# Floods, Waves, and Invasions

## Analyzing Trump's Metaphors on Immigration in Social Media

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Metaphors are a fundamental cognitive tool, shaping how individuals conceptualize abstract phenomena and navigate complex issues. In political discourse, metaphorical language especially plays a role in influencing public opinion and mobilizing support. Political figures frequently use metaphors as a persuasive tool, to evoke emotional responses and reinforce ideological positions (Beard 2000: 21f; Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 3f), making metaphor analysis a valuable approach for uncovering the rhetorical strategies embedded. Donald Trump's highly publicized use of social media platforms, especially X (Twitter) and Truth Social, is characterized by a strategic use of language to generate attention and address his followers directly (Polak 2020: 66).

The present study examines the metaphorical language employed by Donald Trump on these platforms when addressing immigration issues. Utilising Johnson and Lakoff's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), an analytical framework that explores the relationship between cognition and language, the research investigates the types of metaphors employed, their frequencies, and the contexts in which they are used.

All posts from both platforms, spanning from 2009 to 2024, were searched for a number of immigration related terms such as *border*, *alien* and *illegal*, resulting in a corpus of 2300 tweets and 1335 truths. As a subsequent step these were manually searched for metaphors. The 600 tokens containing metaphors were then divided into semantic groups.

The analysis revealed predominant metaphorical themes, encompassing portrayals of IMMIGRATION AS INVASION, IMMIGRATION AS COMPETITION, and IMMIGRATION AS A BURDEN, thereby underscoring a persistent tendency to depict immigrants as threats or adversaries. Furthermore, the study identifies variations in metaphor usage across different years, reflecting shifts in the language and rhetorical strategy employed by Trump.

This research contributes to our understanding of how metaphorical framing in political discourse shapes public opinion on immigration and provides insights into the persuasive mechanisms underlying Trump's communication style. We also discuss the implications of these findings for media studies and political linguistics, emphasizing the role of digital platforms in the propagation of metaphors.

Beard, Adrian (2000) *The language of politics.* London: Routledge.

Lakoff, George and Johnson, Mark (1980). *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Polak, Sara. 2020. '#Unpresidented': The Making of The First Twitter President. In Sara Polak & Daniel Trottier (eds.). *Violence and Trolling on Social Media: History, Affect, and Effects of Online Vitriol*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press. DOI: 10.2307/j.ctv1b0fvrn