

Éditeurs/Editors
Winfried KUDSZUS et Richard TRIM

Métaphores de l'austérité
et austérité des métaphores

Metaphors of austerity
& the austerity of metaphors

L'Harmattan
PARIS
2018

**METAPHORICAL CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ECONOMIC
AND POLITICAL AUSTERITY:
A STUDY IN MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE**

**LA CONCEPTUALISATION MÉTAPHORIQUE DE L'AUSTÉRITÉ
ÉCONOMIQUE ET POLITIQUE :
UNE ÉTUDE DU DISCOURS MULTIMODAL**

Anita Naciscione
Latvian Academy of Culture
Rīga

Abstract

This chapter aims to explore the functioning of metaphor and other stylistic patterns in the conceptualization of economic and political austerity measures in multimodal discourse. In cognitive stylistics, multimodal use is viewed as one of the modes of reflecting figurative thought and its development in discourse. Figurative language in general, and metaphor as its most powerful pattern in particular, serves the purposes of conceptual mapping of abstract thought and abstract reasoning. The cognitive significance of figuration cannot be overestimated. Creative multimodality reveals how thought and language function in verbal, visual and audial representation. Textual and visual representations of the thinking process are profoundly influenced by political, economic, social and cultural processes that lie behind the specific context. Cognitive linguists recognize that metaphor is a primary tool for understanding and interpreting the world and its developments (Lakoff & Turner 1989: xii). However, metaphor is not the only figurative means in the process of conceptualization. Metaphorical representation incorporates other figurative modes: metonymy, visual pun, allusion, and irony as part of cohesive conceptual networks, representing people's experiences and the external world, including multimodal discourse, which is multimodal representation of figurative thought (Naciscione 2010, 2014). Many metaphorical concepts are rooted in human

experience and behavior. Case studies reveal the significance of metaphorical and metonymic conceptualizations, and the use of non-verbal cultural symbols as representations of reality in political debates.

Keywords:

cognitive stylistics, multimodal discourse, figurative conceptualization, metaphor, metonymy, cultural symbols, economic and political austerity

Résumé

Ce chapitre se propose d'explorer le fonctionnement de la métaphore et d'autres schémas stylistiques développés dans la conceptualisation des mesures d'austérité économique et politique au sein du discours multimodal. Dans le domaine de la stylistique cognitive, l'usage de la multimodalité est perçu comme un des processus représentant la pensée figurée et son développement discursif. Le langage figuré en général, et la métaphore en tant qu'elle apparaît comme sa réalisation la plus puissante, sert les objectifs de la projection conceptuelle de la pensée abstraite et du raisonnement abstrait. L'importance des processus figurés ne saurait jamais être trop prise en compte. La multimodalité créative révèle comment la pensée et le langage fonctionnent au niveau de la représentation verbale, visuelle et auditive. Les représentations textuelles et visuelles du processus de la pensée sont profondément influencées par les processus politiques, économiques, sociaux et culturels qui sont à la base du contexte spécifique ici examiné. Les linguistes cognitivistes reconnaissent que la métaphore représente l'outil principal pour comprendre et interpréter le monde et son évolution (Lakoff & Turner 1989 : xii). Cependant, la métaphore n'est pas le seul moyen figuratif à intervenir dans le processus de conceptualisation. La représentation métaphorique inclut d'autres modèles figurés : la métonymie, les jeux visuels, l'allusion et l'ironie au sein des réseaux conceptuels cohésifs qui représentent les expériences individuelles et le monde extérieur, y compris le discours multimodal, qui représente, lui, la multimodalité de la pensée figurée (Naciscione 2010, 2014). Un grand nombre de concepts métaphoriques ont leurs racines dans l'expérience et le comportement humains. Des cas d'étude démontrent l'importance des conceptualisations métaphorique et métonymique, ainsi que de l'utilisation des symboles culturels non-verbaux comme représentations de la réalité au sein des débats politiques.

Mots-clés :

stylistique cognitive, discours multimodal, conceptualisation figurée, métaphore, métonymie, symboles culturels, austérité économique et politique

1. Introduction

Cognitive stylistics explores representation of figurative thought not only in verbal discourse but also in numerous types of visual and audial

expression that usually go together with the verbal. Multimodal discourse integrates these semiotic modes, and multimodal use is seen as one mode of reflecting figurative meaning and its sustained development in discourse. I would argue that multimodal discourse applies stylistic techniques from more than one semiotic mode of expression. The verbal works together with the non-verbal in construction of new meaning in figurative conceptualizations, revealing patterns of thought that are manifest in different semiotic representations (Naciscione 2010).

Metaphor has been recognized by cognitive linguists as a fundamental characteristic of the human mind and a major mode of reflecting our perceptual and conceptual understanding of experience and a technique of abstract reasoning (Gibbs [1994]1999: 16-17). This chapter is devoted to discussion of multimodal metaphor, interacting with metonymy, visual pun and allusion in conceptualization of the global economic downturn and political developments in the world after the Great Recession that started in 2008.

The chapter is structured as follows. Section 2 takes a closer look at visual representations of economic austerity and brings out the role of metonymy and visual pun in metaphorical conceptualizations. The Section also examines the use of cultural symbols in multimodal representations of austerity measures. Section 3 explores economic austerity that is politically motivated and carried out in the self-interest of the political leadership or the government. The same Section presents case studies of Vladimir Putin's failures to stabilize the Russian economy, thus causing severe economic conditions and food shortages after the Sochi Olympic Games and his food embargo. Section 4 focuses on Russia's harsh crackdown on the independent media. A case study of the video *Russian Dolls* by *Amnesty International France* reveals Putin's inhuman ways of dealing with the media. The video is a figurative representation of Putin's double-dealing attitude to freedom of expression. Finally, Section 5 reveals that Putin's policy of political austerity continues acquiring new forms with his army of trolls, spawning glorifying messages about Putin's achievements and slandering Ukraine and Western countries. His information war has assumed a new form, weaponizing information, culture and money. Putin's actions and mode of thinking are motivated by the conceptual metaphor POLITICS IS WAR.

In multimodal discourse, metaphorical and metonymic conceptualizations reveal the essential features of both austerity measures in an economic crisis, and deliberate austerity measures that are politically and ideologically driven. Political austerity effected in the self-interest of the political leadership will invariably result in dual moral standards,

falsifications, blatant lies, and an obvious contradiction between the words and deeds of the political leadership.

2. Conceptualization of Economic Austerity in a Global Crisis

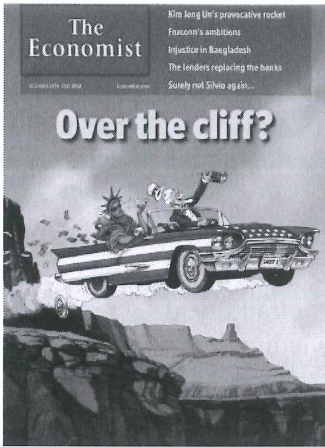
In the Post-World War II period, austerity³² emerged as a metaphorical term to denote extremely difficult economic conditions in a country. In this century, measures of economic austerity have been created by a global crisis and subsequent government measures to reduce expenditure in a recession. Economic austerity is reflected in innumerable verbal and visual representations in all types of media where metaphor emerges as a principal stylistic pattern in conceptualization of these measures and comprehension of different aspects of political thought and economic policies. Lakoff and Turner aptly point out that metaphor is “indispensable not only to our imagination but also to our reason” (1989: xi).

Visual use of metaphor and figurative language in general is a powerful stylistic means of conveying a message. In visual representations of economic austerity, metaphor functions as a leading stylistic pattern working together with other stylistic means. First and foremost, it is visual pun that emerges as a natural result of an attempt to convey metaphorical meaning and reveal the direct meaning of a metaphorical word or unit. The verbal message on the cover of *The Economist*, Dec. 15, 2012, calls upon Barack Obama to avoid an economic abyss and avert the fiscal cliff (<https://www.economist.com/printedition>).

To go over the cliff is a metaphorical phraseological unit³³ which means to go to their own detriment. America's economy is on the edge of a financial precipice, that is, in an extremely dangerous situation.

³² The first meaning of *austerity*: sternness or severity of manner or attitude. Borrowed into late MiE from French (<Latin) (*The Oxford English Dictionary* 2013).

³³ A phraseological unit is a stable, cohesive combination of words with a fully or partially figurative meaning (Naciscione 2010: 32).



The visual representation of a car on the verge of falling into the precipice is a visual pun, persuasively presenting an image of imminent danger (**Figure 1**. *The Economist*, Dec. 15, 2012). The verbal and visual representations of the thought process are determined by economic processes that govern the critical situation.

Each time a new economic problem emerges, it tends to create new metaphorical words and expressions. The metaphorical conceptualization of the global economic austerity of this century has also created new concepts and metaphorical terms. One of these is a *black swan*³⁴, a metaphorical term denoting a huge, rare, unpredictable problem (the origin: Nassim N. Taleb's book *The Black Swan*, 2007). The term spread after the collapse of the US financial system in 2008. The new metaphorical term was quickly borrowed in many languages throughout the world by loan translation. The term *a black swan* is used in visual discourse on p. 1 of the *Financial Times*, April 8, 2009, as part of a visual pun, constituted by the metaphorical phrase *to make the world 'Black Swan' proof* and a picture of a black swan.

The credit crunch of 2008 caused economic austerity measures which were a global adversity affecting each country in its own way. In Latvia, people acutely felt economic austerity, as government agencies cut back on public spending, salaries were slashed and consumption fell.

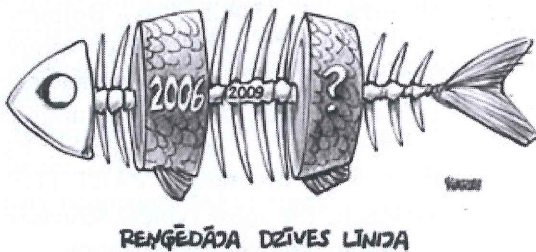
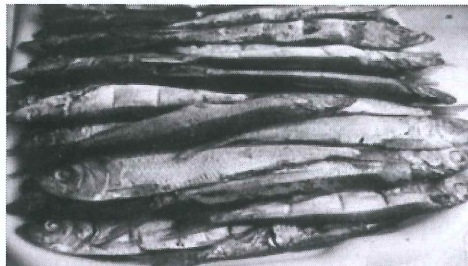


Figure 2 (Gatis Šļūka, *Life Line of an Atlantic Herring Eater*, 2010) features the fate of the common people trying to survive the crisis situation.

³⁴ For a detailed analysis of the origin of the phraseological unit *black swan*, see Naciscione 2011: 284-285.

The caption draws on cognitive associations of contiguity³⁵ and creates in the mind the common perception of the Latvian people as Atlantic herring eaters. The visual metaphor of the life line illustrates the precariousness of the economic situation. Cartoon is an apt medium for commenting on the policies of the day by offering a figurative representation of a topical phenomenon.

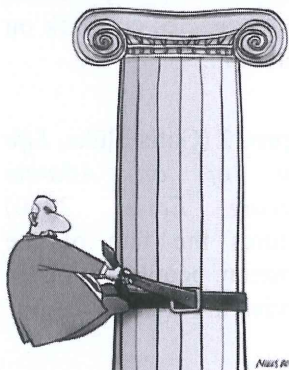


In **Figure 3** (my own archive) we see some smoked Atlantic herring, a traditional Latvian food including throughout difficult periods in history (*smoked Atlantic herring* – traditional Latvian food; *Atlantic herring eaters* – common Latvian people; *metonymy*, derogatory).

In conceptualization, metonymy frequently draws on cultural factors, and contiguous associations play an important part in both verbal and visual representation, which shows our ability to think metonymically. The cultural feature of traditional Latvian food stands for the common Latvian people (PART FOR WHOLE) based on cognitive relations of contiguity.

Cultural aspects play an important part in political debates. Use of cultural symbols carries meaning and evokes certain emotional responses. To the human mind, symbols are cultural representations of reality.

Let me turn to the visual representation of harsh austerity measures in Greece.



A Greek ionic column is associated with Greece by way of contiguity (**Figure 4**. Niels Bo Bojesen, *Griechenland: Den Gürtel enger schnallen*, 2011). As an ancient cultural symbol, the ionic column is a metonym for Greece. Its metonymic structure is PART FOR WHOLE, the most typical structure in metonymic conceptualization.

³⁵ For more on association of ideas and the Law of Contiguity, see James 1899. See also the contiguity principle in Reber 1985[1995]: 159.

The obvious impossibility of tightening the belt on the column clearly indicates that Greece is reluctant to accept the austerity measures that the European Union has been imposing.

The concept of austerity is presented by the metaphorical phraseological unit *to tighten one's belt*, which means to make financial sacrifices and cut back on spending. The figurative meaning of the phraseological unit and the visual perception of the belt being tightened (direct meaning) create a visual pun³⁶. Thus, this visual representation incorporates stylistic techniques from several semiotic modes: metaphor, metonymy, visual pun and use of symbol, all forming a multimodal discourse, providing for creation of a new figurative conceptualization. I agree with Bormanis, who argues for multimodal meaning as a separate semantic category that calls for holistic processing (2014: 47).

Metaphors are applied to different personal experiences and social situations because people conceptualize their lives in figurative, mostly metaphorical terms (Gibbs and Beitel 2003). Metaphorical concepts arise as a reflection of a global cross-language and a cross-cultural phenomenon, emerging in both verbal and multimodal discourse. Cf.:

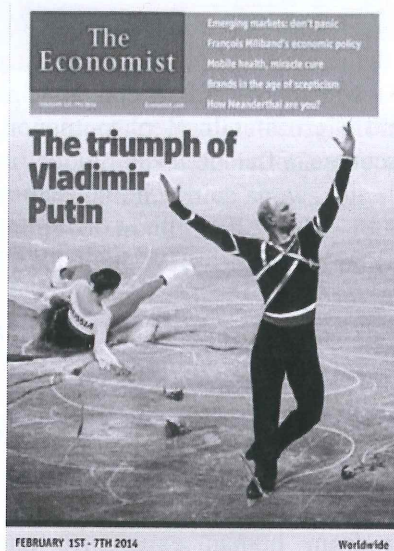
EN *to tighten one's belt*
 FR *se serrer la ceinture*
 GE *den Gürtel enger schnallen*
 SP *ajustarse el cinturón*
 IT *stringere/tirare la cinghia*
 RU *затянуть пояс потуже*
 PL *zaciśkać pasa*
 LT *susiveržti diržus*
 LV *savilkt ciešāk jostu*

Many metaphorical concepts stem from human experience and behavior; they are retained in the collective long-term memory of the people. Similarity in human experiences has led to the theory of polygenesis, which claims that similar figurative units have come into being independently in various languages based on common human experiences and general perceptions. They are of polygenetic origin (Piirainen 2012: 518-519; Mieder 2013) which explains the parallel existence of a figurative unit in many languages and cultures.

³⁶ Media texts abound in innumerable verbal instantiations of the metaphor *to tighten one's belt* in languages of countries affected by economic and financial hardship.

3. Conceptualization of Politically Induced Economic Austerity Measures

Economic austerity may be politically motivated and carried out in the self-interest of a political leader or the government, taking deliberate economic measures in pursuit of political aims. This kind of policy is usually characterized by dual morality that is manifest in partial truths, misrepresentations, selective omissions, and blatant lies, resulting in no consistency between words and deeds.



The dual nature of this policy is well portrayed by *The Economist*, 1-7 Feb., 2014, issued a week before the Sochi Olympic Games (Figure 5. *The Economist*, 1-7 Feb., 2014). The cover page presents an insightful picture of Vladimir Putin's desire to create an image of his own grandeur. We see a tall winning figure skater and his victory gestures. He looks much taller than life-size, achieved by image-editing software which is a semiotic mode of expression in multimodal representations (<https://www.economist.com/printedition>). Red roses are strewn on the ice for him as a symbol of love and recognition. His victory is stated verbally: *The triumph of Vladimir Putin*. His visual and verbal presentation is motivated by the conceptual metaphor SUCCESS IS UP.

However, appearances are deceptive, as the old-time metaphorical proverb goes. This is true not only in the case of present-day Russia; it was also frequently the case in the Soviet Union. The other side of the coin reveals that Putin's partner in figure skating (metonymically standing for Russia) has been spinning out of control; she has fallen down and broken through the thin ice. The illustration is based on a visual allusion to the phraseological unit *to skate on thin ice* that is a metaphor in its base form.

The portrayal of Russia is motivated by the conceptual metaphor FAILURE IS DOWN.

The figurative thought of failure to perform is carried over to the cover story on p. 7. It is reinforced by a detailed analysis of Russia's weakness, endemic corruption and its crumbling state-directed economy, and sustained³⁷ by a sub-headline that reads: *A skater with feet of clay*, establishing a direct semantic and stylistic link with the multimodal representation on the cover page. *Feet of clay*³⁸ is a metaphorical phraseological unit, based on allusion to the Bible (*The Book of Daniel*). It is used to denote hidden faults, vulnerability and imminent downfall. Figurative language reflects figurative thought; as thought is sustainable, so is figurative language. The case study reveals how a multimodal representation of a figurative thought may be sustained in a verbal text. The cover picture of Putin the winner and the analytical article on p. 7 constitute one multimodal discourse where thought processes are presented in figurative networks (Naciscione 2010; Trim 2011). The networking process encompasses use of a number of stylistic techniques, all forming part of an integrated and saturated figurative network: visual allusion to, and pun on, the metaphorical phraseological unit *to skate on thin ice*, the metonymic inscription *Russia* (standing for the Russian people), symbol (the colors of the Russian flag in Putin's belt), extended metaphor (a skater with feet of clay), allusion to the Bible and use of the technique of a composite photograph.

The true picture of the Sochi Winter Olympic Games (7-23 Feb., 2014) emerged immediately after the Games were over: they cost eight times more than the Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver in 2010. Naturally the expenses were covered by the Russian taxpayer. A week after the Sochi Olympic Games, the people of Crimea were already suffering from a shortage of agricultural products. As a result, user cards (RU *карточка потребителя*), which is a euphemism for ration cards, were introduced in Crimea in March 2014. People had to wait in line in stores with their ration cards for essential food items, the same as in wartime.

In depicting austerity measures, cartoonists frequently rely on cultural symbols as an effective means of informing and convincing the reader.

³⁷ For more on sustainability and development of figurative thought in discourse see Naciscione 2006, 2010: 73-77.

³⁸ *Feet of clay* is a metaphorical PU, an allusion to the dream of the King of Babylon, recounted in *The Old Testament (The Book of Daniel)*. Russia has often been referred to as a giant with feet of clay since the beginning of the 20th century (Paddock 2010: 77).

A recognizable Russian cultural symbol that would include all of Russia would be the *matryoshka*, a set of wooden dolls of decreasing size placed one inside the other, known as the Russian nesting doll. It looks happy and healthy, symbolizing hope, family values, and the heart and soul of the Russian people (Figure 6. A *matryoshka*. My own archive).



The failure of the Russian economy to perform was exacerbated by Putin's policy of introducing a food embargo in August, 2014 that came as a response to EU sanctions against Russia. Empty shelves in stores generated jokes about a hunger strike among the people of Russia.



To reflect this development, the best Latvian analytical magazine *IR*³⁹ features the food shortage in Russia on its cover page (Figure 7. *Ir*, No 33, 14-20 July, 2014), portraying a *matryoshka* with a belt fastened tight around her waist as a clear indication of economic hardship (a visual allusion to the metaphorical phraseological unit *to tighten one's belt*). Moreover, it is a Soviet wartime army belt, metonymically standing for harsh discipline.

The *matryoshka*'s waistline has been hyperbolically squeezed almost into non-existence that would rather befit a fashion model. All across her figure we read the inscription "Putina badastreiks" (Putin's Hunger Strike), and we see that the *matryoshka* feels desperate and dejected.

³⁹ LV *ir* – EN it is.

The figurative conceptualization of the plight of the Russian people goes hand in hand with the cover story (pp. 18-19) that is an analytical article with the ironic headline “Putin’s ‘Food Program’” (pp. 18-19), examining Putin’s policies and the economic situation in Russia.

In order to justify his economic austerity measures and reduce complaints about empty shelves, Putin and his media tried to convince the Russian people that his sanctions are an opportunity that will give a chance for the Russian economy to develop.

Putin is attempting “to establish political legitimacy” by creating a credible social and moral purpose (Charteris-Black 2014: xvi) as indeed many political leaders have done before him. Putin claims that his sanctions will stimulate development of the Russian economy and that the difficulties the Russian people are facing now will provide new opportunities in the future. Actually he is attempting to apply the strict father model by persuading the public that he is fighting for a noble cause, and that his economic austerity measures are morally worthy and a blessing for the people⁴⁰. Persuasion and holding out the hope that sanctions will give a chance to the Russian economy to prosper was a tool to cover up the bleak situation in food stores in Moscow in 2014: whole meat sections were empty, entire shelves gaping. “Hope is a political necessity” (*op. cit.*: XII).

For Putin, holding out hope is a political necessity, a political means of persuasion. Many Russian people still believe in Putin, as he is trying to show that his measures should be seen as a manifestation of his care for the Russian people.

Interestingly, the texts of Putin’s official political speeches contain no creative metaphors and even very few conventional metaphors, e.g., some figurative terms, such as *cash flow*. This is mainly due to two reasons. First, it is perfectly in line with the tradition of official speeches in the Russian language. It is generally believed that the language of official public speeches should be characterized by precision and clarity, and the style should use neutral means of expression, that is, non-figurative language. Second, the style of Putin’s political speeches can certainly be attributed to his speechwriters and spin doctors. However, he is perfectly capable of creative figurative use, as is testified to by some of his short speeches on less formal occasions, such as sports competitions. This figurative vocabulary is mostly colloquial or slangy. Surprisingly, Putin is an expert user of jail slang, which is mostly metaphorical. Use of jail slang is “a key feature of *putin-speak*” (Reznikov 2009: 89). At the same time the style of Putin’s

⁴⁰ For more on the strict father model, see Lakoff 2008: 77-82.

public speeches is usually reserved and intelligent (*op. cit.*: 87-89). In his study of Putin's criminal lexicon, Reznikov points out that Putin may unexpectedly employ jail slang or some low colloquial expressions in a speech at a press conference, using words that sound rude and vulgar, and which are hardly appropriate for a head of state in his press conferences. Obviously he wants to portray himself as one of the "common people" (*ibid.*).

4. Putin's Political Austerity and Crackdown on the Media

Political austerity (a term introduced and used by Russia) is a euphemism denoting pressure, censorship and harsh control exerted by the government over the mass media that is metaphorically conceptualized as a crackdown on media texts. In 2008 a special body was established in Russia, called *The Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media*, a euphemistic name for a censorship and surveillance institution (RU *Roskomnadzor*). Putin's attitude to the mass media lies at the core of his understanding of political austerity: closing down Internet sites which contain unacceptable content and/or censurable views in Putin's opinion and cracking down on the media⁴¹. His onslaught on freedom of the press has been in progress since 2008 and has become more severe.

Russia's harsh crackdown on the independent media, social media included, is convincingly portrayed in a video called *Russian Dolls* produced by *Amnesty International France* in 2010 as part of their continued campaign for human rights and freedom of expression. The video appeared as a reaction to mass protests that erupted in the streets of Moscow and the brutal repressive measures used by the Russian authorities to crush and suppress them. *Amnesty International France* denounced these violations of human rights in Russia and the crackdown on protests for freedom of expression.

⁴¹ For more on Putin's techniques of cracking down on the opposition under the pretext of fighting against extremists and terrorists, see Reznikov 2015.

The video⁴² is a brief story about a *matryoshka*, who metonymically stands for the Russian press and the media in general. The beginning of the video features an attack by the Russian police on the media. We see that the *matryoshka* is attacked, beaten, broken, and is lying in a puddle of blood (Figure 8).



Covering up the crime is presented by placing a new *matryoshka* over the wounded and broken doll. This *matryoshka* is beaten up, too. We see her with a black eye, chained hands, taken prisoner, and thrown into jail (Figure 9).



The *matryoshka* is shown in unusually dark and somber colors. Darkness is metaphorical, it is a visual metaphor, conveying a political message. Use of color is a semiotic mode of expression, a resource employed to accent figurative thought. The semiotic element of color becomes part of the multimodal discourse.

⁴² The music for the video is a 19th century Russian folk song *Korobeiniki* (Peddlers), lyrics by Nikolay Nekrasov, performed to the fast rhythm of Chardash. The increasing tempo of the song connects with the rapid course of events.

The whole video (except for the final frames) is made in dark, gloomy and depressing colors, creating a foreboding and intimidating atmosphere. Use of dark colors is motivated by the conceptual metaphor EVIL IS DARKNESS. Conceptualization of evil as darkness is based on people's social and personal experience, as seen in the proverb *He that does evil hates the light* that was first recorded in the English language in the Old English period (c.1000, see Whiting 1968: 164). The proverb has been retained in the long-term memory of the people. It goes back to the Bible, recorded in St. John's Gospel: *He that doth evil hateth the light* (*The New Testament*, John 3: 19-21). Conceptual mapping evolves through time (Trim 2007, 2011), and metaphorical generalizations of human behavior and experience reveal diachronic evolution of figurative language and long-term conceptualizations, forming long-term metaphor paths (Trim 2011: xi-xii). It is an ongoing thought process. As Mieder puts it, "proverbs permeate our sociopolitical life everywhere and at all times" (2008: 346). Proverbs reflect fundamental patterns of human thought (Gibbs 2007: 697), and therefore they form enduring metaphorical conceptual structures.

Further on, the *matryoshka* is seen as a journalist, metonymically standing for the press with a camera and a badge marked PRESS.



As the *matryoshka* does not agree with censorship, she is duct taped, a metaphorical way of showing that the press have been silenced (**Figure 10**). The sound suddenly disappears, and the video remains silent to the very end. As a semiotic element, sound conveys meaning, and so does its absence.

In the next frame we see hands covered with blood. This is a visual allusion to the phraseological unit *to have someone's blood on one's hands* which means to be guilty of a violent act. Blood on one's hands metaphorically discloses the fact of guilt and crime (Figure 11).



The man starts *wiping his hands in innocence* in an attempt to cover up what he has committed and to hide the fact of an unlawful act. This is a case of stylistic use (visual replacement of the verbal constituent) of the phraseological unit *to wash one's hands in innocence*.

Both phraseological units are part of the long-term collective memory of the people. They go back to the Bible: Pontius Pilate washed his hands in innocence to show that he was not responsible for sentencing Jesus to death by crucifixion (*The New Testament*, Matthew 27: 24-25).

It is noteworthy that no words are spoken throughout the video. It is the visual that performs the semantic function with the help of metaphor, metonymy, allusion, and use of semiotic elements (symbol, color and sound).



The man wipes off the last drop of blood from the *matryoshka's* face, and she is finally touched up, outwardly looking bright and happy (Figure 12).

This is an illustration of Putin's political hypocrisy: in appearance, there is no problem with the media. In reality, the media are government controlled and censored.

Finally, the last frame is light, and the darkness is gone while all the previous frames are all presented as dark, in line with darkness being a visual metaphor for evil.

Amnesty

International

France warns the viewer, “We must not let Russia’s charm hide its atrocities” as Putin’s policies distort the truth for deliberately deceptive purposes (Figure 13).



No anti-Putin information is published in the official Russian media today, and Putin is waging a war against the independent media; for instance, the independent TV channel *Dozhd* has suffered from Kremlin-instigated smear campaigns, although it has not been silenced. The video is a powerful way to inform the viewer about the actual state of affairs in the Russian media and the Kremlin’s attitude to freedom of information and expression that are sacrosanct in Western culture.

Along with Putin’s media warfare and other political austerity measures, Russia’s post-Soviet reality has produced new conceptions about the country’s identity, and hence new terms. One of them is Putin’s dream of a Eurasian Union, a vast trade and political bloc stretching from China to the EU that would grow into a powerful, supra-national union of sovereign states. This concept has emerged as a reaction to the collapse of the Soviet Union, which Putin has on a number of occasions called the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century. Another new conceptual claim is the existence of a greater Russian world that implies considerations of territorial expansion and particularly the concept of protecting compatriots abroad who must be saved.

As part of his austerity policy, Putin has introduced another new term, “national traitors”, to designate internal enemies, e.g., those who criticize the annexation of Crimea. In 2014, a new TV program called “National Traitors” started. This is a kind of post-Soviet witch hunt, alleging the existence of a fifth column. War on “national traitors” is part of Putin’s policy of intimidation⁴³, spawning despair, fear and distress.

⁴³ For more on Putin’s techniques of intimidation and manipulation, see Beinerte 2015.

In recent years, the Kremlin has exerted great efforts to intensify disinformation campaigns. For Russia, information war has become a major type of warfare.

5. Putin's Information War

Putin's policies of political austerity continue acquiring new forms: information war, trolling, weaponizing information, culture, and money.

The term *war* is frequently used in media texts when discussing Putin's massive disinformation policies. Apart from its direct meaning of *war* as a state of armed conflict, the semantic structure includes two metaphorical meanings. The conventional metaphorical meaning of *war* is "a state of hostility or antagonism" (*Merriam-Webster's 11th Collegiate Dictionary* 2003). This dictionary is one of the few dictionaries that also give another metaphorical meaning: "an organized effort by a government for a particular purpose" (*ibid.*). This is the meaning contained in the term *information war*, which is used to denote Putin's insidious covert propaganda campaigns with trolling as its most obvious manifestation.

The semantic structure of the noun *troll* has also undergone meaning expansion. A *troll* is a hideously ugly creature in Scandinavian stories that lives in a cave and is either very small or very tall. Over the centuries it developed a metaphorical meaning: "an ugly or unpleasant person" (*Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Students* 2002). With the rise of the Internet in the mid-1990s, including forums, blogs and social networking, a *troll* acquired a new metaphorical meaning: "a person who makes a deliberately offensive or provocative online posting" (https://www.google.lv/?gws_rd=ssl#q=troll+meaning).

Putin's invisible social media campaign includes legions of trolls on his payroll, spreading fabrications of atrocities committed by Ukrainian extremists and posting photo-shopped or staged photos featuring these horrendous crimes. The trolls occupy a new four-storey office in St. Petersburg on the banks of the River Neva, called The Troll House by the people. The Kremlin employs an army of trolls to wage its online war. Trolling is turning into a weapon for a postmodern dictatorship like the Kremlin's.

The *Guardian* editor reports 40,000 comments a day by an orchestrated pro-Kremlin campaign of pro-Russia trolling in Ukrainian stories (Gregory 2014) since the start of the crisis in Ukraine. Trolls also create an avalanche of pro-Russian comments whose message is always the same: the good Putin, the bad Poroshenko and the ugly Obama (Butsenko 2014). Trolling is a tool for regime propaganda. Multimodal representations

of trolls at work on the internet convey a strong political message and profound distrust in Putin and his policy of information war.

Trolls are invisible cogs in Putin's propaganda machine; they are his social media warriors, toiling behind a veil of secrecy, anonymity, and assumed identities. Putin's trolls are frequently conceptualized in terms of military metaphors. **Figure 14** (Euromaidan Press, Nov. 2, 2014, *Putin's Troll Army*) is a metaphorical representation of Putin's troll army, marching in the new Russian army uniforms. Extensive trolling is an integral part of the Kremlin's information war.



Putin, a former KGB lieutenant colonel, is a specialist in trolling and covert propaganda war, who gained his experience while working in Berlin for 16 years as a disinformation specialist, running informant networks⁴⁴. Putin's political thought is structured by the conceptual metaphor POLITICS IS WAR. His actions show that he conceives both his domestic and foreign policy in military terms. Putin's work experience combined with his grandiose sense of self is manifest in political permissiveness, and complete disregard for any norms of law or ethics. According to a study of a Pentagon think tank, Putin suffers from Asperger's Syndrome, a form of autism. The study cites work by world autism specialists and movement pattern experts (Malm 2015).

Since 2008, the Kremlin has been expanding political austerity warfare by intensifying its efforts to weaponize information, culture and money. The Kremlin's activities and goals have been exposed by a special analytical report published by the Institute of Modern Russia, New York⁴⁵.

The metaphorical meaning of the verb *to weaponize*⁴⁶ is a neologism; it is used to conceptualize use of information, culture and money as a weapon of war against freedom of information and expression.

The Kremlin has been talking about information "in weaponized terms as a tool to confuse, blackmail, demoralize, subvert and paralyze" (Pomerantsev and Weiss 2014). It has also started using the Russian

⁴⁴ For more on Putin's social media trolling, see Gregory 2014.

⁴⁵ For an analytical view of Putin's aggressive policies, see Pomerantsev and Weiss 2014.

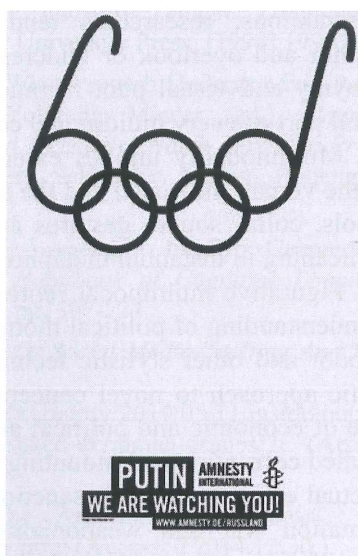
⁴⁶ *To weaponize* – to adapt for use as a weapon of war (direct meaning); e.g., chemicals, explosives, bacilli, lethal plant toxins. The meaning has been registered in dictionaries since 1957. *Merriam-Webster's 11th Collegiate Dictionary*. 2003. The new metaphorical meaning has not been recorded by dictionaries as yet.

Orthodox Church and compatriot organizations abroad as elements of a belligerent foreign policy. The Kremlin has been increasing its budget for new radio channels, the TV channel *Russia Today*, spreading disinformation by trolls and attacking publications and personalities (*ibid.*). With their large Russian-speaking populations, the Baltic States are the EU countries most vulnerable to a Russian information war, as Russian diaspora related NGOs receive considerable funding for their pro-Russia activities.

To sum up, the weaponization of information, culture and money is a vital part of Putin's non-linear war, which combines the above elements with covert and small-scale military operations. I would argue that Putin not only weaponizes information, culture and money: he weaponizes the mind!

The Institute of Modern Russia in New York is a nonprofit, public policy organization, a think tank, researching economic and political developments in Russia. As Pomerantsev and Weiss (2014) point out, the West has no institutional or analytical tools to counteract Putin's information warfare.

At the same time, Putin is not in a position to conceal his dual moral standards and his true motives, while the world is in a position to see, evaluate and judge. *Amnesty International* has published a poster⁴⁷ as a warning to Putin, "We are watching you!" (Figure 15). The poster is a thought-provoking piece of art. It features glasses with five interlaced rings that metonymically stand for the five continents and symbolize world unity. The glasses are foregrounded by their bigger size and position at the top of the poster as a figurative representation of the global eye, watching Putin.



"You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time" (Abraham Lincoln).

⁴⁷ The poster was made for the Olympics in Sochi. Feb. 21, 2014. <http://www.posterposter.org/putin-are-you-watching-by-fons-hickmann/>

6. Conclusion

Analysis of the stylistic use of figurative language on the political stage reveals that multimodality is a powerful mode of figurative meaning construction. Figurative thought determines figurative use in both verbal and visual representation. Multimodal case studies bring out the leading role of metaphor as a pattern of thinking in conceptualization of economic and political austerity measures. In multimodal discourse, metaphor is a major pattern of conceptualization of both austerity measures in an economic crisis and deliberate austerity measures that are politically and ideologically driven. Metaphorical concepts arise as a reflection of global cross-language and cross-cultural phenomena, emerging in both verbal and multimodal discourse.

Metaphor functions together with other stylistic patterns in structuring abstract thought in new figurative instantiations. It incorporates other figurative patterns: metonymy, visual pun, allusion, euphemism, hyperbole and irony, forming figurative networks. When analyzing visual representations, researchers tend to underscore the huge potential of metaphor and overlook or underestimate the stylistic and semantic role of metonymy and visual pun. In practice, metonymy and visual pun form an integral part of every multimodal conceptualization.

Multimodality implies extensive use of other semiotic modes along with the verbal, the visual and the audial. Case studies present use of cultural symbols, color, sound, gestures and image-editing software in creation of new meaning in instantial metaphorical and metonymic conceptualizations.

Figurative multimodal representations of austerity measures promote our understanding of political thought and political events conceptualized by metaphor and other stylistic techniques in political discourse. A cognitive stylistic approach to novel conceptualizations helps us to disclose the true nature of economic and political austerity measures in Russia in the face of unbridled corruption and mounting economic, political and social instability: the actual effects of Putin's sanctions, his crackdown on the media, trolling, information war and weaponizing the mind, all reflected in figurative multimodal representations. Putin's austerity measures demonstrate dual morality and a flagrant contradiction between words and deeds.

REFERENCES

- Vija BEINERTE**, “*Biedu tehnoloģijas: Kā pasargāt apziņu no manipulācijām?*” (Techniques of Intimidation: How to Protect Consciousness from Manipulations?), 2015, <http://m.la.lv/biedu-tehnologijas-ka-pasargat-apzinu-no-manipulacijam/> (Accessed 2015.01.25.).
- Eriks BORMANIS**, “Figurative Aspects of Multimodal Meaning”. In: Ernesta Račienė (ed.), *Language in Difficult Contexts*, Vol. 6, Part 1, Vilnius: Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences, 2014, pp. 39-48.
- Anton BUTSENKO**, *The Sad Life of Putin’s “Troll Army”*, 2014. <http://euromaidanpress.com/2014/11/02/the-sad-life-of-putins-troll-army/> (Accessed 2014.11.26.).
- Jonathan CHARTERIS-BLACK**, *Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, [2005], 2011.
- Jonathan CHARTERIS-BLACK**, *Analysing Political Speeches: Rhetoric, Discourse and Metaphor*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Raymond W. GIBBS**, *The Poetics of Mind: Figurative Thought, Language and Understanding*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1994] 1999,
- Raymond W. GIBBS and Dinara BEITEL**, “What Proverb Understanding Reveals About How People Think”. In: Wolfgang Mieder (ed.), *Cognition, Comprehension, and Communication: A Decade of North American Proverb Studies (1990-2000)*, Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag Hohengehren GmbH, 2003, pp. 109-162.
- Raymond W. GIBBS**, “Idioms and Formulaic Language”. In: Dirk Geeraerts and Hubert Cuyckens (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 397-724.
- Paul R. GREGORY**, *Inside Putin’s Campaign Of Social Media Trolling And Faked Ukrainian Crimes*, 2014. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/paulroderickgregory/2014/05/11/inside-putins-campaign-of-social-media-trolling-and-faked-ukrainian-crimes/2/> (Accessed 2014.11.17.).
- William JAMES**, “Talks to Teachers: The Associations of Ideas”, 1999, <http://www.uky.edu/~eushe2/Pajares/tt9.html> (Accessed 2014.12.30.).
- George LAKOFF**, *The Political Mind: Why You Can’t Understand 21st-Century American Politics with an 18th-Century Brain*, New York: Viking 2008.
- George LAKOFF and Mark JOHNSON**, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, [1980], 2003,
- George LAKOFF and Mark TURNER**, *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989.

Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Students, Oxford: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2002.

Sara MALM, "Vladimir Putin was diagnosed as having Asperger's syndrome by expert working for Pentagon think-tank, report reveals", 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2941009/Vladimir-Putin-diagnosed-having-Asperger-s-syndrome-expert-working-Pentagon-think-tank-report-reveals.html> (Accessed 2015.02.07.).

Merriam-Webster's 11th Collegiate Dictionary (2003), <http://www.merriam-webstercollegiate.com/> (Accessed 2014.12.10.).

Wolfgang MIEDER, "'Let Us Have Faith that Right Makes Might': Proverbial Rhetoric in Decisive Moments of American Politics". In: Wolfgang Mieder (ed.), *Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship*, Vol. 25, Burlington, Vermont: The University of Vermont, 2008, pp. 319-352.

Wolfgang MIEDER, "'Laissez faire à Georges', and 'Let George do it': A Case of Paremiological Polygenesis". In: *Paremia*, 22, 2013, pp. 17-29.

Anita NACISCIONE, "Sustainability of Phraseological Image in Discourse". In: *International Journal of English Studies: New Advances in Phraseological Research* 6 (1), 2006, pp. 43-56.

Anita NACISCIONE, *Stylistic Use of Phraseological Units in Discourse*, Amsterdam et al.: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2010.

Anita NACISCIONE, "A Cognitive Approach to Translating Phraseological Terms". In: Joanna Szerszunowicz, (ed.). *Focal Issues of Phraseological Studies: Research on Phraseology in Europe and Asia*, Vol. 1, Białystok, Poland: University of Białystok Publishing House, 2011, pp. 269-290.

Anita NACISCIONE, "Multimodal Representation of Figurative Thought". In: *Language in Different Contexts* Ernesta Račienė (ed.), Vol. 6 (1), Vilnius: Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences, 2014, pp. 121-129.

Troy R. E. PADDOCK, *Creating the Russian Peril: Education, the Public Sphere, and National Identity in Imperial Germany, 1890-1914*, New York: Camden House, 2010.

Elisabeth PIIRAINEN, *Widespread Idioms in Europe and Beyond: Toward a Lexicon of Common Figurative Units*, New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2012.

Peter POMERANTSEV and Michael WEISS, "The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money. A Special Report", New York: The Institute of Modern Russia, 2014 (Accessed 2014.12.29.).

Arthur S. REBER, *Dictionary of Psychology*, London: Penguin Books, [1985], 1995.

Andrey REZNIKOV, "From Mochit to Koshmarit: Some Observations about Russian Political Language, 1999-2008". In: Kevin McKenna (ed.). *The Proverbial "Pied Piper": A Festschrift Volume of Essays in Honor of Wolfgang Mieder*

on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday, New York: Peter Lang, 2009, pp. 87-94.

Andrey REZNIKOV, “Rudyard Kipling and Russian Presidential Elections”. In: Grandl, Christian and Kevin McKenna (eds). “*Bis dat, qui cito dat*” – *Gegengabe in Paremiology, Folklore, Language, and Literature. Honoring Wolfgang Mieder on His Seventieth Birthday*. In cooperation with Elisabeth Piirainen & Andreas Nolte, Frankfurt am Main *et al.*: Peter Lang, 2015.

The Oxford English Dictionary Oxford: Oxford University Press. <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english>, 2013 (Accessed 09.12.2014.).

Russian Dolls, a video, Paris: Amnesty International France, 2010. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E0qzKx-UmJg> (Accessed 2014.09.12.).

Richard TRIM, *Metaphor Networks*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Richard TRIM, *Metaphor and the Historical Evolution of Conceptual Mapping*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Bartlett J. WHITING, *Proverbs, Sentences and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings Mainly Before 1500*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968.

PERMISSIONS

The author and publisher wish to thank *The Economist* for permission to use the cover illustrations “Over the cliff?” from December 15, 2012 (Figure 1), and “The triumph of Vladimir Putin” from February 1, 2014 (Figure 5); *Amnesty International* for permission to use frames from the video *Russian Dolls*, 2010 (Figures 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13), and the visual representation of the poster “Putin, we are watching you!”, 2014 (Figure 15); the Latvian caricaturist Gatis Šļūka for permission to use his caricature *Reņģēdēja dzīves līnija* (EN Life Line of an Atlantic Herring Eater), 2010 (Figure 2); the Danish caricaturist Niels Bo Bojesen for permission to use his caricature *Griechenland: Den Gürtel enger schnallen*, 2011 (Figure 4); the Latvian magazine *IR* for permission to use the visual representation of the cover page from July 14, 2014, “Putina badastreiks” (EN Putin’s Hunger Strike), Figure 7; and the *Euromaidan Press*, Ukraine, for permission to use the illustration *Putin’s Troll Army* from November 2, 2014 (Figure 14).