A tale of two swamps: Transformations of a metaphorical frame in online partisan media

Christian Burgers [a],[*], Melanie Jong Tjien Fa [b], Anneke de Graaf [c]

[a] Department of Communication Science, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands
[b] Department of Journalism Studies, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands
[c] Department of Communication and Information Studies, Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands

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ABSTRACT

Politicians often use metaphors to frame their political agendas, such as President Trump's promise to "*drain the swamp*." We examine how such metaphorical frames are transformed in partisan media (conservative, liberal). Results demonstrate that the "drain the swamp" metaphor is used in three ways: (1) without transformation, to paraphrase, explain and/or evaluate a statement by a political actor, (2) with transformation of the target, which occurs either through narrowing or recasting and (3) with transformation of the source. These source transformations follow narrative rules constrained by story grammar, and entail the transformation of (a) an event into a state, (b) changing a specific event, (c) adding characters and/or objects, (d) an alternative ending and/or (e) mixed metaphor. We show why and how some strategies are used by both partisan groups, while others are used by one group only, resulting in a different meaning of the same metaphor across partisan media.

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1. Introduction

Metaphorical frames are important tools in political discourse (Lakoff, 1996/2002). Politicians and other political actors ('political partisans') often use political metaphors that reflect their ideology in political debates (Lakoff, 1996/2002) and thus raise the public's awareness for their positions through the use of metaphor (Musolff, 2016). Many studies in political communication focus on political partisans' choices for specific metaphors over other, competing metaphors (Ahrens and Lee, 2009; Cienki, 2004; Lakoff, 1996/2002). These studies focus on the efforts of political partisans to make sure that their metaphor (rather than a political opponent's metaphor) is used to discuss important political issues.

However, in cases in which a specific metaphor is already dominant in the discourse, it may be difficult for political partisans to place a different, competing metaphor on the political agenda. In such cases, political partisans can use other communicative strategies such as extending (Burnes, 2011; Crisp, 2008) and/or subverting (Musolff, 2017a; Piata, 2016) existing metaphors, depending on their political position in relation to the metaphor. This means that, in addition to coining new metaphors, political partisans can change existing metaphors in creative and subversive ways. Thereby, they can appropriate specific metaphors for their own ideological goals. Such changes can reflect incremental change in metaphors, in which existing meanings are re-negotiated (Burgers, 2016).

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* Corresponding author. Department of Communication Science, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, De Boelelaan 1081, 1081 HV, Amsterdam, the Netherlands.
E-mail address: c.f.burgers@vu.nl (C. Burgers).

At the same time, the potential patterns under which political metaphors can change are not yet clear. Therefore, the goal of the current paper is uncovering such patterns through a structured approach towards changes within one specific political metaphor. We focus on a metaphor that has been used across the US partisan divide by both conservative and liberal media. This is the DRAIN THE SWAMP (DTS)[1] metaphor, during and immediately after the election of Donald J. Trump as US President. Our analysis demonstrates that appropriation of this metaphor by both conservatives and liberals follows a number of specific patterns.

1.1. Metaphorical framing in political communication

Metaphors are defined as "cross-domain mappings" between a source domain and a target domain (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980/2003). For instance, as used by Trump, the DTS metaphor targets morality in the US political climate, by suggesting a connection between the ecosystem of a swamp (source domain) and Washington, DC (target domain). Washington, DC, in turn, is a metonymy representing the three branches of US government (legislative, executive, judicial). In Trump's version, the DTS metaphor contains a hero protagonist ('political outsider Trump') who strives to achieve a certain goal ('draining the swamp'), thereby solving the issue of bad governance in US politics. Because of these narrative elements, the DTS metaphor can be classified as a story metaphor (Musolff, 2016; Ritchie, 2017). However, the 'original' DTS metaphor is also relatively abstract and vague, leaving various elements of the metaphorical story unspecified.

According to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980/2003), metaphorical words in discourse ('linguistic metaphors') typically imply comparisons between different conceptual domains ('conceptual metaphors'). CMT proposes that conceptual metaphors are crucial devices in reasoning about societal topics, as they often include a specific ideological stance. For instance, the DTS metaphor negatively evaluates Washington politics. Therefore, various scholars have proposed that such metaphors can be seen as specific types of frames (Burgers et al., 2016; Lakoff, 1996/2002; Semino et al., 2018). Under the classic definition of Entman (1993, p. 52), framing means "select[ing] some aspects of a perceived reality and mak[ing] them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described." The DTS metaphor as used by Trump meets these criteria by metaphorically alluding to the political issue of bad governance, by implying a problem definition (in that Washington, DC resembles a swamp), a moral evaluation (in that this is undesirable) and a treatment recommendation (in that the swamp needs to be 'drained' by an outsider). Thereby, this metaphor contains a specific framing of the issue of governance in the US capital.

Political metaphors are not immutable, but change over time (Burgers, 2016). Metaphor change can occur in one of two ways: (1) through fundamental change in which a specific metaphor is replaced by another metaphor and (2) through incremental change in which the meaning of a specific metaphor is re-negotiated. The discourse career of the metaphor 'Britain at the heart of Europe' (Musolff, 2017b) is an example of the latter. When introduced by British Prime Minister John Major in 1991, it started out as a pro-EU metaphor, meaning that being at the heart of Europe was something positive. Over time, the metaphor was appropriated by British anti-EU politicians who subverted the metaphor through stating that the European heart was diseased or dead. As a result, the 'Britain at the heart of Europe' metaphor, which was introduced as pro-EU in the 1990s, played an important part in the rhetoric of the leave campaign in the 2016 Brexit referendum (Musolff, 2017b).

In the example of 'Britain at the heart of Europe', political partisans were successful in re-negotiating a metaphorical frame and changing its valence in public discourse (from pro-EU to anti-EU). Furthermore, a metaphorical frame can not only show incremental change over time within the same discourse community, but can also transform across different (language and cultural) communities at the same point in time (Chilton and Ilyn, 1993). For instance, various studies have suggested that online discussions often happen in 'echo chambers', in which likeminded people share and discuss political information from their political perspective only (e.g., Jacobsen et al., 2016; Shin and Thorson, 2017). The goal of the current study is uncovering the patterns through which such political proponents and opponents can appropriate a metaphorical frame that is dominant in a specific discourse. To achieve this goal, we focus on the DTS metaphor in US political discourse.

The DTS metaphor compares Washington political institutions to a swamp, which fits within a larger structure of metaphors of morality. Swamps may evoke images of rot, decay, and dirt. Presenting bad government through the metaphorical source domain of rot, decay and dirt has a long history, as for instance exemplified in the quote "something rotten in the State of Denmark" (Hamlet, Act I, Scene IV) and is common across different political systems (e.g., Charteris-Black, 2011; Negro, 2015). In addition, the physical smell of decay alone can make people more suspicious of what is being described (Lee and Schwarz, 2012). Furthermore, broader metaphors of morality in which dirt represents bad morals, and cleanness and purity represent good morals are widespread as well (Lee and Schwarz, 2010; Yu, 2015; Zhong and House, 2014). Thus, the metaphorical scenario of the DTS metaphor can be placed within these larger metaphorical perspectives on morality.

Nonetheless, the DTS metaphor also has a distinct local character, by referring to a well-known story that the city of Washington, DC was constructed on a swamp (Widmer, 2017), although some classify this as an urban myth (Hawkins, 2014). The DTS metaphor has a long history in US public discourse. For instance, in an 1913 interview with the New York Times, labor organizer Mother Jones already used the DTS metaphor to talk about labor relations. In the 1970s, the phrase 'drain the swamp'

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[1] Following conventions in the metaphor literature (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980/2003), conceptual metaphors are written in small capital letters.

was used in informal office culture to contrast the dilemma between solving short-term problems and achieving long-term goals.[2] More recently, both Republicans like Ronald Reagan and Democrats like Nancy Pelosi used this metaphor in their election campaigns prior to 2016 (LaPira and Holyoke, 2017; Widmer, 2017). Presidential candidate Donald J. Trump first mentioned the DTS metaphor in a campaign speech on 17 October 2016 (Widmer, 2017). Through this metaphor, Trump presented himself as an outsider who — when elected — would take on corruption in Washington, DC.

The DTS metaphor has since become a symbol of both support for and opposition to the Trump presidency. For example, a political candidate supported by Trump styled a campaign rally on the theme of 'drain the swamp', including a fake swamp with plastic alligators (Jacobs and Smith, 2017). By contrast, a Facebook blog that was highly critical of Trump was labeled 'Swamp Watch' (https://www.facebook.com/swampwatch/). This makes the DTS metaphor a good case for studying how partisans from both ends of the political spectrum transform the same metaphorical frame at the same point in time.

2. Method

2.1. Corpus selection

Our data come from two types of partisan media (Flaxman et al., 2016): two online (right-wing) conservative platforms (Breitbart.com, Newsmax.com) and two online (left-wing) liberal platforms (HuffingtonPost.com, Salon.com). Articles were sampled from the period between 17 October 2016 (Trump's first use of the metaphor) and 17 March 2017 (five months later). This timeframe contains both Trump's election (on 8 November 2016) and inauguration (on 20 January 2017). We retrieved all articles from the four platforms that mentioned both 'Trump' and 'swamp', leading to a total corpus of 694 articles, of which 306 were conservative (165 from Breitbart, 141 from Newsmax) and 388 were liberal (295 from Huffington Post, 93 from Salon).

2.2. Analysis

Next, we analyzed all references to the DTS metaphor, following the methodology of Critical Metaphor Analysis (Charteris-Black, 2004). This method comprises three steps: (1) identification, (2) interpretation, and (3) explanation. In the identification phase, we established whether the 'swamp' reference was indeed metaphorical, rather than a reference to an actual swamp. In the interpretation phase, we explored, for each reference from the corpus, if and how the DTS metaphor was transformed. The explanation phase entailed categorizing the specific transformations into sub-strategies.

3. Results

Our data show how the DTS metaphor was used in three distinct ways: (1) without transformation, (2) with transformation of the target and (3) with transformation of the source. Each type of usage is further characterized by a number of sub-strategies. In the following, we describe each type of usage (and sub-strategy) and illustrate these with examples from our corpus data.

3.1. No transformation: paraphrase, explanation, evaluation

In various cases, all four platforms referred to the DTS metaphor without transforming the metaphor. Such cases were classified into three main groups, in which authors (1) paraphrased a statement by a public actor, (2) explained the metaphor's meaning to their readers and/or (3) added an evaluation to the metaphor.

First, a mention of the DTS metaphor involved a form of direct or indirect reported speech. Direct reported speech describes what was literally said, through a direct quotation (Harry, 2014). A good example is (1), which exemplifies how outlets mainly reported the fact that Trump or one of his supporters discussed draining the swamp:

(1)   *Trump proposes government ethics reforms: "It is time to drain the swamp in Washington, D.C."* (Breitbart, 17/10/2016).

While (1) contains a direct quote, these paraphrased forms could also involve indirect reported speech. Indirect reported speech involves paraphrasing a public actor's words without verbatim quotations placed within quotation marks (Harry, 2014), like (2), which mentions:

(2)   *In the field of energy and climate, President Trump has said that there is a massive swamp that needs draining* (Breitbart, 06/02/2017).

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[2]   According to Dundes and Pagter (1987, p. 91), an early usage could be traced back to the accounting offices of the University of California, Berkeley in 1971, in which a notice was found that read: "*The objective of all dedicated company employees should be to thoroughly analyze all situations, anticipate all problems prior to their occurrence, have answers for these problems, and move swiftly to solve these problems when called upon... However, when you are up to you ass in alligators, it is difficult to remind yourself that your initial objective was to drain the swamp*".

Example (2) provides a summary of the words uttered by Trump at some time, without placing these within quotation marks. This indicates that (2) contains a paraphrase of Trump's words. Finally, some examples are mixed, which means that they combine both direct and indirect reported speech (Harry, 2014), such as:

(3)   *Trump [...] tweeting that his administration will "always be trying to" empty the swamp* (Huffington Post, 22/12/2016).

Example (3) contains both a quotation ascribed to Trump and a reference to the DTS metaphor. However, (3) does not mention the original wording of the metaphor. Instead, the author of (3) replaced one word of the metaphor (the verb 'drain') with a synonym (the verb 'empty'). Thereby, (3) contains an example of indirect paraphrase through a synonym for one of the words of the original metaphor, combined with a Trump quote.

The next reference type without transformation is explanation. Especially in the first month of our corpus (when the DTS metaphor was relatively novel to discourse on the Trump campaign), authors explained the metaphor's meaning, as in (4) referring to:

(4)   *a speech proclaiming [Trump's] intent to "drain the swamp" which is our nation's capitol [sic]* (Huffington Post, 01/11/2016).

The author of (4) added a clause explaining that 'swamp' referred to Washington, DC, which could indicate that − at the time of publication − the author could not yet assume all readers to be familiar with the DTS metaphor.

The third reference type without transformation was adding an evaluation to a mention of the DTS metaphor. This evaluation could either be positive, indicating that the author believed Trump would be successful in fulfilling his campaign promise, as in (5), or negative, indicating that the author believed that Trump would be or had been unsuccessful in delivering on his promise, as in (6):

(5)   *Debbie Dooley: Once in a lifetime opportunity to drain the D.C. swamp* (Breitbart, 26/10/2016).
(6)   *[Trump] will drain the swamp. Right. Does anyone think for a minute that Trump can fulfill almost any of his vacuous policy position pronouncements? For the sake of my country, and as a proud American, I do wish him the best, but I think not* (Huffington Post, 14/11/2016).

Examples (5) and (6) both contain a summary of the DTS promise combined with the author's evaluation of that promise, which is either positive or negative. Example (5) is the header of an opinion piece by Debbie Dooley, one of the founders of the Tea Party, published less than two weeks before the 2016 Presidential election. In (5), Dooley refers to the DTS metaphor in positive terms, meaning that she agreed with Trump's campaign promise, and saw the election as an opportunity to realize this promise. By contrast, (6) comes from a liberal opinion piece in which the author expresses support for the sentiment of Trump's campaign promise, but also skepticism that Trump will be able to realize this campaign promise. In cases like (5) and (6), the authors do not transform the metaphorical scenario, but mainly summarize and evaluate the scenario as statements from political actors.

3.2. Specifying the swamp: narrowing and recasting

The first group of strategies reflecting changes made to the DTS metaphor as introduced by Trump involves transformation of the target. The original metaphor referred to Washington, DC in a generic way, without differentiating between specific branches of government (executive, legislative and/or judicial). Target transformations change this referent of Washington, D.C., through either narrowing or recasting the target. Narrowing implies zooming in on specific governmental branches and/or actors, as in (7), (8) and (9):

(7)   *Trump already draining the judicial swamps* (Newsmax, 14/02/2016).
(8)   *Ex-Federal Prosecutor Sidney Powell: Trump needs to drain DOJ swamp* (Newsmax, 17/02/2016).
(9)   *Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus, who basically is the swamp that Trump talked about draining* (Huffington Post, 15/11/2016).

The authors of (7), (8) and (9) narrow the original metaphor, by referring to a specific branch of government as in (7), which refers to the judicial branch, to a specific department as in (8), which mentions the Department of Justice (DOJ), or to a specific individual as in (9). Subsequently, (7), (8) and (9) narrow the metaphor to specific sub-groups or individuals. That is, while the original DTS metaphor mainly targets the superordinate group of the US government, (7) and (8) identify and focus on specific subgroups nested within this larger superordinate group (Hornsey and Hogg, 2000). Example (9) narrows even further by pointing to an individual politician. In these ways, transformations of the target make the DTS metaphor more specific.

Another transformation of the target is recasting the original metaphor, with authors applying the DTS metaphor to political institutions other than the US federal government, as in (10) and (11):

(10)   *It will take a bold use of U.S. power to drain the ultimate swamp, the United Nations* (Newsmax, 27/12/2016).
(11)   *if Washington, D.C. is the swamp, then we should start referring to Westminster as the bog* (Breitbart, 18/11/2016).

Like (7)–(9), examples (10) and (11) keep the narrative structure of the DTS metaphor intact, in that they designate a specific political institution − like the United Nations (example 10) or the UK government (example 11) − as a metaphorical 'swamp' that needs to be 'drained' by political outsiders. Example (11) also recasts the DTS metaphor from a cultural perspective, by referring to a 'bog', a type of wetlands that is more common in the UK than a swamp.

In sum, transformations of the target like narrowing and recasting keep the original metaphor in place, but apply the metaphor to different political institutions compared to its original instantiation. It is also noteworthy that this rhetorical strategy is mostly used by conservative media who support Trump's campaign and presidency. This specific strategy was relatively rare in liberal media, with exceptions like (9), which uses the DTS metaphor to critique President-elect Trump by singling out the installation of Preibus as chief of staff.

3.3. Transforming the metaphorical narrative

The examples discussed so far mainly kept the structure of the original DTS metaphor intact. However, more radical transformations occur through source-domain changes. Such transformations are mostly found in liberal media, as ways to reframe the metaphor from being supportive to being critical of Trump. These source-domain transformations build on the structure of the DTS metaphor. In Trump's version, the DTS metaphor contains a hero protagonist ('political outsider Trump') who strives to achieve a certain goal ('draining the swamp'). Thereby, the DTS metaphor meets the minimal definition of a narrative which includes "at least one character who experiences at least one event" (de Graaf et al., 2016, p. 90), making it a story metaphor (Musolff, 2016; Ritchie, 2017). This also means that the DTS metaphor should follow some basic rules on the development of stories.

Story grammar (Mandler and Johnson, 1977) proposes that a story contains a setting and an event structure. A setting starts with a state, which is either an external state of affairs in the (story) world or an internal state of affairs (e.g., specific thoughts and plans of the protagonist). An event is a change of a state, such as a specific action. Events are structured into episodes with a beginning (e.g., character 'Trump' intends to drain the swamp), a middle (in which the act of draining is performed) and an ending (in which the swamp is successfully drained or not). Various episodes can be joined to form a larger story (e.g., a second episode could detail what happens after the draining). Such stories can also be complicated by adding characters who function as helpers or as antagonists (see Bal, 2009).

Our results show that the source-domain changes occur within this narrative structure. In terms of story grammar (Mandler and Johnson, 1977), the original DTS metaphor contained one specific event, in which the character Trump performed the action of draining a swamp. Changes to this simple narrative structure we found in our corpus are: (1) changing the metaphorical event into a state, (2) changing the specific event, (3) adding additional characters and/or objects, (4) introducing an alternative ending, and (5) mixed metaphor. We now turn to each of these changes.

3.3.1. From event to state

A first narrative transformation changes the event in the original metaphor into a state, as in:

(12)   *[Trump] is the swamp* (Huffington Post, 08/11/2016).
(13)   *[Trump's] cronies are the swamp, and he's the Swamp Thing* (Huffington Post, 23/01/2017).

Rather than seeing 'Trump' and 'the swamp' as two separate entities as in the original metaphor, (12) and (13) recast the metaphor by taking out the action. In both cases, the story included in the original DTS metaphor is replaced by a non-narrative direct metaphor in the form of A = B (Barnden, 2015) in which an explicit comparison is made between a source ('swamp') and a target element ('Trump').

Example (12) contains the most straightforward direct metaphor, by replacing the word 'drain' (which implies an event) with the word 'is' (which implies a state). Example (13) contains two direct metaphors, in which Trump's supporters (who are negatively labelled as 'cronies') are compared to a swamp, and Trump is directly compared to Swamp Thing. In order to understand the latter metaphor, readers need to know that Swamp Thing is a fictional comic-book hero. According to Wikipedia, the Swamp Thing character "fights to protect his swamp home […] from various supernatural or terrorist threats". Readers with this background knowledge can thus infer that the author of (13) described Trump as a resident of the metaphorical swamp rather than an outsider, and that the author of (13) expected Trump to take active measures to 'protect' rather than 'drain' the 'swamp'. Nevertheless, examples (12) and (13) no longer contain an event. Through this transformation, the metaphor loses its narrative element, and shifts in valence (from Trump support to Trump opposition).

A second way to transform the event into a state is by swapping narrative perspective. The original DTS metaphor is presented from the perspective of Trump. Yet, it is also possible that the perspective of other characters is adopted, as in:

(14)   *That poor swamp, just sitting there all undrained and everything* (Huffington Post, 30/11/2016).

In examples like (12) and (13), Trump is the character from whose perspective the metaphorical narrative is told. However, in (14), the perspective shifts from Trump to the swamp itself. Thereby, (14) contains a personification (Dorst, 2011) in that human-like traits (like sitting) are attributed to the non-human entity of the swamp. At the same time, (14) implies a state

because it contains no reference that the swamp character will change their sitting position. In addition, (14) requests the reader to pity the human-like 'swamp' because s/he has not been drained. The combination of transforming the swamp into a pitiable character in stasis suggests both criticism of Trump's appointments and a belief that little will change in the near future. In this way, (14) contains both a shift in structure (from event to state) and a shift in perspective (from Trump to the swamp) which together serve to subvert the original DTS metaphor.

3.3.2. Changing the event

In addition to changing the metaphorical event into a state, authors can transform the metaphorical story in other ways. Another basic transformation lies in changing the event itself, for instance by replacing the action of draining with a contrary action, as in:

(15)   *Instead of "draining the swamp" in Washington, Trump is turning on the fire hose to flood it* (Huffington Post, 19/12/2016).
(16)   *Trump is stocking, not draining the swamp* (Huffington Post, 06/02/2017).

Examples (15) and (16) not only metaphorically propose that Trump is unsuccessful in delivering on his campaign promise to 'drain the swamp', but even suggest that he does the exact opposite of what he promised. Furthermore, (15) and (16) assign active agency to Trump in this process, through expressions like 'turning on the fire house' and 'stocking'.

Like in (14), authors also performed this operation while shifting narrative perspective, as in:

(17)   *Swamp re-swamped* (Huffington Post, 09/12/2016).

Example (17) shifts perspective focus from Trump to the swamp, through an ambiguity that can be explained in two ways. First, we argue that (17) changes the specific event through using the word 'swamp' as a transitive verb. According to the Macmillan Dictionary of American English, one of the meanings of this verb is "to fill or cover something with water". In that way, the verb 'swamp' is an antonym for 'drain', offering Trump opponents the opportunity to subvert the original frame. Second, it is also possible that the author of (17) used the verb 're-swamp' as a grammatical metaphor, deriving from the noun 'swamp' (see Halliday, 1998; Ritchie and Zhu, 2015). In this reading, the grammatical metaphor would go beyond filling with water, and could be interpreted as "becoming a swamp again".

Expressions like (15)–(17) suggest that the authors believed Trump to take specific actions that were the exact opposite of his original campaign promise. In these ways, the DTS metaphor remains a single-event story, but the nature of the event changes dramatically. These changes thus reverse the valence of the original DTS metaphor, making it highly critical of Trump.

3.3.3. Adding characters and/or objects

A third strategy to transform the source domain is by adding new characters and/or objects. These can serve as a further specification of both the metaphor and of the position taken by the author. Please note that the first two strategies of 'changing the event into a state' or 'changing the event' were mainly found among media critical of Trump. This third strategy, however, was used both in media supportive and in media critical of Trump. Nevertheless, the source—target relations of the added characters and/or objects were different among the two media types:

(18)   *Swamp draining will expose corrupt climate crocodiles: [...] Al Gore finally has something real to be alarmed about [...]. Responding to President-elect Trump's pledge to drain the Washington, D.C. swamp of corruption, their Dec. 5 meeting must have tracked lots of muddy footprints onto plush Trump Tower carpets. The discussion reportedly delved into murky science waters of manmade disaster concerning an inconvenient croc* (Newsmax, 12/12/2016).
(19)   *Instead of DRAINING the Swamp as Trump "promised," he is filling his Administration with the most deplorable of the crocodiles, alligators, sharks and piranhas he can possibly find amongst the Washington Elite* (Huffington Post, 04/12/2016).

Both examples add characters by introducing animals associated with swamps such as crocodiles, alligators and piranhas. Typically, such animals are presented as antagonists and refer to political actors with whom the author disagrees. As a result, examples from conservative and liberal platforms differ in which political figures are portrayed as swamp animals: where examples from conservative platforms primarily target liberal political figures, examples from liberal platforms mainly target conservatives. For instance, (18) comes from a conservative website and designates Democrat Al Gore and other environmentalists as swamp animals, while (19) comes from a liberal website and designates Republican members of Trump's Administration as swamp animals. Furthermore, cases like (18) not only contain explicit references to swamp animals, but also contain additional references to a swamp and its inhabitants through references like 'muddy food prints' and 'murky waters'. In addition, authors sometimes added intertextual references to the adapted metaphors, such as 'inconvenient croc',[3] which references 'An Inconvenient Truth', Al Gore's documentary film on climate change.

Examples like (18) and (19) present specific real-life (groups of) people as animals, and are thus examples of dehumanizing metaphors (see also Musolff, 2015). The denial of human elements by referring to animals is defined as a specific type of

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[3] Croc is an informal shorthand for 'crocodile'.

dehumanization known as 'animalistic dehumanization' (Haslam et al., 2008). This means that humans are ascribed bestial characteristics such as irrationality (rather than rationality) and immorality (rather than moral sensitivity). Dehumanization can have very negative direct effects on its targets (Bastian and Haslam, 2011) and is, unfortunately, one of the ways through which both conservatives and liberals frame their political opponents (Crawford et al., 2013).

Yet, authors can also to choose to add other characters and/or objects within the source domain, such as:

(20)   *[Trump] promised to drain the swamp, and he's coming into a city that has a lot of park rangers for that swamp so it's going to be a challenge* (Breitbart, 29/12/2016).

Example (20) introduces park rangers as new characters in the source domain, who are presented as antagonists wanting to preserve the metaphorical swamp. This example references a real-life controversy on whether preserving wetlands is positive or negative (see LaPira and Holyoke, 2017). In December 2016, ecologist Adam Rosenblatt for instance published an op-ed in the *Washington Post*, arguing that wetlands have many advantages, and that draining a swamp can have devastating ecological consequences. He supported his argument through the example of the Florida Everglades, which were drained in the second half of the 19th century to make way for farming land. However, within a few years, the drained Everglades land suffered from groundwater depletion, and was barren and dry. Rosenblatt thus argued that the DTS metaphor was "lazy" and "inept", and should be avoided. By negatively evaluating park rangers as environmental protectors, the author of (20) also references this real-life debate about preserving wetlands. Nevertheless, and in contrast to (18)–(19), example (20) does not contain dehumanization, making it a more constructive way of introducing an opponent into the source-domain schema of the metaphor.

3.3.4. Alternative ending

In story grammar, one or more specific events can form an episode with a clear ending (Mandler and Johnson, 1977). The original DTS metaphor implies an ending in which the swamp is emptied of its swamp-like features. This ending is not well specified, enabling critics to rewrite it, as in:

(21)   *I voted for Clinton […] primarily as a means of attempting to stop Trump from creating a billionaire theme park out of his drained swamp* (Huffington Post, 06/02/2017).
(22)   *"But wasn't [Trump] going to 'drain the swamp' in Washington?" you ask.*
        Good question. He actually did drain the swamp!
        And out from the murky depths of that gloomy quagmire rose a bridge — a CEO's bridge […]
        Never again shall titans of industry need to cross this dingy swamp to the White House on the backs of their swimming servants!
        (Huffington Post, 09/12/2016).

Unlike other metaphorical transformations critical of Trump, examples (21) and (22) start from the assumption that, in the metaphorical story, Trump was successful in draining the swamp. Yet, they subvert the original metaphor by adding a second event (the creation of a billionaire theme park or the emergence of a CEO's bridge) emphasizing negative and/or unforeseen consequences resulting from the draining. In that way, the authors of (21)–(22) undermine Trump while simultaneously acknowledging that he delivered on his campaign promise.

3.3.5. Mixed metaphor

Another way to transform the source domain is through mixing metaphors (Gibbs, 2016; Kimmel, 2010), which means that two or more metaphors are combined within one frame, as in:

(23)   *Trump is going to send his tanks into the swamp from Day One* (Breitbart, 03/01/2017).
(24)   *The American people have descended into warring tribes. […] If Trump wants to "drain the swamp" and burn down the house, they are eager to give him a lighter* (Salon, 04/11/2016).

Both (23) and (24) introduce at least one element to the frame that does not belong to either the target domain of US politics or to the source domain of swamps. In (23), this is the physical object of a tank. In (24), the DTS metaphor is combined with two other metaphors: (a) the American public as warring tribes and (b) the US as a house that can be burnt down. Such frames thus combine elements from at least two different source domains, leading to a blend of the different source domains (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002). In cases like (23) or (24), these source domains are seemingly contradictory through placing a tank in a swamp (which could sink into the swamp) or through combining water (*swamp*) with fire (*burn down*, *lighter*). Nevertheless, this blend remains comprehensible for readers.

Authors can also create a mixed metaphor through intertextual references, as in:

(25)   *Far from "draining the swamp", Donald Trump has — like the old Testament God — been raining down hard on us for 40 days and 40 nights, while inviting a few kleptocrats, billionaires, and white nationalists onto his Arc [sic]* (Huffington Post, 28/02/2017).

Content-wise, (25) is similar to (15) by assigning active agency to Trump in a process in which the swamp gets filled rather than drained. Yet, the two examples also differ: (15) communicates this proposition directly, while (25) ties the DTS metaphor to the Biblical story of Noah's Ark (Genesis 6:9-9:17). In the mixed metaphor of (25), Trump takes on two character roles as he is portrayed both as the Old Testament God (through a direct comparison) and as Noah (by referring to 'his Ark'). Some of Trump's supporters take on the role of the animals saved onto the Ark, while the American public (referred to as 'us') are described as the people punished to die in the flood. Thereby, the liberal author criticized Trump through evoking a well-known Biblical story.

Yet, intertextual references were not necessarily restrained to religious stories or prose, but referred to poetry as well, as in:

(26)   *I saw the worst candidate of any generation*
         elected by a minority, lying shouting tweeting,
         dragging our poor nation into the swampiest of backlashes
         with a hostile takeover of democracy, […]
         who vowed to "drain the swamp" of political corruption
         but once elected by less than a quarter of those
         who could vote and by 3 million less than who did
         vote began assembling a cast of the richest most
         ethically-challenged figures ever to crawl out of swamps towards Washington,
         who just happened to have donated to him (Huffington Post, 01/02/2017).

The author of (26) evoked Part I of Allen Ginsberg's (1956/1959) poem *Howl*, in which Ginsberg denounced the forces of capitalism and conformity. Example (26) references the poem through word play on *Howl's* opening line ("*I saw the best minds of my generation*"), through various lines starting from the base word 'who', and through the article's title ("*Inaugurhowl*", which phonetically combines '*Howl*' with the word 'inaugural'). But (26) also changes *Howl*, which originally constituted praise of society's outcasts, into an explicit critique of the country's most powerful elected official. Example (26) contains a basic premise in which the author predicted Trump to be unable to drain the swamp as in (6), and a dehumanization of Trump's Cabinet as swamp animals as in (19). Nevertheless, through parodying Ginsberg's *Howl*, the author set himself up as a staunch contemporary counterculture critic of US politics.

4. Discussion and conclusion

The goal of the current study was presenting an overview of the patterns with which a metaphorical frame is changed by both political supporters and opponents in partisan media. Our analysis reveals three major ways of usage: (1) without transformation, (2) transformations of the target, and (3) transformations of the source.

Uses of the metaphorical frame without transformation include paraphrasing, explaining and/or evaluating the metaphorical frame as a public statement by a political actor. The strategies of paraphrasing and explaining are mostly used to inform readers that a political actor used a specific metaphorical frame to discuss a political policy in a specific setting. By contrast, the strategy of evaluation means that a partisan author added their evaluation to the metaphor, which is typically positive for political supporters and negative for political opponents. Thus, the strategies without transformations of paraphrasing and explaining mainly serve to inform the audience, and are used by political proponents and opponents. The evaluation strategy is also used by both groups, yet the valence of the evaluation differed depending on the author's political orientation.

Transformations of the target and/or the source were also often conducted along partisan lines. Target transformations included narrowing and recasting. The narrowing strategy meant zooming on a subsection of the 'original' metaphor's target. By contrast, the recasting strategy involved applying the same policy frame to targets different from the original metaphor. These target-transformation strategies mainly retained the structure of the 'original' metaphor. Most cases of target transformation (with some exceptions like example 9) were used by political supporters of the 'original' metaphor.

Source transformations occurred in a number of ways. The DTS metaphor comprised a narrative, and the potential for source-domain transformation was constrained by narrative rules proposed by story grammar (Mandler and Johnson, 1977). The 'original' metaphor was a basic single-event narrative containing one character performing one action. Patterns of change included (1) changing the event into a state, (2) changing the event, (3) introducing additional characters and/or objects (4) introducing an alternative ending and (5) mixing metaphor. Thus, the nature of these transformations is often connected to the basic building blocks of narratives (Bal, 2009; Mandler and Johnson, 1977).

Our analysis also revealed that political proponents and opponents use different patterns to transform the 'original' metaphor. Expressions by political proponents typically keep the structure of the 'original' metaphor, presumably because it aligns with their political position. Thereby, the types of source-transformations open to this group are relatively limited, and mostly constrained to providing additional details, like including new characters and/or objects or by presenting a mixed metaphor. Political proponents have more opportunities in target-domain transformations. By contrast, transformations by political opponents typically subvert the structure of the 'original' metaphor. As a result, political opponents have more possibilities in source transformations at their disposal, and less possibilities in target transformations.

Furthermore, these differences in expressions between political proponents and opponents reveal two different uses of the same metaphor. In the case of the DTS metaphor, political proponents refer to Washington, DC as a 'swamp' and to Trump

as an outsider to the swamp who will 'drain' the swamp. By contrast, political opponents frame Trump as being a part (and sometimes even a defender) of this 'swamp'. Both groups thus use the same narrative metaphor of DTS, and in both cases, 'swamp' represents corruption and cronyism. Yet, the ways in which this metaphor is used are diametrically opposed. In conservative media, Trump is presented as an outsider to the swamp. By contrast, in liberal media, Trump is seen as an important part of the swamp. Thereby, the question of which political actors constitute the 'swamp' takes on a different meaning across partisan media.

Some caveats should be mentioned. First, we present a case study of the DTS metaphor, which was a single-event narrative metaphorical frame. Future research could build on our study for other metaphorical frames across languages and cultures to review whether the types of transformations found for the DTS metaphor also apply to other cases. For instance, future research could answer the question whether theories of narratives also predict patterns of change in multiple-event narrative metaphorical frames, such as the metaphor seeing a NATION as a FAMILY (Cienki, 2004; Lakoff, 1996/2002; Musolff, 2016). Through this metaphor, a long political narrative can be spun in which nations seeking to sign a treaty are described as 'wooing each other', nations that sign a treaty are described as 'getting married' and nations that end a treaty are seen as being 'in a divorce'. Please note that metaphorical frames are not specific to political communication and can also be used in other communicative domains like health (Semino et al., 2018) or climate change (Ritchie, 2017). Future research could analyze whether transformations of metaphorical frames in these domains follow similar or different patterns.

Furthermore, we acknowledge that not every metaphorical frame is also a narrative. For instance, direct metaphors in the form of A = B (e.g., 'Juliet is the sun') may only include a state (and not an event), while other metaphors (e.g., comparing the Internet to a highway) may not involve a character. Thus, we recommend checking whether a specific metaphor meets the basic definition of narrative (de Graaf et al., 2016) of featuring at least one character experiencing at least one event, before also labelling it as a narrative.

Follow-up studies could also focus on how political partisans respond to transformations of a metaphorical frame like DTS that either correspond to or are contrary to their own political ideology. After all, many metaphor studies suggest that metaphorical frames are effective in steering the audience's opinions in line with the position implied in the frame (Boeynaems et al., 2017). By contrast, other studies have suggested that exposure to opposing views online enhances polarization (Bail et al., 2018), which would imply that participants become more certain in their own political beliefs (regardless of the ideology of the metaphor to which they have been exposed). Furthermore, the role of echo chambers and filter bubbles in political polarization has recently also been debated, with some studies proposing that their impact is more limited than generally assumed (e.g., Dubois and Blank, 2018; Nelson and Webster, 2017).

In sum, our study demonstrated how a metaphorical frame in political communication is used and changed in online partisan media. We find three superordinate patterns of usage: (1) no transformation, (2) target transformations and (3) source transformation. Each superordinate pattern has a number of sub-strategies that can be used and combined. At the same time, specific types of transformations are connected to different groups of political partisans: political supporters typically choose transformations that keep the structure of the original metaphor, while political opponents use transformations that upend the structure of the original metaphor. In this way, one specific narrative metaphorical frame has two different instantiations across online partisan media. This can contribute to meaning creation, as a specific metaphor (e.g., swamp in relation to politics) gets re-negotiated across partisan media.

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Christian Burgers is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication Science at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (the Netherlands). This paper is part of his research project on figurative framing in public discourse, funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO VENI grant 275-89-020). He is a member of the Management Team of the Metaphor Lab Amsterdam (www.metaphorlab.org).

Melanie Jong Tjien Fa holds a Master of Arts in Journalism Studies from Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (2017) and a Master of Science in Corporate Communication from the University of Amsterdam (2018). Her research interests are journalism, new technology and metaphor.

Anneke de Graaf is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication and Information Studies at Radboud University Nijmegen (the Netherlands). Her research focuses on narratives and their impact.