

Challenging the European Union: A Critical Metaphonymic Analysis of Viktor Orbán’s Speeches (2015–2021)

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Abstract. This paper aims to carry out a critical metaphonymic analysis of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán’s speeches related to the European Union (EU). It offers a theoretical model to explore *how* the Hungarian prime minister constructs his image of Europe’s strongman, challenging the EU. The theoretical and methodological framework lies in the cross-fertilization of the studies of A. Barcelona, G. Radden, Z. Kövecses, G. Lakoff, and M. Johnson, to mention but a few. As a key figure in Europe’s rise of illiberalism, under Viktor Orbán’s rule Hungary has become a hybrid system of autocracy, eroding democratic institutions while benefiting from EU membership. The paper sums up research in the field of political studies and discusses Orbán’s strategies to consolidate power, exploit EU funding, and foster crony capitalism, while arguing that the EU’s response to Hungary’s democratic backsliding has been slow, reactive, and ineffective. Suggestions are made that the EU needs stronger mechanisms and more decisive actions. Orbán’s foreign policy

pragmatism further complicates the EU's efforts, raising concerns about the stability of the union and the future of European values. The findings arrived at in this article suggest that metaphonymy is used to connect Hungary's historical struggles with its contemporary challenges, portraying the country as a defender of European sovereignty, and contrasting its nationalist stance with a declining, imperialistic EU. Thus Orbán's rhetoric positions Hungary as a moral and cultural leader in Europe, using emotional appeal to gain public support for his policies.

Keywords: critical metaphonymic analysis, political speech, Viktor Orbán, Hungary, the European Union

Калина Ишпекова-Братанова. Росица Ишпекова. ПРЕДИЗВИКАТЕЛСТВАТА НА ВИКТОР ОРБАН КЪМ ЕВРОПЕЙСКИЯ СЪЮЗ: КРИТИЧЕСКИ МЕТАФТОНИМИЧЕН АНАЛИЗ НА РЕЧИТЕ НА УНГАРСКИЯ ПРЕМИЕР (2015–2021)

Резюме. Целта на тази статия е да направи критически метафтонимичен анализ на речите на унгарския премиер Виктор Орбан, отнасящи се до Европейския Съюз (ЕС). Тя предлага теоретичен модел за изследване *как* унгарският премиер конструира своя имидж на силния човек на Европа, предизвикателен към ЕС. Теоретичната и методологична рамка представлява взаимното пресичане на изследванията на А. Барселона, Г. Раден, З. Кьовечеш, Дж. Лейкоф и М. Джонсън, да споменем само няколко имена. Като ключова фигура в издигането на либерализма в Европа, Унгария под ръководството на В. Орбан се превърна в хибридна система на автократията, като разяжда демократичните институции и в същото време извлича ползи от членството в ЕС. Статията обобщава изследванията в областта на политическите науки и разглежда стратегиите на Орбан за консолидиране на властта си, използване на финансирането от ЕС за насърчаване на приятелския капитализъм, като твърди, че отговорът на ЕС на забавянето на Унгария е бил бавен, реактивен, и неефективен. Правят се предположения, че ЕС се нуждае от по-силни механизми и по-решителни действия. Прагматизмът във външната политика на Орбан допълнително усложнява усилията на ЕС, пораждайки загриженост за стабилността на съюза и бъдещето на европейските ценности. Констатациите, до които достигнахме в тази статия, предполагат, че метафтонимията се използва за свързване на историческите битки на Унгария със съвременните предизвикателства, обрисувайки страната като защитник на европейския суверенитет, правейки контраст между националистическата ѝ позиция и западащия, империалистически ЕС. Така реториката на Орбан позиционира Унгария като морален и културен лидер в Европа, като използва емоционалния апел за спечелване на обществена подкрепа за политиките си.

Ключови думи: критически метафтонимичен анализ, политически речи, Виктор Орбан, Унгария, Европейски съюз

Research/Научно изследване

Introduction

This paper aims to carry out a critical metaphonymic analysis of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's speeches related to the European Union (EU). The social influence of ideology, culture and history provides a convincing account of why particular metaphonymies are chosen in specific discourse contexts. Hence Orbán's governance style and behavior are some of the reasons why his speeches have been chosen as the object of this piece of research. The major question it addresses is to explain *how* the Hungarian prime minister constructs his image of Europe's strongman, challenging the EU. As aforementioned, this paper's theoretical and methodological framework lies within critical metaphonymic analysis, which is a relatively recently developed field of cognitive study.

1. Viktor Orbán's politics

Viktor Orbán is a key figure in the rise of illiberalism in Europe, whose political tactics and governance style pose significant challenges to liberal democratic principles across the world. Hungary's political system under Viktor Orbán represents a new form of autocracy within the context of the EU. In other words, a hybrid system of autocracy has been embedded within EU membership. The *Economist* describes Orbán as a disruptive figure in the EU since his Fidesz party returned to power in 2010. His administration has been accused of undermining democratic institutions and violating EU rules, often remaining a step ahead of EU efforts to rein in his government (The Economist 2024a). In much the same vein the *Economist* levels criticism at Orbán's self-promotion, comparing his social media videos to Hollywood action blockbusters. Orbán stars in these clips as a decisive, "action hero" figure, timed to coincide with Hungary's assumption of the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU (The Economist 2024b). Orbán's antics are seen by the periodical as undermining EU unity, particularly regarding relations with Ukraine, Russia, and China. The article overall highlights Orbán's divisive role in European politics, blending his media-savviness with diplomatic recklessness (The Economist 2024b). In another article, the *Economist* discusses how Orbán's control of academia could possibly follow the same pattern as Fidesz's dominance over other institutions like the media, courts, and electoral system. Hungary's situation is seen as part of a broader trend, where populist governments in countries like Poland, Croatia, and Slovenia have copied Orbán's tactics to consolidate control over institutions (The Economist 2021).

There are quite a few studies that have approached the issue at stake, though not through the lens of metaphonymy. Lendvai (2017) analyzes Orbán's political transformation – from a liberal, anti-communist dissident in the 1980s to a nationalist, right-wing leader. Orbán's Fidesz party systematically weakened the independence of the judiciary, reshaped electoral rules, and curtailed press freedoms, helping entrench his rule. Furthermore, his success is attributed to his ability

to harness nationalism and populism. Orbán capitalizes on fears of immigration, promotes a narrative of Hungarian victimhood, and positions himself as a defender of Hungary's sovereignty against external forces, such as the EU and multinational corporations. Another reason for his long reign is his successful exploitation of Hungary's EU membership for political and financial gain. He benefits from EU funding while simultaneously defying EU norms and criticizing Brussels, using this dynamic to fuel his populist rhetoric at home. Lendvai assumes that Orbán's foreign policy is based on pragmatism rather than ideological commitment. His cultivation of relationships with illiberal leaders, such as Vladimir Putin, is seen as part of a broader strategy to balance between the EU and other global powers while protecting his domestic interests. Lendvai's ultimate assumption is that Orbán's leadership has broader implications for European politics, as his influence could destabilize the EU by promoting nationalism, undermining democratic norms, and fostering division within the bloc. Other researchers also attempt to examine the tensions between the Hungarian government and the EU. Bako (2023) contends that Orbán's approach is not merely a rejection of EU values but a calculated political maneuver to consolidate power and navigate the complexities of domestic and international politics. She also explores Orbán's governance model of illiberal democracy that combines authoritarianism with popular support. The book criticizes the EU's largely reactive approach to Hungary's democratic backsliding, arguing that the Union has been slow to respond to violations of rule-of-law principles and has often failed to implement effective measures to hold Hungary accountable for its actions. The overall conclusions pertain to the potential paths for the EU to address the challenges posed by Hungary. Bako suggests that a more nuanced understanding of Orbán's political context and motivations, combined with a stronger commitment to upholding EU values, is essential for fostering constructive dialogue and potential reform.

Zsuzsanna Szelenyi (2023) also examines Orbán's authoritarian shift and his populist rhetoric, which appeals to national identity and portrays a strongman image. The researcher also discusses the intertwining of political power and economic interests in Hungary, considering that the government has favored crony capitalism, where state resources are allocated to loyalists and allies, fostering corruption and limiting economic competition. Central attention is given to how Orbán has navigated EU mechanisms to his advantage. The researcher offers insights into how the EU can respond to Hungary's situation, advocating for a robust mechanism to uphold democratic standards among member states and suggests that the EU should not avoid imposing stricter measures to punish rule-of-law violations.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Research in the field of metaphonymy

There are many researchers in the field of cognitive linguistics that impacted the development of the theory of metaphonymy.

In their Blending Theory, also known as Conceptual Integration Theory, Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner provide a cognitive linguistic framework that explains how humans combine different mental spaces to create new meanings. Though not focused specifically on metaphonymy, their theory addresses the issue of how metaphor and metonymy often blend to create complex mental spaces and meaning extensions. The authors of the seminal book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) explored the pervasive role of metaphor in everyday language. Although their primary focus was on metaphor, their research also touched on how metaphor and metonymy work together in cognitive processes. Lakoff and Johnson argue that metonymy is as central to thought and language as metaphor. In their view, metonymy involves a part-whole relationship or contiguity between two concepts. As a leading figure in Cognitive Linguistics and Psycholinguistics, Raymond Gibbs also directs his efforts towards explaining how metaphor and metonymy are processed in the human mind and how they interact in thought and language. Arguing that metaphor and metonymy are not isolated processes but work together in complex ways, Gibbs concedes that metaphors often have metonymic components, and metonymies can have metaphorical implications. Metonymic relationships frequently serve as a grounding mechanism that enables metaphoric extensions.

Kövecses (2000) has also contributed to the study of conceptual metaphor and has addressed the overlap and interaction between metaphor and metonymy in his research. His work on emotion metaphors often involves metaphonymy, where the two cognitive processes are intricately linked in the expression of emotions.

It was Antonio Barcelona who coined the term metaphonymy in his foundational work *Metaphor and Metonymy in Cognitive Linguistics* (2003). Exploring the cognitive nature and interaction of metaphor and metonymy, the researcher explained why the two concepts are essential to how humans conceptualize abstract ideas, communicate complex concepts, and make sense of the world. While metaphor involves understanding one domain in terms of another (cross-domain mapping), metonymy involves within-domain mapping. Furthermore, Barcelona argues that metaphor and metonymy often interact and blend in discourse. For example, many metaphors are grounded in metonymic relationships. Suggesting that complex cognitive models often involve a combination of the two processes, Barcelona conveys the idea that metonymy often serves as a cognitive basis or motivator for metaphor. Barcelona's work further examines how different languages and cultures utilize metaphor and metonymy differently, even though they are universally present in all cultures and languages. Arguing that these processes are central to meaning-making, not just stylistic devices, this work influenced further studies in the field of conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) and cognitive linguistics.

In *Metonymy in Language and Thought* (1999), Klaus-Uwe Panther and Günter Radden explore the role of metonymy in shaping language and cognitive processes. The book applies metonymic theory to discourse analysis, showing how metonymy influences the way we structure conversations, understand implicature, and convey politeness or indirectness in language. It examines how metonymy helps in achieving a communicative economy by allowing speakers to refer to complex ideas or actions through simple, proximate expressions.

2.2. Examples of metaphonymy

The aforementioned researchers offer a wealth of expressions used in everyday speech in which metonyms and metaphors are intertwined, such as *the White House announced today...* and *the crown will decide the future of the kingdom*. Metonymically *the White House* and *the crown* as physical objects stand for the political administration, while metaphorically they are conceptualized as political institutions capable of human action. Analogously, *we need fresh blood in the company* and *we need more hands on deck* combine metonyms with metaphors, as blood stands for people (part-for-whole) and hands – for workers, while at once being metaphors - physical freshness is applied to abstract ideas like creativity or productivity and participation in the workplace is likened to working on a ship's deck, comparing work to nautical duties. The classical phrase *the pen is mightier than the sword* combines metonymic reference with metaphorical comparison of intellectual versus physical power, considering that *pen* stands for writing or diplomacy, and *sword* stands for warfare (instrument-for-action), while the metaphor is that diplomacy (represented by the pen) is more powerful than physical force (represented by the sword). Phrases that involve body parts are also analyzed in terms of metaphonymy, such as a *heart of gold*; *losing face* or *saving face*, eye for perception (as in a *sharp eye for detail*); head for rationality (as in *keeping a cool head* or *using your head*), among many other.

3. Dataset and materials

This paper analyzes 14 speeches connected with the EU and delivered by Orbán in the period 2015–2021. The speeches are coded A1 to A14 for convenience of reference and are presented in Table 1. There follows a brief summary of the specific topics addressed in the speeches.

4. Major topics in Orbán's speeches

Stressing that Europe and the EU are distinct, with Europe being a cultural legacy and the EU a political formation, Orbán criticizes the EU's shift toward a “super-state” model, warning that it erodes national sovereignty and democracy (A1). The Hungarian prime minister goes on to argue that the Union prioritizes integration over national interests and traditional values, accusing it of being influenced by exter-

nal networks, particularly those linked to George Soros. An assumption is held that the EU is moving toward an undemocratic empire. In much the same vein the EU's current trajectory is criticized in A2. Orbán warns against Brussels overriding national interests and values, targeting traditional communities such as families and faith groups. He calls for empowering national parliaments and for curbing Brussels' overreach. In A4 Orbán highlights challenges like Brexit, migration, and diminishing European People's Party (EPP) leadership, urging the party to return to its winning ways by protecting people from illegal migration, terrorism, and economic issues. In his 2018 speech at the Visegrád Group conference (A5), Orbán discusses the failure of the EU's earlier ambitions, including the Lisbon objectives, and argues for a re-design of Europe to strengthen its competitiveness and security. He advocates for a work-based society, technological advancement, and a European defense force while rejecting the idea of a European empire. Orbán criticizes mass migration, referencing the 2015 crisis and its impact on Western Europe, and opposes transforming Hungary into an immigrant country. A6 criticizes the EU's handling of migration, in particular the failed EU migration quotas. On financial aid, Orbán clarifies that EU funds are not gifts but part of a mutually beneficial cohesion policy. Emphasizing the importance of debate and democratic principles, Orbán advocates for stronger national sovereignty and responsibility among member states, while urging for reform and fair treatment, asserting that mutual respect and open dialogue are essential for a successful partnership (A7). In A8 Orbán frames recent political changes in Europe, including Brexit, as opportunities for intellectual transformation and growth, advocating for a realistic and flexible response to the evolving economic landscape. In his press conference following the EU summit in October 2016 (A9), Orbán emphasizes a philosophical divide between EU countries that are traditionally immigrant-receiving and those, like Hungary, that oppose becoming immigrant countries. Orbán rejects the European Commission's proposal for mandatory refugee resettlement quotas, arguing that it contradicts Hungary's interests and the outcome of its recent referendum. He asserts Hungary's commitment to border protection as a form of solidarity with the EU, rejecting claims of a lack of solidarity. In his press conference on October 2, 2016 (A10), Orbán celebrated the referendum results in which over 90% of voters opposed the EU's mandatory migrant distribution plan. He promises to resist EU pressure, asserting that Budapest, not Brussels, should have the final say on immigration policy. In A11 the Hungarian prime minister discusses the implications of Brexit for the EU, emphasizing Hungary's concerns about further disintegration of the Union. He notes that all member states reaffirmed their commitment to stay in the EU, but expressed disappointment that no changes were made to Brussels' immigration policy, which he criticizes as naive and self-destructive. In A12 Orbán admits that the EU faces instability, largely due to citizen disillusionment and crises such as the British referendum, the geopolitical situation in Ukraine, and migration pressures. The prime minister recalls how early integration efforts came to a halt after the rejection of the EU Con-

stitution by France and the Netherlands in 2005, leading to a loss of confidence in the EU's ability to guarantee prosperity. Highlighting the EU's inherent weaknesses, Orbán asserts that member states should presumably regain control over their borders and policies, emphasizing Hungary's role in protecting its external borders against migration influxes. He advocates for a balanced approach, arguing against mandatory quotas for refugee relocation, and insists on the need for respect for national sovereignty. Orbán calls for a collaborative approach to address shared challenges like digitalization and security while acknowledging the complexities of differing national perspectives. In his 2015 speech at the EPP Congress in Madrid (A13), Viktor Orbán addresses the migration crisis, emphasizing its potential to destabilize European governments and societies. The prime minister asserted the importance of protecting European borders and criticized the left for allegedly supporting migration to secure future voters. Concluding, he urges the EPP to listen to the public and protect the essence of Europe from liberal and socialist influences. In his 2015 article (A14), Viktor Orbán warns of the explosive consequences of the migration crisis in Europe, emphasizing the staggering increase in illegal immigration, particularly through Hungary. Orbán criticizes the EU's immigration policies, once again stressing the necessity of protecting Europe's external borders. Orbán highlights Hungary's initiative to build a border fence as a necessary defensive measure and cites a consultation process in Hungary where the respondents felt the EU had failed in managing immigration. Orbán concludes that defending borders is the priority before addressing other immigration issues, warning against the cultural implications of a large influx of non-Christian migrants, which he views as a threat to European identity.

5. Metaphonymies in Orbán's speeches

In his speeches on various occasions, Viktor Orbán draws on the cognitive interaction between metaphor and metonymy to create a narrative on the EU as a disintegrating political entity and of Hungary – as both a symbolic and literal leader in the ongoing struggle for European sovereignty. This comprises a rhetorical strategy that uses figurative language to shape ideologies, reinforce arguments, and frame complex political realities in a more accessible way.

5.1. Metaphonymies of the EU's cultural identity: Europe versus the EU

Throughout the narrative, Orbán often contrasts the EU with Europe as a cultural entity, using metaphors of empire-building (A1 and A2). He frames Brussels' attempts at further integration as the construction of a "superstate", and invokes the image of "empire" to expose a political shift from democratic sovereignty to a centralized, authoritarian structure. Hence an image of control, suppression, and a loss of national autonomy is created, whereby the EU is conceptualized as an external force that needs to be resisted.

In A1 Orbán invokes a complex metaphonymy when he refers to the three hills of Europe – Acropolis, Capitolium, and Golgotha. As cultural symbols, they metonymically represent the core values and origins of European civilization - Greek philosophy, Roman law, Christian values – while metaphorically suggesting that contemporary Europe is rooted in this spiritual and intellectual legacy. In other words, this cultural metonymy can be interpreted as a metaphor for the perceived decline of Europe, as Orbán contrasts the original “flavor” and “beauty” of European culture with the current state of the EU, suggesting that the EU is a poor imitation of this glorious past. In A2 Orbán’s reference to Europe as a vinestock grown from the Acropolis, Capitoline Hill, and Golgotha creates a *metaphonymic* blend. Yet again each hill symbolizes a foundational part of Europe’s identity. This complex metaphor blends into metonymy, where “wine” and the “three hills” become shorthand for European cultural identity and heritage.

Throughout the speeches, Orbán refers to Europe’s “spiritual and cultural identity,” which are used as metonyms for the shared Christian and democratic values that he believes should underpin European unity. This is framed metaphorically as the “roots” of Europe, suggesting a deep connection to tradition and history (A4). The metaphor of roots signifies stability and heritage, while the metonymy of spiritual identity stands for Europe’s Christian legacy. In other words, the “roots” metaphor is blended with the metonym of Christian identity, constructing a vision of Europe as a culturally and spiritually unified entity that is threatened by external forces like socialism, liberalism, and migration. In the same speech (A4) Orbán metaphorically describes Europe as having “27 faces,” symbolizing the diverse nations within the EU. The metonymic dimension of this metaphor comes from the individual nations that make up these “faces,” with each one standing for its cultural and historical contributions to Europe. Thus, the metonym of individual nations combines with the metaphor of Europe as a unified yet diverse whole, reinforcing the idea of a Europe united through its differences.

5.2. Metaphonymies of the EU’s economic decline

In A1 Orbán introduces economic data to emphasize Europe’s decline, using a metaphor to describe the EU’s failure to adapt, with phrases like “Today the EU is where it was thirty years ago.” The EU is metaphorically static and stagnated, while other powers like China and the United States are described in terms of rapid growth and dynamism. Hence the metaphor of stagnation is paired with the metonymy of economic indicators (GDP, patent filings) to emphasize the declining role of Europe on the global stage. The metonymic use of these indicators turns abstract economic conditions into concrete symbols of failure.

In A2 statistics is used to discuss the EU’s shrinking share of global GDP and patent applications as metonymic markers of decline, representing the entire political entity’s failure through these quantifiable indicators. The question “What has

happened to our European Union?” is repeated throughout, using this rhetorical device as a metonym for disillusionment and crisis within the EU.

In A6 Orbán's portrayal of EU financial relations taps into a metaphorical frame of competition and warfare as the following quote shows: “The money which Hungary receives from the European Union is not some charitable donation. Everyone benefits from the cohesion policy” (A6). By rejecting the idea that EU funds are a “charitable donation,” Orbán shifts the frame from charity to one of fair competition and reciprocal exchange, where financial contributions are not gifts but returns on investments. This transforms the EU economic relationship into a battlefield of sorts, where each state competes for fair treatment and equity.

In A5 Orbán recalls the EU's “grand plan” that included goals like making the euro competitive with the US dollar and creating a single trade area from Lisbon to Vladivostok. The failure of these objectives is metaphorically described as the collapse of the plan, implying that Europe has failed to live up to its ambitions. This failure in turn becomes a metonym for the EU's broader decline in global influence and economic performance. Hence, the metaphonymy combines the metonym of failed objectives (euro, trade area) with the metaphor of collapse, portraying the EU as a structure that has crumbled and needs to be rebuilt.

In the same speech (A5), Orbán refers to the economic progress of the Visegrad countries (V4), particularly their trade relationships with Germany, to argue that these nations are no longer “loitering” in Europe's financial centers “clutching their hats.” This imagery is a vivid metaphor for dependency and subservience, while the economic statistics serve as a metonym for independence and strength. The metaphonymy links the economic data (metonymy) with the metaphor of moving from a position of weakness (begging) to strength (independent contributors). This underscores the V4's success in gaining autonomy within the EU.

In A7 Orbán repeatedly references Hungary's economic success in terms that metaphorically frame it as a weapon in political debates: “Since then, we have fully repaid this money, ahead of maturity... Hungary is on the road to the lowest unemployment rate in the European Union.” By portraying economic achievements as part of a war of influence, Orbán suggests that Hungary's financial independence and growth are a defense against external criticism. His metaphorical language equates economic policies with the arming of the nation against ideological attacks, reinforcing Hungary's position as a sovereign state that can stand on its own.

A8 discusses competitiveness and labor in the EU, which evolves into a metaphorical landscape where Hungary must navigate “wage pressure” and “economic transformation.” Labor serves as a metonym for economic strength, where higher wages signify both value and the need for innovation within the workforce. The transition from a labor-cost-driven economy to one that values creativity and technology illustrates a strategic pivot, framing the Hungarian model as an adaptive response to global economic trends.

5.3. Metaphonimies of the EU's political decline: institutional failure and democratic deficit

In A6 Orbán's concept of illiberal democracy functions metaphorically, and the idea of democracy as inherently tied to the inclusion of liberals in power is framed as follows: "Illiberal democracy is when someone other than the liberals have won" (A6). Democracy is thus recast as a game or contest in which different ideological teams compete for control. By defining illiberal democracy as a system in which liberals do not always win, Orbán metaphorically positions liberalism as an out-dated framework that Hungary – and potentially other Central European nations – no longer needs to follow. Furthermore, Orbán's description of political divisions within the EU, particularly his accusation of communist tactics against the European People's Party (EPP), reflects another use of metonymy: "You clearly want to create division within it so that later you can become stronger. We know this. This is how the communists destroyed democracy in Hungary" (A6). Communist tactics serves as a metonym for political manipulation and betrayal. By invoking this historical reference, Orbán creates a symbolic link between past authoritarianism and present EU politics, suggesting that similar forces of division are at play.

Throughout the narrative, Orbán uses "Brussels" metonymically to stand for the EU's governing bodies, particularly when criticizing its policies: "Thus the term 'Stop Brussels' (A7)". Brussels refers to the EU bureaucracy as a whole, depicted as a centralized, overreaching entity threatening Hungarian national autonomy. This metonymy condenses complex European governance structures into a singular bureaucratic body, which Orbán portrays as distant, disconnected, and overbearing. The simplicity of this metonym appeals to nationalist and Eurosceptic audiences, casting the EU as a monolithic entity.

In A7 Orbán frequently employs metaphonymy when discussing the Hungarian practice of national consultation, portraying it both as a tool of democracy (metaphorically) and as a metonym for the will of the Hungarian people: "It has become commonplace in Hungary in the past decade to regularly ask for the opinion of our citizens." National consultations are metaphorically framed as an extension of democracy, emphasizing Orbán's claim that Hungarian democracy operates on deeper, more authentic engagement with its citizens than the EU. Simultaneously, these consultations serve as a metonym for the voice of the people, allowing Orbán to argue that his government's policies reflect the direct will of the Hungarian populace. In his closing remarks in the same speech, Orbán uses a metaphor to characterize the EU as something that must undergo therapeutic treatment to regain its health: "For the therapy we need a clear diagnose and the unequivocal names of our maladies." This metaphor of the EU as a patient in need of diagnosis and treatment exposes that the Union is sick and dysfunctional. Orbán implicitly positions himself as part of the solution, suggesting that he - and by extension, Hungary - has the ability to diagnose and potentially cure Europe's malaise.

In A8 Orbán's description of "liberal non-democracy" serves as a metonym for the political ideologies that he believes have constrained true democratic governance. By presenting the end of this era as liberation, he crafts a narrative that emphasizes pragmatism over ideology, positioning Hungary as a leader in a newly emerging democratic landscape. What is more, Orbán calls for a return to reality free from the constraints of political correctness, using metonymy to represent a broader rejection of established political norms. This move positions Orbán's government as grounded in practical solutions rather than ideological constraints.

In A12 the statement that "[t]he EU is rich, but weak" juxtaposes wealth (metonymy for resources and influence) with weakness (a metaphor for a lack of power). Hence Orbán criticizes the EU's failure to respond effectively to crises, suggesting that material resources alone cannot ensure political or social stability. Furthermore, in the statement "[w]e must end the move away from the nation states of Europe", nation states is metonymic, referring to national identities and political sovereignty. Hereby Orbán argues for a return to national sovereignty as a means of reinforcing security and stability, suggesting that the EU's federal aspirations undermine individual nations' power.

5.4. Metaphtonymies of EU's immigration policies

Migration is a central theme in Orbán's speeches, and he uses it metaphorically as a modern-day mass population movement that has "opened up completely new dimensions" and "cast everything in doubt" (A5). The movement of people becomes a metaphor for destabilization and uncertainty, while specific references to parallel societies, terrorism, and the deterioration of public security serve as metonyms for the perceived negative consequences of immigration in Western Europe. The metaphtonymy blends the metaphor of migration as a destabilizing force with the metonymy of social problems (terrorism, security) that Orbán associates with it, creating a powerful narrative of crisis and positioning migration as a threat to European stability and identity.

Orbán's stance on migration integrates metonymy and metaphor, particularly in how he describes the EU's failed migration policies as reflective of a broader failure. In the statement "It is obvious that the policy based on relocation and mandatory quotas has failed" (A6), migration is used metonymically to represent the deeper, structural weaknesses of the EU's governance system. Additionally, migration is metaphorically presented as an invading force or threat, turning the act of migration into a force that could destabilize Europe. The failure of relocation policies thus becomes a symptom of the larger failure of the EU project.

In A10 Orbán emphasizes the idea of sovereignty, using it as a metonym to signify Hungary's right to self-determination. Thus, Hungary is positioned as a legitimate nation state that should control its immigration policies without external interference. When referring to the EU as a "democratic community," Orbán em-

loys metonymy to suggest that democratic values should guide the EU's actions. However, he juxtaposes this with Hungary's overwhelming rejection of EU immigration policies, questioning the legitimacy of any EU decision that contradicts the will of the Hungarian people.

In A12 Orbán frames the migration situation not merely as a humanitarian challenge that threatens “the future of our political family”. Crisis signifies urgency and instability, implying that migration poses a fundamental risk to political identity and order. On the other hand, by mentioning the “destabilization of governments, countries, and the whole European continent,” Orbán draws on metonymy, where governments stand for the political stability and authority they represent. This shift evokes a direct link between migration and the collapse of societal structures.

In A13 migrants are described as “victims of bad governance” and “human traffickers”, and are portrayed as innocent parties caught in a dire situation. This metaphor emphasizes compassion, yet it also serves to create a dichotomy between the victims and those responsible for their plight, implying that the European response must be careful and well-measured. The call for “moral responsibility” associates the Christian democratic identity with ethical obligations. The former stands for broader European values, linking the parties to the need for a decisive response to migration while distancing them from a narrative that embraces unregulated migration.

A14 states that Europe is threatened by “an ever mounting wave of modern-era migration.” *Wave* functions as a metaphor for the overwhelming influx of migrants, evoking imagery of a natural disaster that cannot be easily controlled, reinforcing the urgency of the situation. The *movement of people* signifies not just physical migration but the broader implications of demographic change, economic pressure, and cultural transformation, linking the movement directly to socio-political instability.

In A3 Orbán's description of the actors influencing migration policy – people smugglers, terrorist organizations, illegitimate power groups, NGOs, financial speculators, and the media – draws a vivid metaphorical picture of migration as a chaotic battlefield. This battlefield metaphor frames migration policy as a contentious struggle, where legitimate political leaders must take over control from illegitimate forces. Each of the groups becomes a metonym for destabilization, with their actions standing in for broader societal and political disintegration. This metaphonymic construction connects the actors (metonyms) with the metaphor of a battlefield, emphasizing the stakes and the need for political leaders to take charge.

5.5. Historical references as metaphonymies

Throughout the narrative, historical events are recalled when discussing present issues. The Berlin Wall is metonymically used to refer to the entire Soviet oppression, while metaphorically it represents the barriers to freedom. Orbán states, “The Berlin Wall didn't just come down, we knocked it down,” where the Wall becomes both a literal entity and a symbolic representation of oppression (A1). Orbán ref-

erences the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall in A4, using the Wall as a metonym for Europe's Cold War division. The *fall* of the Wall becomes a metaphor for the reuniting of Europe, blending the literal event with the broader metaphor of "unity." By stating that Central Europeans never accepted the division into "two Europes," Orbán creates a *metaphonymy* that positions the fall of the Wall as both a literal and symbolic end to oppression. The metonymy (the Wall as division) and the metaphor (fall as reunification) work together to frame the historical event as a moment of liberation for Central European countries, which he connects directly to his own party's origins and identity.

In A1 Hungary's fight against the Soviets is both a metonym for its historical bravery and a metaphor for its current stance against the EU. The metonymic use of "freedom fighters" evokes Hungary's past struggle, which is then metaphorically extended to describe Hungary's resistance against what Orbán perceives as the EU's overreach. Thus, Hungary is positioned as a defender of European values. This metaphor evokes images of struggle, heroism, and resistance, linking Hungary's role today to past events like the Cold War and the fight against Soviet oppression. In A4 Orbán refers to Central European freedom fighters as the driving force behind European reunification, using these as a metonym for the resistance movements against Soviet control. This connects to the metaphor of reunification as the restoration of freedom. By positioning the Fidesz party within this historical context, he ties its identity to broader European values of freedom and unity, framing it as both a metaphorical and literal participant in the reunification process. The metonym of freedom fighters stands for the struggle against communism, while the metaphor of reunification elevates this struggle to a pan-European ideal. Together, they form a *metaphonymy* that legitimizes Fidesz's role in modern European politics.

In turn, the Cold War victory is framed as "we" (Hungary and its allies) winning freedom, which allows the nation to stand as a symbol of this struggle. This part-whole metonymy (Hungary as a part standing for the collective freedom fighters) transforms the national experience into a broader European one. Metaphorically framed as a "battle" or "fight" for freedom, the Cold War functions as a metaphor that stands for Hungary's role in a series of struggles, moving from the past (Cold War) to the present (EU crisis).

5.6. Political figures as metaphonymies

Orbán uses specific political figures as metonymic representations of broader political trends. For example, he refers to Václav Klaus (A1) as "the brightest beacon among former political leaders in Europe today," where Klaus becomes a metonym for a particular ideological position (nationalism, sovereignty). In A4 Orbán pays tribute to former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, using him as a metonym for EPP and for European unity. Kohl's role in inviting Hungary to join the EPP symbolizes broader European integration and political stability. This metonymy is extended

metaphorically when Orbán likens the EPP to a family, suggesting that while there may be disagreements, unity is essential. Hence the metaphonymy fuses Kohl's personal legacy with the broader metaphor of European unity, reinforcing the EPP's identity as a protector of European values and traditions. In the same speech the *metaphonymy* in this case uses the metonymy of Castro and Marx to evoke socialism and contrasts it with the metaphor of political aberration, suggesting that these ideologies are deviations from the proper path of European governance.

In his comments about George Soros (A6), Soros is used as a metonymic symbol for liberal globalism and external influence. Orbán's statement is as follows: "I have quite a few thoughts about George Soros, but I certainly don't think that he ever gave anyone a scholarship because he thought that by doing so he was buying that person's opinions for the rest of their life" (A6). Thus, Soros is positioned not as an individual but as a proxy for larger forces threatening Hungary's sovereignty, and becomes the metonym for external, liberal control, particularly as a representative of the liberal values that Orbán opposes. The invocation of Soros thus functions as a shorthand for a broader network of liberal internationalism, creating a sense of a liberal elite working against national interests. In A7 Soros is described as "an American financial speculator [...] despite ruining the lives of millions of European people with his financial speculations... [he] is so highly praised that he is received by the EU's top leaders." In this statement, Soros becomes a stand-in for a broader range of actors and institutions, particularly financial elites and global liberalism, whom Orbán perceives as undermining national autonomy. By invoking Soros, Orbán avoids addressing individual EU policies and instead directs attention to a perceived external enemy whose influence threatens Hungary and the EU itself. This use of Soros metonymically connects one man to a larger ideological battle, enhancing Orbán's nationalist and anti-globalist stance.

Conclusion

Viktor Orbán's speeches employ metaphonymy to create a powerful narrative that intertwines Hungary's historical struggles with contemporary political challenges, particularly within the European Union. By connecting Hungary's fight for freedom with its current conflicts in the EU, Orbán portrays Hungary as both a symbolic and literal leader in the defense of European sovereignty. He contrasts Hungary's nationalist stance with the EU, depicting the latter as a declining, imperialistic force. Orbán frames migration as an existential threat, presenting Hungary as a defender of Christian values and European identity. He uses vivid metaphors and historical references to reinforce a nationalist and sovereigntist agenda, positioning Hungary as a key player in the global political landscape. Additionally, his speeches emphasize the importance of national sovereignty while criticizing liberalism and supranational governance. Through these rhetorical strategies, Or-

bán advocates for a strong, sovereign Europe rooted in traditional values. His use of metaphonymy allows him to effectively communicate complex political ideas in accessible ways, heightening emotional appeal and mobilizing public support for his policies, particularly in areas such as immigration and EU-related issues. Orbán's speeches thus position Hungary as a moral and cultural leader in a Europe facing crises of identity and legitimacy. What is more, this paper exposes the potency of the chosen theoretical model for analyzing political speeches, setting the scene for the use of critical metaphonymic analysis.

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No.	Title of PM Viktor Orbán’s addresses	Link
A1	On the future of the EU, on the occasion of the 30 th anniversary of the end of the Cold War in June 2021	https://fidesz.hu/int/news/pm-orbans-speech-on-the-future-of-the-european-union
A2	At the conference “Thirty Years of Freedom”, Budapest, 19 June 2021	https://www.klaus.cz/clanky/4772
A3	At the 1st Arab League – European Union summit on 29 February 2019	https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-address-at-the-1st-arab-league-european-union-summit
A4	At the congress of the European People’s Party in Helsinki on 8 November 2018	https://abouthungary.hu/prime-minister/speech-of-viktor-orban-at-the-congress-of-the-european-peoples-party
A5	At the Visegrád Group conference “The Future of Europe” Budapest, 26 January 2018	https://miniszterelnok.hu/viktor-orbans-speech-at-the-visegrad-group-conference-the-future-of-europe/
A6	Reply in the European Parliament on 26 April 2017	https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/viktor-orban-s-reply-in-the-european-parliament
A7	In the European Parliament in Brussels on 26 April 2017	https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-speech-in-the-european-parliament20170426
A8	At the conference “Reinvigorating Growth, Competitiveness and Investment – The EU from the Baltics, through Central Europe, to the Mediterranean” on 15 November 2016	https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-speech-at-the-conference-reinvigorating-growth-competitiveness-and-investment-the-eu-from-the-baltics-through-central-europe-to-the-mediterranean
A9	Press conference in Brussels after the EU summit on 21 October 2016	https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/prime-minister-viktor-orban-s-press-conference-in-brussels-after-the-eu-summit
A10	At press conference after the announcement of referendum results, Budapest on 2 October 2016	https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/viktor-orban-s-press-conference-after-the-announcement-of-referendum-results
A11	At press conference after an extraordinary meeting of the European Council on 16 September 2016 in Bratislava	https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/viktor-orban-s-press-conference-after-an-extraordinary-meeting-of-the-european-council

No.	Title of PM Viktor Orbán's addresses	Link
A12	“Are You Opposed to Peace?” on 13 July 2016	https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/are-you-opposed-to-peace
A13	At at EPP Congress in Madrid on 22 October 2015	https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/speech-of-viktor-orban-at-the-epp-congress20151024
A14	Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 3 September 2015	https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/those-who-are-overwhelmed-cannot-offer-shelter-to-anyone

Table 1: Orbán's speeches as a primary source

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