that pre-determines acceptable solutions, naturalizes specific power structures, and emotionally charges political discourse. By systematically analyzing these metaphorical models, we gain a deeper understanding of how national identities are forged, geopolitical stances are justified, and public consent is manufactured across the globe. The language of politics is, indeed, a language of metaphor, and decoding it is essential for understanding the underlying forces that shape international relations and domestic politics in the 21st century.

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