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## Article

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## Article

# When the Going Gets Tough, Leaders Use Metaphors and Storytelling: A Qualitative and Quantitative Study on Communication in the Context of COVID-19 and Ukraine Crises

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**Abstract:** Metaphors and storytelling are important communication tools that play a significant role in leadership and organizational life. Leaders have used metaphors and storytelling to enhance their written and verbal communication from ancient times, since Aristotle, to the modern age. In the present research, we focus on the use of storytelling and metaphors by leaders in times of crisis. We perform a qualitative analysis of the public statements and addresses of the leaders of two different countries in the context of recent worldwide crises: The prime minister of Greece during the COVID-19 health crisis and the president of Ukraine during the outbreak of the conflict with Russia in 2022. Based on existing evidence, their effectiveness in convincing their subordinates and conveying their intended meaning either nationally or internationally during the aforementioned crises has been widely recognized. Our analysis reveals that both leaders have consistently utilized metaphors and storytelling in their efforts to be more convincing and empowering. We also find that the higher the intensity of the crisis, the more pronounced the use of metaphors and stories. We accordingly provide an analysis of the types and frequency of use of the aforementioned communication tools. Reflecting on our findings, we provide specific insight for practice by leaders, discuss theoretical implications, and suggest directions for future research.

**Keywords:** leadership; crisis; communication; metaphors; storytelling; stories; COVID-19; Ukraine; Greece; information strategy; taxonomy; politics



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## 1. Introduction

Leadership is a skill that can be learned and cultivated by observing contemporary leaders that have a successful track record of inspiring and motivating others towards achieving specific results (Griggs 2013). The interest in the language of politics (political rhetoric, speech, style, and discourse) is accordingly a heated topic and can be traced back to as early as ancient Greece (Zhou 2016). Moreover, leadership skills can be improved by studying the words and speeches of historical leaders, along with their actions and the resulting impact on their community, country, or even the world (Griggs 2013).

Researchers have widely identified the close relationship between politics and language. Accordingly, it has been noted that politics and language are “intimately linked at a fundamental level”, while “politics is language” and, at the same time, “language is politics” (Chilton 2003; Lakoff 1990; Zhou 2016). It has been noted that the ample use of figures of speech can make political addresses more convincing to their audience as well as more effective in conveying the suggested political views (Zhou 2016). More importantly, stories and metaphors in particular, as linguistic elements, are considered “fast and powerful leadership tools for communicating complex concepts in unforgettable ways” (Harris and Barnes 2006). This comes as a result of the fact that leaders who effectively employ

solid rhetoric rich in symbolism and drama confidently in their everyday communication are considered charismatic and are able to cultivate trust among their followers, as well as communicate a collective vision and build shared values with them, especially in times of uncertainty or when transformation is necessary (Auvinen et al. 2013a; Cleverly-Thompson 2018; Conger and Kanungo 1987; Gergen and Gergen 2006; Gillespie and Mann 2004). Accordingly, metaphors and storytelling have historically been widely used by country leaders worldwide in order to communicate their thoughts and persuade their people, especially in times of crisis (e.g., Martin Luther King Jr. in his “I have a dream” speech or Abraham Lincoln in his “Gettysburg address”).

At the same time, extant literature suggests that metaphor theorists have thus far not given adequate attention to metaphors as a communicative tool that can be utilized towards intentionally changing their recipients’ perspective, as is often the case in the use of metaphors in politics (Steen 2008). Therefore, political discourse offers the capability to formulate and test more elaborate theories on metaphors and their role in communication (Ottati and Renstrom 2010). Moreover, studies in the field of politics can both utilize and expand the insight collected on metaphors in the context of cognitive science (Bougher 2012). In addition, the content of the metaphors and stories employed by politicians during crises has in many cases been drawn from themes such as war, religion, or sport. Malaysian and Singaporean prime ministers employed war metaphors in their speeches in the context of the COVID-19 crisis (Rajandran 2020). The former Italian prime minister in the mid-1990s, Silvio Berlusconi, also regularly utilized metaphors drawn from the fields of football, war, and the Bible in his political speeches (Semino and Masci 1996). Tony Blair also frequently quoted religion in his speeches in order to speak clearly and concisely in public and adopted metaphors, such as when he referred to the recent transformation of the Labour Party in 2002 as a “journey of change” and a “journey of modernization” (Charteris-Black 2006b; Hamilton 2009). However, existing taxonomies do not include such theme-based categories (war, religion, or sports metaphors) that are often included in political leaders’ discourse. Based on the above, in this research, we have delved into existing literature to synthesize combinatory taxonomies of metaphors and storytelling that can be used in the context of the analysis of political discourse. Our suggested taxonomies were therefore based on a synthesis of existing taxonomies of metaphors and storytelling, with additional evidence from the literature on types of metaphors and stories used specifically in political discourse.

Based on the above, in the present paper, we focus on the following research question: *“What types of metaphors and storytelling techniques do political leaders use in contemporary times of crises, and to what extent? Does the intensity with which political leaders use metaphors and stories fluctuate based on the severity of the crisis faced?”*. In order to address this question, we have identified two contemporary political figures that have been noted as having been particularly successful in conveying their intended meaning as well as persuading their audience towards specific actions: (i) The PM of Greece, whose communication strategy led to international recognition of the effective management of the first lockdown period during the COVID-19 crisis (with minimal casualties and maximum compliance to the isolation and containment measures), and (ii) the President of Ukraine during the initial stages of the ongoing (2022–2023) conflict with Russia, who managed to convince the parliaments of European countries through his speeches to align with and provide their support to his country. The two politicians’ statements and/or public addresses were gathered and their content was analyzed in order to identify patterns of usage in metaphors and storytelling (twenty-one public statements of the Greek PM addressed to the Greek people in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, and twenty-five addresses of the Ukrainian President to international parliaments in the context of the conflict in Ukraine). According to the attained results, we find that extensive usage of both metaphors and storytelling has been recorded through their speeches. Specifically, we recorded more than one hundred and fifty metaphors and fourteen stories in the Greek PM’s speeches, and more than one hundred metaphors and thirty-six stories in the Ukrainian president’s addresses. Moreover, by analyzing the different types of metaphors and stories within the

analyzed speeches, we provide a quantitative account of the intensity with which each of these tools was employed.

Our synthesized taxonomies of stories and metaphors can be utilized by researchers that aim to analyze political discourse in future studies as per the inclusion of such elements. Moreover, our findings can also provide useful insight for leaders who aspire to effectively convey their intended message, convince, and motivate their audience towards specific directions, especially in times of crisis.

## 2. Background

### 2.1. Metaphors

#### 2.1.1. Definition and Importance of Metaphors

According to the American Psychological Association (APA), a metaphor is “*a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object, person, or action that it does not literally denote*” (APA 2023). Metaphors have been used since ancient times, arousing the curiosity of thinkers, and Aristotle considered their command to be the mark of genius (Ortony 1975). Moreover, they are considered “*the basic function through which we understand the world, capture abstract concepts and offer our thinking the ability to function on an abstract level*” (Conger 1991; Lakoff and Johnson 2008).

As a cognitive phenomenon, metaphors have been widely researched since the early 1980s (Gibbs 1994; Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Sweetser 1990). A metaphor is in essence “an artificial translation of one word from the proper signification to another not proper, but yet nigh and like” (Osborn and Ehninger 1962; Peacham 1971). More simply, according to Aristotle, it is a means of comparing two things (objects, ideas, feelings, etc.) as—based on Greek etymology—the word “μεταφορά” (=metaphor) involves “transfer”, stemming from the Greek words “μετα” (trans) and “φέρειν” (to carry), and in terms of its use as a communicational tool, it involves, or is, “*the transfer of meaning*” (Ortony 1975). Non-linguistic expressions, such as objects, paintings, or even artistic performances, can in some cases also be treated as metaphors (Conger 1991). However, in the context of this research, we focus solely on the use of metaphors as figures of speech.

Metaphors are regularly used by ordinary people in their daily lives (Ortony 1975), in order to clarify, increase vividness, express certain emotions, or interpret reality (Conger 1991). As they can both inform and inspire, they are considered a catalyst for bringing forth organizational change (Keizer and Post 1996; Mio et al. 2005). More importantly, metaphor is also considered an important tool in leadership (Mayer-Schoenberger and Oberlechner 2002) as well as politics (Mio 2009). Their power stems from the fact that they provide the ability to capture and illustrate real-world experiences by appealing simultaneously to the various senses of the listener (Conger 1991). Moreover, they can help in conveying large amounts of information in a concise way (Mio 2009; Ortony 1975). However, metaphors can work both positively and negatively. They have the power to help us create meaning and understanding, but they can also manipulate, limit thinking, and increase the chances of thinking “inside the box”, as it is both a communicative stimulus and a mental reaction (Lumby and English 2010).

#### 2.1.2. Types of Metaphors

There are different taxonomies and types of metaphors delineated in extant literature, including conceptual, absolute (standard), mixed, dead (cliché), extended metaphors, or even war, game, sport, art, machine, visual, and religious/spiritual metaphors. We delineate their characteristics and uses in more detail in the following paragraphs. However, Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) is considered the most central in beginning to unwind and categorize them. The central claim of CMT is that people conceptualize many abstract domains metaphorically in terms of domains of knowledge that are relatively concrete or well-understood (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 2008; Lakoff 1993a, 1993b). An example is “time is money”, or “this tool will save you hours”. According to Lakoff and Johnson, who were the first to mention conceptual metaphor in their work: “In short, the locus of

metaphor is not in language at all, but in the way, we conceptualize one mental domain in terms of another” (Lakoff 1993b; Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Unlike earlier scholars, Lakoff and Johnson (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) aimed to provide systematic linguistic evidence to support the claim that there are indeed metaphors of thought, or “conceptual metaphors”. Moreover, due to the fact that numerous studies have adopted Lakoff and Johnson’s “Conceptual Metaphor Theory” (CMT) since 1980, from a variety of academic disciplines, this perspective is considered the dominant and most researched theoretical framework in the academic study of metaphor (Gibbs 2011; Kristiansen et al. 2008; D. Wilson and Carston 2006, 2007), which has been undergoing modifications and refinements ever since its inception in 1980 (Kövecses 2002, 2010; Lakoff and Johnson 2008; Lakoff 1993a; Lakoff and Johnson 1980). Moreover, three basic categories of metaphors are defined in CMT by taking into account their cognitive functions (Kövecses 2002):

- *Structural metaphors* provide mappings between the source and target domains. For example, the metaphor “Salvation is a journey” maps extant knowledge on the concept of journey onto the concept of salvation and vice versa.
- *Oriental metaphors* help make sense of concepts “in a coherent manner, based on our image-schema knowledge of the world”. They can be powered by words that signify orientation (e.g., up, down, front, and back), or position (e.g., on or off)—for example, “Sadness is down”, “Happiness is Up”, etc.
- *Ontological metaphors* are the ones involving ways of viewing intangible concepts (feelings, activities, and ideas) as entities that can in turn be categorized, grouped, and quantified in order to fathom them more completely. In essence, they can help people share their experiences in a concrete way, as well as identify, refer to, and quantify their non-physical aspects, as exemplified by the phrase “my battery died”.

Over time, scholarly work has led to the identification of additional categories of metaphors to be included in the CMT:

- *Absolute metaphors* were conceptualized by the German philosopher and intellectual historian Hans Blumenberg in 1960, in his work “*Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie*” (Blumenberg 1960). According to his work, absolute metaphors’ utility is in enhancing speech under the influence of rhetoric. In this type of metaphor, selected concepts are transferred to a non-literal, almost metaphysical plane. Then, through the repeated use of the constructed metaphor, a permanent connection is formed between the components of the metaphor; it becomes a norm and is effectively embedded in the culture. For example, in the expression “the naked truth”, as truth itself has no physical existence, it cannot literally be ‘naked.’ Similarly, the word “box” can be used to describe a house, and “tube” to describe a train. However, the distinctness and meaning of this metaphor have made it prevail in multiple cultures and languages (German, English, Greek, etc.).
- *Extended Metaphors*: The extended conceptual metaphor theory has more recently been brought forth by Zoltan Kövecses (Kövecses 2021), which builds on Lakoff and Johnson’s metaphor theory by adding “extended metaphors”. According to this theory, and as indicated by their name, extended metaphors are lengthened versions of an already established metaphor. Moreover, to further define and describe this type of metaphor, one has to take into account that – apart from their cognitive characteristics that fall into the description of standards theory on metaphor – they also bear a strong contextual component. Thus they seem to simultaneously exist on four hierarchical levels of schematicity (image schemas, domains, frames, and mental spaces). An example of an extended metaphor is Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I have a dream” speech, where the rights and freedoms that many Black Americans were fighting for are described in the context of a detailed, accounted-for ‘dream’ of a future reality (Kövecses 2021).
- *Dead (cliché) metaphors*: For a metaphor to be dead (cliché), it has to have lost its metaphorical qualities (Gibbs 2011) and have crossed the boundary to normal, literal speech towards becoming an ordinary part of the literal vocabulary used in



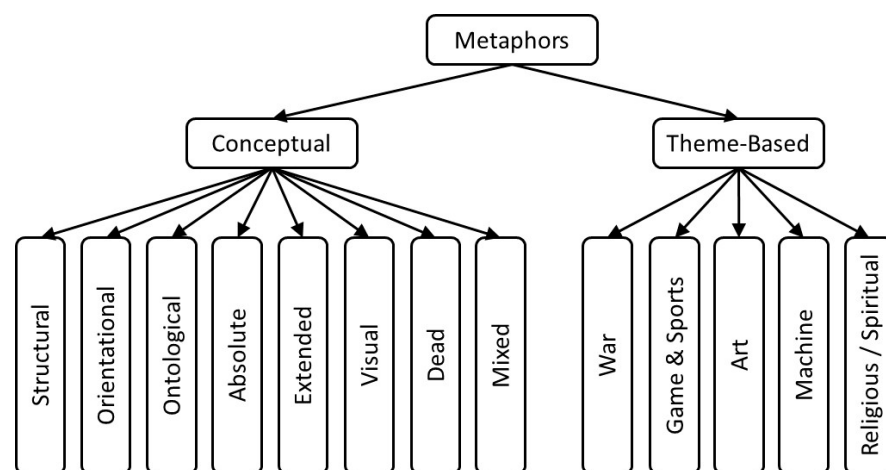
everyday discourse (Grey 2000). This can be exemplified by the fact that a person can fully understand the expression “falling head-over-heels in love” even if they have never encountered that variant of the phrase “falling in love” before. The boundaries between metaphorical and literal speech may thus have been crossed to the point where some argue that the dead metaphor should not be considered a metaphor at all but rather classified as a separate vocabulary item. The category of “dead metaphor” was added by George Lakoff in 1987 and defined as “a linguistic expression that had once been novel and poetic but had since become part of the mundane conventional language” (Lakoff 1987). It emerged from the fact that traditional folk theories of language seemed to treat metaphors in a way that, over time, has been proven not to be workable. In this case, the locus of a metaphor was basically on the language used (increased eloquence), instead of thought. As ordinary everyday language tended to be more ‘literal’ in its nature, mundane, unpoetic language was believed to not be able to support metaphorical expression, and thus novel poetic or rhetorical expressions were in turn candidates for being metaphors. As, over time, such ‘novel’ (then) metaphorical expressions have (now) become embedded in everyday language use, they have lost their ‘novelty’ altogether. Moreover, while the source for some dead metaphors is widely known or their symbolism easily understood (e.g., “falling in love”), in other cases most people may not be aware of their origins at all (e.g., “to kick the bucket”).

- **Visual Metaphors:** Although a number of studies have explored visual metaphors in very diverse genres, such as advertising, films, cartoons, and visual displays for training and control purposes, there is little agreement among researchers over their definition (Refaie 2003). In essence, they entail the utilization of visual elements to create a metaphor through the comparison of the properties of contextually diverse objects within the same context. Modern advertising relies heavily on the utilization of visual metaphors, such as placing a picture of a car next to a tiger, in order to suggest that the car has similar qualities of speed and power (van Mulken et al. 2014). Moreover, the visual metaphor is also considered a common and expected device in political cartoons (van Mulken et al. 2014), for example, when the face of a particular politician is visually amalgamated with the body of a specific animal (Refaie 2003). Finally, moderately challenging visual metaphors are usually more appreciated by their audience than simpler or more complex metaphors (van Mulken et al. 2014).
- **Mixed Metaphors:** To be considered mixed metaphors, metaphors need to satisfy two basic conditions. They should occur in textual adjacency (i.e., within a single metaphor cluster) and should not (for the most part) share any imagistic ontology or any direct inferential entailments between them (Kimmel 2010). In essence, in some cases, a metaphor may belong to multiple conceptualized categories at once (Kövecses 2016). These kinds of metaphors fall into the category of “mixed metaphors”. Several metaphor scholars argue that mixed metaphor is a phenomenon that conceptual metaphor theory cannot handle, due to the premise that once a conceptual metaphor is activated it should normally lead to and support the use of further linguistic examples of the same conceptual metaphor. However, according to Kövecses, in real discourse, most metaphors are mixed in nature due to the fact that conceptual metaphors are not activated in practice and do not often lead to further consistent linguistic metaphors of the same conceptual metaphor. Finally, the power of a mixed metaphor lies in its ability to delight and surprise readers and to challenge them to move beyond notions of “correct” or “incorrect” metaphors, as illustrated through William Shakespeare’s Hamlet, who considers the question “to take arms against a sea of troubles”, where a strictly literal completion of the metaphor would demand the use of a word such as ‘host’ instead of the word ‘sea’ (Encyclopaedia Britannica 2023).

A variety of different kinds of metaphors are also used in the context of leadership, in many cases adhering to recurring themes that can be clustered in five categories (Mayer-Schoenberger and Oberlechner 2002):

- *War metaphors* are abundant in extant literature on leadership, as illustrated by the existence of “A ‘field book’ analysis of Jack Welch’s leadership style, advertising itself as a ‘battle plan’ for a ‘revolution’, or “The Wounded Leader”.
- *Game and Sports Metaphors*: Another group of leadership metaphors is drawn from the world of playing games and sports, such as golf (leaders “trust their swing”), or even the “great game of life”. These metaphors often emphasize the constructed and changeable nature of the context within which leadership takes place, encouraging the leader to either “toy around” with different game rules (in game metaphors) or practice to achieve leadership mastery (in sports metaphors).
- *Art Metaphors*: Leadership has been often presented as art—e.g., the art of acting and performing, the similarity of leadership to being the conductor of an orchestra, producing “an expressive and unified combination of tones” or acknowledging the need to “turn his back on the crowd”.
- *Machine Metaphors*: Frequently, leadership is linked to machine metaphors, which build on concepts drawn from engineering and industrial production, with leaders being portrayed as—or even operating—machinery (e.g., “the leadership engine”).
- *Religious/Spiritual Metaphors* link the concept of leadership to spirituality, often calling upon concepts such as the “temptations”, or “obsessions” of successful leaders, and linking them to “fables”. In other cases, leadership is linked to magic or fairy tales, as evident in the suggestion that a leader “can never close the gap between himself and the group”, which represents a physical-spatial metaphor, implying that a leader may possess extraordinary or super-human powers.

Based on all of the above, the different types of metaphors we have described can be reviewed in Figure 1, which outlines a combinatory taxonomy of metaphors. We note that existing taxonomies with regard to metaphors offer different perspectives. Therefore, to better categorize the use of metaphors by political leaders in particular, we have synthesized them into our own taxonomy. We note that, in this synthesized taxonomy, although each metaphor can only belong to one subtype in the conceptual metaphor typology, it may also be categorized in one of the sub-types within the theme-based typology. Therefore, the same metaphor can be counted as both a “conceptual” and a “theme-based” one.



**Figure 1.** Taxonomy of Metaphors.

### 2.1.3. Metaphors in Leadership and Politics

A number of scholars have argued that metaphors have considerable political effects, as their use is considered crucial in foreign policy, they may undermine long-existing political constellations, and they can prepare for new political structures (De Landtsheer 2009). In essence, leaders implicitly or explicitly define their leadership through metaphors (Mayer-Schoenberger and Oberlechner 2002). Therefore, the analysis of metaphors and their use provides the opportunity to build theories of leadership “in use” (Argyris et al. 1985;

Mayer-Schoenberger and Oberlechner 2002). Specifically in politics, it has the power to define the pattern of perception to which people respond by intensifying selected perceptions and ignoring others—“thereby helping one to concentrate upon the desired consequences of favored public policies and helping one to ignore their unwanted, unthinkable, or irrelevant premises and aftermath”—and therefore each metaphor can be a subtle way of highlighting what one wants to believe and avoiding what one does not wish to face (Mio 2009). Metaphors play a significant role in encapsulating issues, as they can create stronger emotional reactions to both the speaker and the topic of the speech and thus make speeches that contain them more inspiring and effective in conveying the intended message of action (Graesser et al. 1989; Mio 1996, 2009; Mio et al. 2005).

Metaphors can be used to make a message more vivid and increase its retention, to influence others, to give shape to the world in certain ways, or even to manipulate listeners (Argyris et al. 1985; Katz 1996; Mayer-Schoenberger and Oberlechner 2002; Ortony 1975). Moreover, they can also play a critical role in increasing engagement toward change efforts (Akin and Schultheiss 1990; Burke 1992; Inns 2002; Mio et al. 2005). In addition, they can be used to convey emotional meaning and trigger strong emotional reactions in others by creating strong reactions (e.g., when using the metaphor that a certain leader “is a Hitler”) (Katz 1996; Mio et al. 2005). This ability to clarify and perhaps arouse emotions in followers may be a key reason why leaders use metaphors in political speeches. Indeed, some of the most memorable and inspirational political speeches of the past century, including Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I have a dream” speech, Winston Churchill’s “iron curtain” speech, and George H. W. Bush’s “thousand points of light” address, were built on metaphors designed to inspire followers (Mio et al. 2005).

Hence, we find that metaphors are an important element of political discourse that needs to be further researched, especially in the context of crises.

## 2.2. Storytelling

### 2.2.1. Definition and Importance of Storytelling

Storytelling is a widely used information medium that finds application in leadership, business, education, and training within a wide variety of contexts (Andrews et al. 2009; Denning 2011; Ellet 2007). For thousands of years, societies have taught key principles through storytelling, fictional, and non-fictional examples (Andrews et al. 2009). The interest in storytelling has also been on a steep and continuous rise in the past decades, in fields as diverse as law, urban planning, cognitive science, anthropology, and organizational behavior, as well as outside academia (e.g., narrative journalism or narrative therapy), as is evident by the fact that the number of articles published on narrative or storytelling between 1990 and 2010 was ten times the number of articles published between 1970 and 1990 (Polletta et al. 2011). Moreover, the fact that interest in storytelling is still on the rise worldwide is also corroborated by the rising interest recorded in Google Trends for the search term “storytelling”, which has risen by almost 25% over the past five years (Google Trends 2023).

Storytelling is a traditional and powerful tool of communication and knowledge sharing that can be used to address the emotions of people instead of their rational minds and overcome the barriers people usually build to protect themselves against the external world and new ideas (Mládková 2013). It is considered one of the oldest forms of human communication and is generally defined by scholars based on the way in which it promotes communication between the storytellers and the story listeners (Lucarevschi 2016). It can be defined as “a process where a teller uses a narrative structure, vocalization, and/or dramatic and mental imagery to communicate with an audience that in turn correspondingly provides their own feedback to the storyteller” (Dyson and Genishi 1994). Hence, a “story” is created through the interaction between the storyteller and the audience, while the storyteller uses his/her voice and gestures to convey a story and the audience physically reacts to it (e.g., by squinting, staring, or smiling), providing the storyteller with feedback on how their storytelling is being received (Lucarevschi 2016).



Stories—in the form of parables, legends, myths, fables, and real-life examples—have also been used as instructional tools by great leaders of all types (religious, political, educational, and military) (Fryer 2003). They can further be identified in all texts and all human communication (Mládková 2013). A story can be defined broadly as anything told or recounted and, more narrowly, as something told or recounted in the form of a causally linked set of events/account/tale/the telling of a happening or connected series of happenings, whether true or fictitious (Denning 2011; Lucarevski 2016). Although many scholars have attempted to distinguish between them, the term “story” is usually used interchangeably with “narrative” (Polletta et al. 2011), both among practitioners and consultants as well as in scholarly research in the field of leadership (Cleverly-Thompson 2018). A narrative is defined as “an account of a sequence of events in the order in which they occurred to make a point” and tends to include human or human-like characters intended to invoke empathy from the audience (Labov and Waletzky 1967; Polletta et al. 2011). In essence, a story is an instrument that can be used to express how and why life changes (Fryer 2003). In the beginning, a situation in which life is relatively in balance is described, then some events that throw it off-balance, a description of the efforts made by the protagonist in order to bring it back to balance against the forces that tend to oppose his actions, and so on. This fundamental conflict between subjective expectations and reality has been dealt with by storytellers from the ancient Greeks through Shakespeare and up to the present day (Fryer 2003).

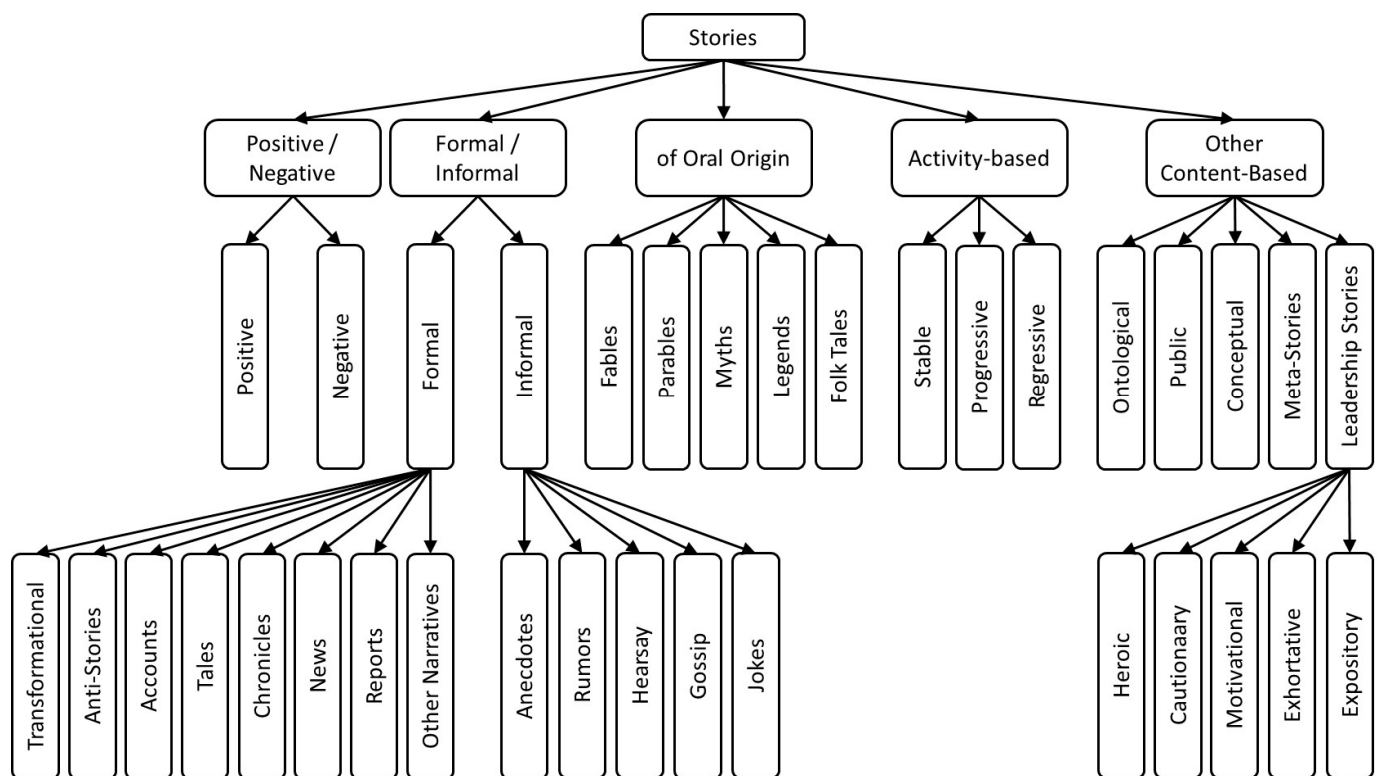
### 2.2.2. Types of Stories in Storytelling

Storytelling can be performed by employing a variety of stories. Stories in turn can be classified into different categories, according to extant literature. They include:

- *Positive and Negative stories.* Both types are present in any organization (Denning 2004; Mládková 2013):
- *Positive stories* are about victories, fulfilled desires, and wishes. They help in the creation and sharing of vision and objectives, to create new organizations, states, families, teams, and communities, and to create an understanding of the standpoints of others.
- *Negative stories* are about danger, problems (solved or unsolved), and defeat. They help us to acquire new knowledge, as well as understand and change the terms of present reality, and ultimately enable us to learn through the description of mistakes, moments of ignorance, and difficulties people had to overcome in the past.
- *Formal and Informal stories* (Mládková 2013):
- *Formal stories* are used in formal communication and feature a number of different sub-types:
  - *Transformational stories:* Also known as springboard stories, they are powerful enough to enable the sharing of very complex tacit knowledge and change people’s perceptions of reality. They also have high potential in management (Denning 2004).
  - *Anti-stories:* Stories created in response to another story with the aim of negating it. Their usage is risky, as they may have a negative impact on their creators if they are inaccurate or based on lies.
  - *Accounts:* Brief descriptions of a situation.
  - *Tales:* They may contain both true and fictive events.
  - *Chronicles:* Historical accounts of facts and events in the order in which they occurred.
  - *News:* They carry new information (e.g., news in the media).
  - *Reports:* They periodically provide information on the actual state in connection with specific activities or phenomena.
- *Other Narratives:* Whatever is said in the form of a story (not in any of the previous categories)
- *Informal Stories:*
- *Anecdotes:* Short, entertaining stories, usually with regard to the adventures of one or more individuals.

- *Rumors*: Stories that are not based on knowledge or proven by facts.
- *Hearsay*: A story that the storyteller has become the recipient of but has not yet confirmed its validity.
- *Gossip*: Sharing personal, unverified information with regard to other people.
- *Jokes*: Humorous anecdotal stories usually aimed at entertaining but also able to effectively serve as transformational stories under the right circumstances.
- *Stories of Oral Origin/Fables, parables, myths legends, and folk tales* stories originally told verbally, later transferred to a written form) (Mládková 2013):
- *Fables*: Fictive stories where the protagonists are usually animals who represent people and usually contain a moral lesson.
- *Parables*: Brief accounts of well-known events that carry moral or religious meaning.
- *Myths*: Popular stories from unknown authors, explaining nature, human nature, institutions, and religious habits, describing heroic acts of good performed by famous heroes, and inspiring the reader to improve their mental and physical abilities.
- *Legends*: Stories passed from generation to generation, outlining a historical background that cannot be proven.
- *Folk tales*: Mythical stories characteristic of a nation or a large population therein that differ from culture to culture and have become embedded in the cultural heritage of other nations. They usually discuss relationships between cause and effect, good and evil, and are given huge attention in tough times and during national uprisings.
- *Activity-Based/Stable, Progressive, and Regressive stories*, based on the activity of the protagonist (Gergen and Gergen 1986; Mládková 2013):
- *Stable Stories*: The protagonist tries to journey through the story and remain unchanged. When he succeeds, he is the same as he was at the beginning of the story.
- *Progressive Stories*: The protagonist develops to improve himself or his situation.
- *Regressive Stories*: The protagonist develops for the worse, or his situation worsens.
- *Other/Content-Based*:
- *Ontological stories* help co-create the identity and social position of an individual (e.g., the clichéd story about the role of sexes in a family, where the mother cooks and the father repairs things) (Mládková 2013; Somers 1994).
- *Public stories* are related to institutional and cultural forms and are related to human life and activity (Mládková 2013; Somers 1994).
- *Conceptual stories* are analytical models that explain something, like scientific theories (Mládková 2013; Somers 1994).
- *Meta stories* are widely known myths, ideologies, and cosmologies from which other types of stories are derived. They influence the culture and behavior of all types of human groups and organizations (Mládková 2013; Somers 1994).
- *Leadership stories* (Harris and Barnes 2006): In the context of leadership, the stories used by leaders to inspire and motivate may, in many cases, also be:
  - *heroic* (you probably couldn't do this)
  - *cautionary* (never do this)
  - *motivational* (you should try to do this)
  - *exhortative* (always do this)
  - *expository* (I did this, and this is what I learned)

Based on all of the aforementioned extant categories of stories that can be utilized in storytelling, we have derived the taxonomy that can be reviewed in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Taxonomy of Stories that can be utilized in Storytelling.

Therefore, as existing taxonomies with regards to stories offer different perspectives, we have constructed our taxonomy by synthesizing different views towards better aiding the process of categorizing the use of stories by political leaders in particular.

### 2.2.3. Storytelling in Leadership and Politics

Extant literature suggests that “the best leaders have always been the best storytellers” (Auvinen et al. 2013a; Peters 1991). Moreover, instead of ordering their subordinates to “get motivated”, “get results”, or “be creative”, to achieve these results, effective leaders utilize purposeful storytelling (using the right stories to get their leadership message across and achieve their set goals) (Auvinen et al. 2013b; Cleverly-Thompson 2018). Storytelling is essentially an important organizational tool that utilizes narrative to enable effective communication and sensemaking both within and outside the organization (Aaltio-Marjosola 1994; Gergen and Gergen 1986; Weick 2000), while influential leadership involves storytelling (Ciulla 1995, 2005).

The significance of storytelling for leadership has been thoroughly outlined over the past decades in the extant literature, which suggests that leaders can use storytelling for a variety of purposes within organizations (Auvinen et al. 2013b; Cleverly-Thompson 2018). More specifically, it is considered one of the most valuable and efficient methods and tools for leaders to influence and inspire, as it can help: (i) explain ideas, (ii) share knowledge and values, (iii) build a shared vision, (iv) create personal and group identities, (v) change social practices, (vi) affect worldviews, (vii) influence the response to incentives, (viii) smooth and advance organizational change, build trust and maintain employee loyalty when guiding an organization through difficult changes, (ix) develop leadership skills, (x) improve communication, community, and team-building, and settle conflicts peacefully, (xi) implement changes, (xii) cultivate and intensify innovation, and (xiii) form the corporate culture by influencing and co-creating the basic principles of individuals and groups (Boal and Schultz 2007; Cleverly-Thompson 2018; Denning 2005, 2006; Gill 2011; Mládková 2013; Snowden 2001). Self-disclosure through storytelling (even in the case of disclosing past failure) is also a powerful method of engaging and inspiring others, building trust, and

encouraging openness (Cleverly-Thompson 2018; Harris and Barnes 2006). Some even argue that storytelling in organizations is so powerful that “it is actually the leader’s story that leads people in the organization, not the leader” (Auvinen et al. 2013a; Parry and Hansen 2007).

Leaders (political, religious, military, and business leaders) have always utilized stories in order to inspire and motivate, reduce conflict, build trust, influence superiors, and establish a clear direction (Auvinen et al. 2013a; Cleverly-Thompson 2018; Harris and Barnes 2006). Stories can also serve as a mental map, as they can help the members of an organization identify what is important and how things are done (Cleverly-Thompson 2018; Kouzes and Posner 2012). Therefore, the ability to tell stories can be an important skill for leaders to cultivate towards boosting their effectiveness (Baldoni 2003; Cleverly-Thompson 2018; Denning 2004; Kouzes and Posner 2012). Moreover, the role of storytelling in increasing leadership effectiveness has in fact been outlined by researchers for decades (Boje 2001; Cleverly-Thompson 2018; Denning 2001; Weick 2000), and stories have been accordingly considered “tools of leadership” as, by using stories, leaders can communicate important messages to others, entertain, teach, delight, frighten, or inspire (Harris and Barnes 2006). The leaders’ personal experience is believed to be the greatest source of leadership stories (Harris and Barnes 2006). However, in essence, the category and content of the stories used by leaders depend on the context in which they are to be told, as well as the targeted outcome.

More recently, storytelling has also been suggested as a research tool and intervention around public health perceptions and behaviors (McCall et al. 2019). At the same time, storytelling is considered a form of social action (Björminen et al. 2020), as compelling stories can motivate people to become acquainted with scientific evidence and learn about science (Engel et al. 2018), as well as engage with and respond to science-related issues faced by society (Dahlstrom and Scheufele 2018), especially in the digital era (van Laer et al. 2019). This comes as a result of the strong emotional response of storytelling on its recipients, which in turn leads to their increased engagement (Kang et al. 2020), as exemplified by the public’s response to the brand storytelling approach followed in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic (Rossolatos 2020).

### 2.3. *The Use of Metaphors and Storytelling by Leaders and Politicians in Practice*

Although leadership carries different meanings for each individual, it is essentially considered “the art of making people want to take action to realize common aspirations” (Karaszewski and Drewniak 2021). Metaphors and storytelling have historically been widely used by both business leaders and country leaders worldwide to communicate their thoughts and persuade their people. In this section, we revisit some of the more characteristic examples of such leaders and politicians who utilized metaphors and storytelling with great success.

Examples of corporate leaders who used metaphors and storytelling include Jack Welch (is considered one of the most significant cases of successful, charismatic, and inspired exemplary business leaders in the 1980s–1990s) (Amernic et al. 2007; Hardy et al. 2000), Steve Jobs (the co-founder and successful CEO of Apple Inc.) (Raj 2020; Richardson and Arthurs 2013), and Xenophon Zolotas (who served as both the governor of the Bank of Greece in three different terms as well as a prime minister in Greece and was famous for his eloquence and his ability to captivate the audience) (To Vima 2019).

A number of well-known examples of historical political leaders who utilized metaphors and stories also exist in the literature. Winston Churchill is considered one of the greatest leaders and most outstanding politicians of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was most famous for his eloquence and ability to inspire confidence through his heartfelt speeches during World War II (Crespo-Fernández 2013), where he extensively used figurative speech and metaphorical abstractions (Rickert 1977) to motivate his audience, as he seemed to be well aware of “the power of words to move hearts and minds and shape beliefs” (Crespo-Fernández 2013).

*Abraham Lincoln* also laced his famous speeches with metaphors and stories. In the “Gettysburg Address” (delivered on 19 November 1863, the most celebrated speech considered one of the best speeches of all time) (Raj 2020), he metaphorically spoke of the nation as “a living being”, and as “a family” (Gross 2004), and extensively employed storytelling (Raj 2020; Taylor et al. 2002). Lincoln’s addresses, which contained “echoes from the bible and book of common prayer” have since influenced—and echoed in the addresses of among others—Edgar Evans, Dr. Martin Luther King, and US presidents John F. Kennedy and Barack Obama (Elmore 2009).

*Theodore Roosevelt* is also a politician well-known for his speeches. One of his greatest speeches, entitled “Citizenship in a Republic” (delivered at the Sorbonne in 1910), comprised a story that regarded the importance of integrity and character in a leader and the need to be a good citizen (Griggs 2013) and has since become one of the most widely quoted speeches of his career (Raj 2020). *John F. Kennedy* is also undeniably a politician who marked history through his speeches. His Inaugural Address on 20 January 1961 has achieved historical significance thanks to the rhetorical strategies he employed and the extensive use of metaphors and storytelling he made (Zhou 2016).

*Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.* also frequently used metaphors and storytelling in his speeches and supported his arguments with well-known historical references (Gallo 2022). His “*I have a dream*” speech (delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial before 250,000 people during the “March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom” on 28 August 1963), had a profound impact on the audience (Raj 2020; Vail 2006). Essentially, it is an excellent example of vivid storytelling (Gallo 2022), as his “dream” is believed to have been deeply rooted in “the American dream” (Raj 2020). Another famous example where he employed both metaphors and storytelling is in his “I’ve been to the mountaintop” oration (Rosteck 1992).

In essence, politicians strategically employ metaphors and storytelling to convey their intended meaning and support their objectives (Wilson 2015). This seems to remain true for contemporary politicians, as illustrated by numerous examples. The use of conceptual metaphors and storytelling has been noted in former US President *Donald Trump’s* speeches (such as the acceptance speech of his candidacy, the victory speech on election night, and his inaugural address as president of the US). He used metaphors and stories in order to frame and support his views with regard to critical issues such as immigration and the economy, as well as to convey a number of different political personas for himself, such as that of a repairman, builder, healer, warrior, etc. (Pilyarchuk and Onysko 2018; Polletta and Callahan 2017). In his speech in December 2016, when *Time Magazine* named him “2016 Person of the Year”, he also used a metaphor to comment on being politically correct: “I was lucky enough to receive the *Time* Person of the Year . . . They used to call it ‘Man of the Year,’ but they can’t do that anymore, so they call it ‘person.’ They want to be politically correct”. (Archer and Kam 2022). Metaphors have also been employed by right-wing politicians in the UK in order to support their views towards immigration policy during the 2005 British election campaign (Charteris-Black 2006a). Storytelling has also been employed as a strategy by politicians in Romania during the 2014 presidential elections campaign to convince their voters (Toader and Grigorași 2016).

Metaphors and storytelling have also been employed in the context of recent crises and military conflicts. Metaphors were also employed by US President *G. W. Bush* in his statements during the 2004–2005 war in Iraq, where, through his Persian Gulf addresses, he aimed to build an international military coalition (Bates 2004; Meadows 2007). Moreover, metaphors dominated the political speeches of both President *G.W. Bush* and *Jens Stoltenberg* in the aftermath of terrorist attacks that took place in the US on 11 September 2001 and in Norway on 22 July 2011 (Rafoss 2019). Metaphors were extensively used by North Belgian politicians in the context of the 2007–2011 Belgian constitutional crisis and after the 9th of December 2011 (when a new Belgian government was sworn in after a record-breaking 541 days of negotiations between all democratic political forces with the



aim to alter the constitution and provide more autonomy to the different regions that make up Belgium) (Cammaerts 2012).

In his address to the nation on Syria (Washington, D.C., 10 September 2013), *Barack Obama* used metaphors and narratives, including, for example: “Let me make something clear: the United States military doesn’t do pinpricks” and “I will not put American boots on the ground in Syria” (to issue a direct warning to the country about what the United States military would not do), as well as stories on Franklin Roosevelt and World Wars I and II (to talk about the use of chemical weapons) (US National Archives 2013).

*Bill Clinton* also often used different kinds of metaphors in his speeches in order to deal with the political crises he had faced: On 20 January 1993, he referred to “the pillars of our history” and “the foundations of our nation”, on 25 January 1994, he referred to storms that left Americans feeling as if the world were “coming apart at the seams”, on 17 February 1993 he spoke of replacing political “drift and deadlock with renewal and reform”, and on 20 January 1997 he spoke of “the journey of our lives” and “the journey of our America” which “must go on” (Charteris-Black 2006b; Hamilton 2009). *The use of metaphors and storytelling by political leaders in the context of the COVID-19 crisis*: While actions are led by attitudes, people tend to develop attitudes toward emerging public health threats (such as the COVID-19 crisis) that in turn inform the protective actions they believe the government should take (Kam 2019). There are three key steps to effective communication during a crisis: “you tell people what you know, you tell people what you don’t know, and you constantly update people on what you didn’t know as you learn more” (KelloggInsight 2022). To accomplish these goals in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, leaders internationally have resorted to using metaphors and storytelling in order to convince their citizens to align with and comply with the social distancing measures. Newspaper headlines or articles written during the epidemic have also accordingly been filled with metaphors and storytelling in communications about the COVID-19 pandemic (“the virus that shut down the world”, “not soldiers but fighters”, etc.). Indicatively, on 24 May 2020, The New York Times published a list of 1000 names out of the first 100,000 victims of COVID-19 in the US, spanning the whole front page. The list was accompanied by descriptions of each of the victims, reflecting upon their individual characters through phrases such as “was never afraid to sing and dance” and “emergency room doctor who died in his husband’s arms”—the list was further subtitled, “They were not simply names on a list. They were us” (Craig 2020). Moreover, throughout their addresses about the COVID-19 pandemic, political leaders worldwide (such as in China, France, Italy, the USA, Great Britain, and Greece) have extensively employed words such as “war”, an “enemy”, “to be beaten”, and “fight”. Indicatively, on 17th March 2020, five days before the United Kingdom was put under lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Prime Minister issued an official statement that included the following words: “Yes this enemy can be deadly, but it is also beatable—and we know how to beat it and we know that if as a country we follow the scientific advice that is now being given we know that we will beat it. And however tough the months ahead we have the resolve and the resources to win the fight”. (Gov.UK 2020) (Semino 2021). At the same time, during the pandemic, the US president delivered his briefings, surrounded by a “task force” that included his “Surgeon General”, while synchronized fighter jets, named “Blue Angels” and “Thunderbirds”, flew in order to offer tribute to the victims of the pandemic (Craig 2020). Finally, in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, the French President declared that: “We are ‘at war.’ Yet, the battle cry is less ‘charge’ than ‘retreat’ inside one’s home” (Erlanger 2020). These references to military commands were accompanied by phrases such as “stay at home”, “shelter in place”, and practice of “self-isolation”, which constituted “policy metaphors strategically designed to valorize self-reliance and the integrity of the private home, instead of the more suspect” (Craig 2020; Erlanger 2020).

Hence, we find that metaphors and storytelling have been used both in isolation and combined in the discourse of political leaders in the past with positive and impactful results.

### 3. Materials and Methods

#### 3.1. Study Aim

Taking all the above-mentioned background information we have presented in the previous paragraphs, we find that a number of studies have discussed the rhetorical style of leaders and political figures both in normal circumstances and in times of crisis. At the same time, some of these studies have focused on the use of metaphors and stories. However, we believe that there is a need to corroborate the utility of metaphors and storytelling in contemporary crises, as the contextual situation is never identical. Moreover, to our knowledge, no theory or concise practical guide exists with regard to the kinds of metaphors that should be used by political leaders in times of crisis and the intensity as well as the frequency with which they should be delivered in their speeches. Therefore, the rhetorical style of political leaders in times of crisis, especially with regards to the types of metaphors and stories used in their discourse and the intensity with which they are employed, needs to be analyzed in more depth while considering the situational circumstances that are in effect.

Adhering to the abovementioned fact, our aim in this study is to provide combined insight with regards to when, which types, and how much metaphorical speech and storytelling should be employed by political leaders in times of crisis.

#### 3.2. Research Methodology

In the context of this research, we follow a case study research methodology. More specifically, we conducted case study research involving the analysis of two cases in parallel. Case studies have been extensively utilized in the past in order to develop theory in different fields (Eisenhardt 1989; Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007). A case study is an empirical method aimed at investigating, documenting, and describing particular instances of contemporary phenomena—either historical or contemporary recent events—in their real-life context (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007; Runeson and Höst 2009; Yin 2003). Moreover, case study research can be defined as: “The intensive (qualitative or quantitative) analysis of a single unit or a small number of units (the cases), where the researcher’s goal is to understand a larger class of similar units (a population of cases)” (Seawright and Gerring 2008). In such a case study, research questions should be defined from the beginning of the study (Perry et al. 2004). Accordingly, our investigation was based on the research question we had already articulated based on extant literature, namely, “*What types of metaphors and storytelling techniques do contemporary political leaders use in times of crises, and to what extent? Does the intensity with which political leaders use metaphors and stories fluctuate based on the severity of the crisis faced?*”.

The central notion of theory building from cases as a research methodology is to use empirical evidence from one or more case studies to develop theory inductively by recognizing patterns of relationships between constructs within and across cases and exploring their underlying explanations, in order to create theoretical constructs, propositions, and/or theory (Eisenhardt 1989; Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007). Moreover, in order to build theory from case studies in applied principles, replication logic is central, with each case treated as a distinct experiment and multiple cases serving as replications, contrasts, and/or extensions to the emerging theory (Dooley 2002; Yin 2003). In most cases, the boundaries between the phenomenon itself and the context within which it is observed are usually unclear (Yin 2003). Moreover, the information is gathered from a limited number of entities (in our case, country leaders) without experimental control (Benbasat et al. 1987). Hence, a variety of multiple sources of evidence may need to be employed (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007; Robson 2002). Our decision to not focus on just one case was based on the fact that, although a single case can serve towards investigating new phenomena in depth, in a multiple-case study research design, the findings have relevance beyond the cases under investigation (Ridder 2017). Hence, a multiple-case research design can lead to more strongly grounded and generalizable results.

Adhering to the suggestions of Benbasat et al. (1987), the cases we analyze in our research were intentionally selected, on the basis of being at the same time “typical”, “critical”, “revelatory”, and “unique” in some respect. We also took into account that case selection is particularly important when the selected cases are used to verify (or contrast) the findings from previous cases (Yin 2003). More specifically, in our study, the cases analyzed were those of leaders who—as widely proposed in existing literature—have successfully managed to communicate with and convince their audience in the context of significant crises (health, humanitarian, or conflict). Finally, acknowledging Riddler’s suggestions (Riddler 2017), in selecting each of the cases, our sampling was purposeful, as each one represented a good opportunity to understand the issue at hand (i.e., the utilization of metaphors and storytelling by leaders) in similarly framed but contextually different conditions (i.e., in the context of different forms of crises).

### 3.3. Data Collection and Analysis Methodology

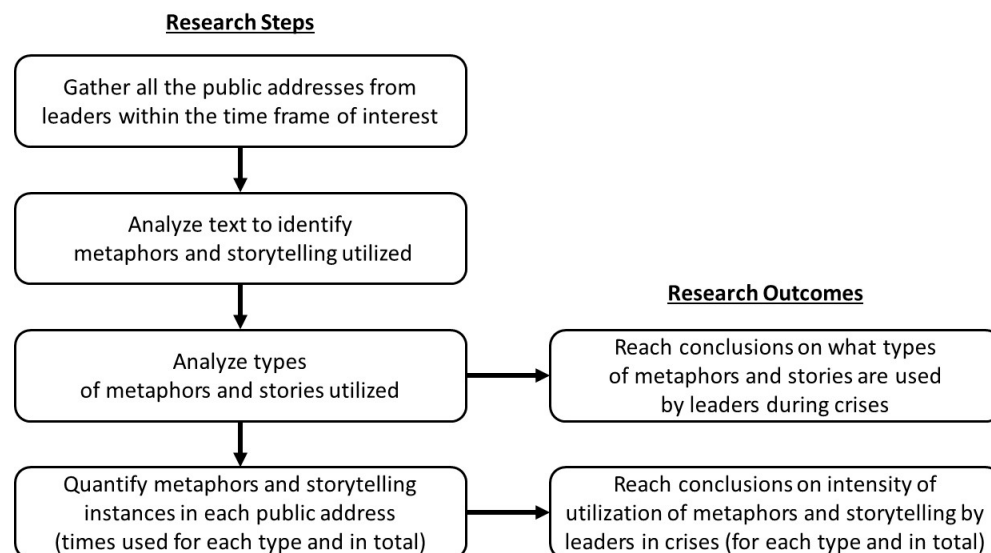
Data collection in case studies can take the form of ethnographic methods (such as interviews and observations) as well as other research methods, while a literature review can often precede a case study in order to collect additional data (Runeson and Höst 2009). Moreover, although qualitative data are more often employed in case study research designs, quantitative data are also regularly utilized in order to strengthen cases (Riddler 2017). In essence, in order to increase the precision of empirical research, triangulation is often employed; this involves examining the problem from different angles—and employing different methodologies accordingly—so as to provide a broader understanding of the studied object (Runeson and Höst 2009; Stake 1995). Finally, case study research that includes the combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis of a single or a small number of cases in order to record the situation in general is an acknowledged method in the context of political research (Seawright and Gerring 2008).

In our case, we employed data triangulation (Stake 1995), utilizing more than one data source (public address transcripts provided from government sources, as well as contextual evidence recorded by well-established and highly regarded news agencies), and collecting the same data at different occasions (during the COVID-19 crisis and the conflict in Ukraine). The data analysis methodology we follow is also both qualitative and quantitative. We first conducted a qualitative analysis of the public addresses of the leaders in both cases examined to identify the utilization of different types of metaphors and stories. More specifically, we based our analysis on the taxonomies we have presented in Figure 1 (types of metaphors) and Figure 2 (types of stories utilized in storytelling). To organize and present our data, we utilized the method of tabulation, where the coded data was arranged in tables, thus making it possible to get an overview (Robson 2002). After the different types of stories and metaphors had been identified, they were then counted (within each public address and in total), so as to provide a quantitative indication of how often and how intensely they were utilized (in total as well as per the type of metaphor/story). We additionally utilized both hypothesis-generating techniques such as “constant comparisons” and “cross-case analysis”, as well as hypothesis-confirmation techniques such as triangulation and replication (Andersson and Runeson 2007; Seaman 1999) in both cases, respectively.

The method of first identifying and then counting figures of speech such as metaphors and stories in a text has been regularly employed by scholars. Although qualitative metaphor analysis is considered by many to be the most important, metaphor analysis can involve either a quantitative or qualitative method by associating metaphors with topics and their frequency of occurrence in a text (Moser 2000; Pitcher 2013). It has also been suggested that by utilizing both methods (first identifying and then counting) in metaphor analysis, researchers can attain increased objectivity and credibility in their analysis (Pragglejaz Group 2007). Moreover, it has been noted that “counting metaphors has become a new fascination in metaphor studies” (Gibbs 2015). A number of studies

have also adopted this process in practice by identifying and counting the instances of metaphors and stories in written text (Rajandran 2020; Steen 2002; Steen et al. 2010).

The data collection and analysis strategy we followed can be reviewed in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** Research Outline: Data collection and analysis strategy employed.

In the first case, we gathered and analyzed the Greek PM’s statements and public addresses (twenty-one in total) in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, from the first address before the first lock-down on the 27th of February 2020 to the last address when the containment measures ceased on the 23rd of September 2021. In the second case, we gathered and analyzed the Ukrainian President’s addresses (twenty-five in total) to international parliaments in the context of the conflict in Ukraine during the first three months of the recent invasion (from 24/2/2022 until 31/5/2022). All statements were first gathered from the official websites of the PM of Greece (<https://primeminister.gr>, accessed on 15 February 2023) and the President of Ukraine (<https://www.president.gov.ua>, accessed on 15 February 2023), and content-analyzed, before proceeding to their categorization and assessment. The categorization was made according to the taxonomy of metaphors that we have presented in Section 2.1.2 and the taxonomy of storytelling in Section 2.2.2 of this paper. Then, the instances of metaphors and stories utilized were also numerically assessed by counting them within each speech.

### 3.4. Characteristics of The Two Cases

In this section, we discuss the representative nature of the two chosen cases as per the utilization of metaphors and storytelling by country leaders during crises.

#### 3.4.1. The Greek “Success Story” during the COVID-19 Health Crisis

As the COVID-19 virus spread across Europe, many Greeks feared the worst: that they would face the fate of Italy or Spain. Greece had one of the oldest populations in the EU (second only to Italy), and the Greek healthcare system had been weakened by a decade-long financial crisis and austerity measures, thus leaving it more vulnerable to the disease (Magra 2020b; Perrigo and Hincks 2020). Hence, many expected that the coronavirus outbreak in Greece should have been a disaster (Perrigo and Hincks 2020). However, Greece’s response was “swift and effective” (OECD 2020). It managed to avoid the worst of the global pandemic in its early stages, with one of the lowest counts of people in intensive care, confirmed cases, and deaths because of the virus in the European Union (Perrigo and Hincks 2020) and a tiny fraction of what they were in many other European nations (Magra 2020b).

The Greek crisis management came as a surprise to many observers. However, there are also other reasons why the country did so well in curbing the pandemic. Clear and consistent messages allowed the government to close the trust gap with the population. According to Kevin Featherstone, director of the Hellenic Observatory at the London School of Economics, Greece has defied the odds mainly due to the fact that the government's response to the coronavirus has won praise from its citizens (Magra 2020a). The "success story" of Greece in dealing with the coronavirus pandemic, both timely and with fewer victims compared to other countries (given its size and situation compared to other countries worldwide), especially in the initial stages of the pandemic, has also been featured in the headlines of international news media. Examples include (i) the Independent (UK)—on 8 April 2020 "*How Greece Managed to Flatten the curve*" (Fallon 2020) and 29 April 2020 "*Coronavirus: Greece's handling of the outbreak is a surprising success story, so far*" (Magra 2020b), (ii) Reuters (Athens)—on 13 April 2020 "*Greece has won a battle against COVID-19 but war is not over: PM*" (Reuters 2020), (iii) TIMES Magazine on 23 April 2020 "*Greece Has an Elderly Population and a Fragile Economy. How Has It Escaped the Worst of the Coronavirus So Far?*" (Perrigo and Hincks 2020), and (iv) the NY TIMES on April 28th, 2020: "*Greece Has 'Defied the Odds' in the Pandemic*" (Magra 2020a). Moreover, as we've seen, one of the headlines praising Greece's response to the crisis featured a statement by Konstantinos Mitsotakis, the Prime Minister of Greece: *Greece has won a battle against COVID-19, but the war is not over* (Reuters 2020). Indicatively, this statement that made the headlines contains metaphors of war such as "won a battle" and "war is over".

According to initial surveys, the general public reacted positively to the government's evidence-informed response, and levels of trust in the government and public institutions increased (Ladi et al. 2021; Prorata 2020). Indicatively, 65% of Greeks believed that the government was on top of the COVID-19 health crisis, with only 15.5% expressing the opposite viewpoint, while 59.5% fully trusted the information issued by the Ministry of Health and the government (HIT 2020; Ladi et al. 2021).

#### 3.4.2. Ukraine's Communication Success during the Ongoing (2022–2023) Conflict with Russia

The Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's communication skills in the context of the recent conflict with Russia have been highlighted in headlines such as Fortune magazine's: "*Here's what leaders can learn from Zelensky's communication style*" (Bubich 2022). His success in leading his country against the Russian invasion is considered a remarkable paradigm that has a lot to do with what he says and how he says it (Segal 2022). In essence, he is a very effective communicator, showing a great combination of strength and vulnerability and delivering 'a master class in crisis communications' (Bubich 2022; KelloggInsight 2022). More importantly, he managed to win over international public opinion by using communication as a weapon (KelloggInsight 2022) and effectively conveying a simple message of humanity and shared mission to the world (Bubich 2022). Towards that end, he used speeches and highly tailored messages with a single urgent purpose—to muster international support (Adams 2022).

Since the emergence of the current phase of the conflict and in order to ask for the support of the nations, he has addressed numerous parliaments, receiving standing ovations everywhere (Bubich 2022). Moreover, in order to persuade world leaders and parliaments, the Ukrainian President relies on speaking highly specifically to the target audience, selecting metaphors and stories that would best fit their cultural background, and reminding them of the values they share, and therefore using formal stories (mainly *chronicles* and *accounts*) while tapping into epic national events and traumas as, among others (Adams 2022; Gallo 2022; KelloggInsight 2022): (i) To the French he spoke of freedom, equality, fraternity, (ii) to the British he repeated the Shakespearean "to live or not to live", and mentioned Winston Churchill, (iii) to the Germans the fall of the Berlin "Wall", and (iv) to the Americans he spoke of the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington, he encouraged the U.S. President to choose to "become the leader of the world" by first becoming "the



leader of peace”, and he cited Dr. Martin Luther King’s famous “I Have a Dream” speech in his remarks during his speech at the US Congress.

The Ukrainian President’s success as a wartime leader was based on the fact that he uses simple and short sentences that are easily understood by all. Indicatively also, according to Jonathan Eyal, associate director of strategic research partnerships and international director at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), “the Ukrainian President knows how to embody the spirit of the nation” through his speeches (Bubich 2022).

#### 4. Results

In this section, we analyze the Greek PM’s and the Ukrainian President’s addresses and present the results of the two cases separately. Selected indicative examples of metaphors and stories are also provided. However, a more extensive account of the stories and metaphors identified in this study can be found in the accompanying *supplement* to this paper, which can be downloaded separately.

##### 4.1. Usage of Metaphors and Storytelling by the PM of Greece during the COVID-19 Health Crisis

We gathered and analyzed the Greek PM’s statements and public addresses (twenty-one in total) in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, from the first address before the first lock-down on 27 February 2020, to the last address when the containment measures ceased on the 23 September 2021. All statements were first gathered from the official website of the PM of Greece (<https://primeminister.gr>, accessed on 15 February 2023) and content was analyzed before proceeding to their categorization and assessment.

##### 4.1.1. Identification of Metaphors and Storytelling Instances in the Greek PM’s Speeches

Analyzing the Prime Minister’s addresses qualitatively, we found that he often used both conceptual and theme-based metaphors in his speeches, as well as storytelling.

As per the Conceptual Metaphors taxonomy, the utilization of structural, orientational, ontological, absolute, extended, and dead (cliché) metaphors was evident. We offer the following representative examples from the analyzed speeches: “*Weapons against coronavirus*” (structural), “*We lift the burden of the fatherland*” (orientational), “*Chain of terror*” (ontological), “*immunity wall*” (absolute), “*Let us be alone, but not lonely! Protected, not besieged! And isolated, but not alienated*”. (extended), “*Key to success*” (dead/cliché).

As per the analysis of the statements according to the theme-based metaphors categories, the utilization of war metaphors, religious metaphors, and game metaphors was also evident. We offer the following representative examples: Reference to ‘battle,’ ‘war,’ ‘soldiers,’ ‘heroes,’ and ‘guns’ against viruses—e.g., “*We are at war with an enemy that is invisible but not invincible*” (war metaphors), Reference to ‘faith,’ and ‘beliefs’—e.g., “*Faith often begins where science ends*” (religious metaphors), Reference to ‘political games’—“*Some seem to be playing political games*” (game metaphors).

Regarding the use of storytelling, our analysis showed that the PM utilized personal stories that can be linked to the “positive storytelling” category and stories from the past or from hospitals that usually constitute “negative storytelling”. Some examples include: “*It is certain that, when the crisis is over, we will see the people who fill the supermarket shelves differently. We’ll be worried if the man on the motorbike isn’t wearing his helmet. And we’ll say good morning to the women and men who empty our neighborhood dumpsters. They will no longer be invisible as they perhaps were to some. Many have had to wear the protective mask so that their bright face would shine behind it. It is the face of progress and solidarity. Of tomorrow’s Greece*”. (positive storytelling), and “*In Italy, they have no coffins to bury their dead. A person is sadly lost every two minutes. And the situation is getting worse and worse all over the world*”. (negative storytelling).

Therefore, based on our initial analysis, we find that the use of metaphors and storytelling is both evident and pronounced in the Greek PM’s statements in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.

#### 4.1.2. Types of Metaphors and Stories in the Greek PM's Speeches

After their identification, we proceeded to quantify the occurrence of different kinds of stories and metaphors in the PM's addresses. The metaphors were first analyzed according to the conceptual metaphor taxonomy. The results of this categorization can be reviewed in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Utilization of Metaphors by the Greek PM in Public Addresses during the COVID-19 Crisis: Analysis per Subtype, based on the Conceptual Metaphors taxonomy.

Date	Subtypes of Conceptual Metaphors						Sum (All)
	Structural	Orientalional	Ontological	Absolute	Extended	Dead (Cliché)	
29/2/2020	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
11/3/2020	-	-	3	1	1	1	6
14/3/2020	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
17/3/2020	10	1	6	2	6	-	25
19/3/2020	5	-	1	1	2	-	9
22/3/2020	3	2	7	2	2	-	16
27/3/2020	1	-	1	2	-	3	7
13/4/2020	5	-	4	1	1	-	11
19/4/2020	1	-	1	2	4	1	9
28/4/2020	2	-	1	-	-	2	5
24/9/2020	1	1	3	-	1	2	8
20/10/2020	2	-	2	-	2	-	6
31/10/2020	3	1	3	1	1	4	13
17/11/2020	-	-	-	-	1	1	2
31/12/2020	3	-	2	1	3	2	11
9/2/2021	3	-	2	-	-	1	6
4/3/2021	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
25/3/2021	1	-	-	1	3	1	6
21/4/2021	1	1	1	1	-	1	5
1/5/2021	-	-	-	2	3	-	5
23/9/2021	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
<b>Total *</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>Average **</b>	<b>2.05</b>	<b>0.29</b>	<b>1.76</b>	<b>0.86</b>	<b>1.43</b>	<b>0.90</b>	<b>7.29</b>
<b>% ***</b>	<b>28.1%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>24.2%</b>	<b>11.8%</b>	<b>19.6%</b>	<b>12.4%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* All metaphors identified were categorized in strictly only one of the contextual metaphor subtypes. \*\* Average number of instances per speech/public address for the twenty-one speeches analyzed. \*\*\* Percentage of instances based on total 153 instances of metaphors (all types).

Reviewing the table above, we found that the conceptual metaphors used by the PM in his speeches were structural (28.1%, >2 per speech), orientational (3.9%, <0.3 per speech), ontological (24.2%, almost 2 per speech), absolute (11.8%, almost 1 per speech), extended (19.6%, almost 1.5 per speech), or dead (cliché) (12.4%, almost 1 per speech).

After analyzing the metaphors utilized by the Greek PM in his addresses according to the conceptual metaphor taxonomy, we re-analyzed them as per the existence of theme-based metaphors, according to the theme-based taxonomy. The results of this recategorization can be reviewed in Table 2.

Based on the information included in the table above, we find that the PM used the following theme-based metaphors: war (24.2%, almost 2 per speech), religion (8.5%, >0.6% per speech), and games (0.7%, <0.05% per speech—he only used one game metaphor in one of his 21 speeches).

Reviewing the combined evidence in Tables 1 and 2, in Table 3 we review the total summed instances of the utilization of all types of metaphors, along with the additional analysis of all types of stories in his utilization of storytelling within the speeches.

Reviewing the table above, we find that out of the metaphors employed by the PM, 30.5% can also be categorized in one of the categories of the theme-based taxonomy. As per the stories employed, we find that, in total, more than one story was included in

every two speeches (0.67 per speech). The only types of stories used were either positive (8/14) (42.9%, or almost 1 every three speeches) or negative (57.1%, or almost 1 every two speeches) stories.

**Table 2.** Utilization of Different Types of Theme-Based Metaphors by the Greek PM in Public Addresses during the COVID-19 Crisis.

Date	Subtypes of Theme-Based Metaphors			
	War	Religious	Game & Sport	Sum (All)
29/2/2020	-	-	-	-
11/3/2020	1	2	-	3
14/3/2020	-	1	-	1
17/3/2020	15	-	-	15
19/3/2020	5	-	-	5
22/3/2020	3	-	-	3
27/3/2020	-	-	-	-
13/4/2020	2	5	-	7
19/4/2020	-	5	-	5
28/4/2020	2	-	-	2
24/9/2020	1	-	-	1
20/10/2020	2	-	-	2
31/10/2020	2	-	1	3
17/11/2020	1	-	-	1
31/12/2020	1	-	-	1
9/2/2021	-	-	-	-
4/3/2021	-	-	-	-
25/3/2021	-	-	-	-
21/4/2021	2	-	-	2
1/5/2021	-	-	-	-
23/9/2021	-	-	-	-
<b>Total *</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Average **</b>	<b>1.76</b>	<b>0.62</b>	<b>0.05</b>	<b>2.43</b>
<b>% ***</b>	<b>24.2%</b>	<b>8.5%</b>	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>33.3%</b>

\* All theme-based metaphors were also categorized (and accounted for) in the conceptual metaphor taxonomy. \*\* Average number of instances per speech/public address for the twenty-one speeches analyzed. \*\*\* Percentage of instances based on a total of 153 instances of metaphors (all types).

**Table 3.** Utilization of Different Types of Metaphors and Stories by the Greek PM in Public Addresses during the COVID-19 Crisis.

Date	Metaphors			Storytelling			Total (Metaphors & Stories)
	Theme-Based	Non-Theme-Based	Sum	Negative	Positive	Sum	
29/2/2020	-	1	1	-	-	-	1
11/3/2020	3	3	6	-	-	-	6
14/3/2020	1	-	1	-	1	1	2
17/3/2020	15	10	25	1	1	2	27
19/3/2020	5	4	9	-	-	-	9
22/3/2020	3	13	16	-	-	-	16
27/3/2020	-	7	7	1	-	1	8
13/4/2020	7	4	11	-	-	-	11
19/4/2020	5	4	9	-	-	-	9
28/4/2020	2	3	5	-	-	-	5
24/9/2020	1	7	8	2	-	2	10
20/10/2020	2	4	6	-	-	-	6
31/10/2020	3	10	13	-	-	-	13
17/11/2020	1	1	2	1	-	1	3
31/12/2020	1	10	11	-	3	3	14
9/2/2021	-	6	6	-	-	-	6
4/3/2021	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 3. Cont.

Date	Metaphors			Storytelling			Total (Metaphors & Stories)
	Theme-Based	Non-Theme-Based	Sum	Negative	Positive	Sum	
25/3/2021	-	6	6	-	2	2	8
21/4/2021	2	3	5	-	-	-	5
1/5/2021	-	5	5	1	1	2	7
23/9/2021	-	1	1	-	-	-	1
<b>Total</b>	51	102	<b>153</b>	6	8	<b>14</b>	<b>167</b>
<b>Average *</b>	2.43	4.86	<b>7.29</b>	0.29	0.38	<b>0.67</b>	<b>7.95</b>
<b>% **</b>	30.5%	61.1%	<b>91.6%</b>	3.6%	4.8%	<b>8.4%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Average number of instances per speech/public address for the twenty-one speeches analyzed. \*\* Percentage of instances based on total 167 instances of metaphors and stories (all types).

#### 4.1.3. Intensity of Usage of Metaphors and Storytelling by the Greek PM during the Crisis

Reviewing the evidence in Tables 1–3, we see that the usage of metaphors and storytelling was not evenly distributed across all of the PM's public statements. In some cases, many instances occurred, while in others only a few did. In order to attempt to explain this fact, we will turn to examine the progress of the pandemic in Greece in connection to the dates when the speeches were delivered. Table 4 includes a timeline of the restrictive measures that were imposed during the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic in Greece.

**Table 4.** Timeline of COVID-19 restrictive containment measures (e.g., social distancing) imposed during the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic in Greece. Adapted from (Ladi et al. 2021).

Date	Containment Measures
27 February 2020	Cancellation of all (Clean Monday/Halloween) carnival festivities
9 March 2020	Cancellation of big events of more than 1000 people, sports events, and school trips; suspension of all flights to and from northern Italy
10 March 2020	Closure of all educational establishments
12 March 2020	Closure of all lawcourts, theatres, cinemas, clubs, gyms, and playgrounds
13 March 2020	Closure of all museums, archaeological sites, sports facilities, shopping centers, cafes, bars, and restaurants—except for supermarkets, pharmacies, and food stores offering take-away or delivery
14 March 2020	Suspension of all flights to and from Italy; closure of all organized beaches and ski resorts
16 March 2020	Suspension of all services in areas of religious worship of any religion or dogma; closure of retail shops; closure of borders with and suspension of all flights to and from Albania and North Macedonia; suspension of all flights to and from Spain; prohibition on all cruise ships and sailboats docking in Greek ports; imposition of 14-day home quarantine on those entering the country
18 March 2020	Imposition of special restrictions on migrant camps and facilities in regard to movement and visitors; ban on public gatherings of more than ten people and imposition of 1000 euros fine on violators; closure of external borders—in common with EU member-states—to non-EU nationals
21 March 2020	Restriction on travel to the islands—except for permanent residents and supply trucks
22 March 2020	Closure of all hotels—except three each in Athens and Thessaloniki and one per regional unit; closure of all parks, recreation areas, and marinas
23 March 2020	Imposition of total lockdown and restriction on all non-essential movement throughout the country—the imposition of 150 euros fine on violators; suspension of all flights to and from the UK and Turkey
28 March 2020	Suspension of all flights to and from Germany and the Netherlands
4 April 2020	Extension of lockdown until 27 April
23 April 2020	Extension of lockdown until 4 May
20 October 2020	The use of masks becomes mandatory everywhere and there is a prohibition of standing in indoor halls
31 October 2020	The territory is divided into two zones: Surveillance and Increased Risk. Use of masks everywhere, indoors, and outdoors. Restriction of traffic from 12:00 at night to 5:00 in the morning. Implement teleworking 50% in the public and private sectors. And full tele-education in universities. In the Increased Risk Zone Suspension of the operation of all catering premises, places of entertainment, culture, and sport
28 February 2021	Additional measures in high-risk zones with the closure of all retail outlets and distance learning at all levels.
3 May 2021	Gradual lifting of the measures. Outdoor dining reopens
10 May 2021	Secondary and primary schools reopen
15 May 2021	Tourism opens

As we already have seen through our analysis of the Greek PM's statements, in the context of his twenty-one (21) speeches from the first lockdown until when the social distancing measures were released, he used metaphors and storytelling. However, their use was not distributed evenly among all speeches. In some speeches, the use was extensive, while in others it was close to non-existent.

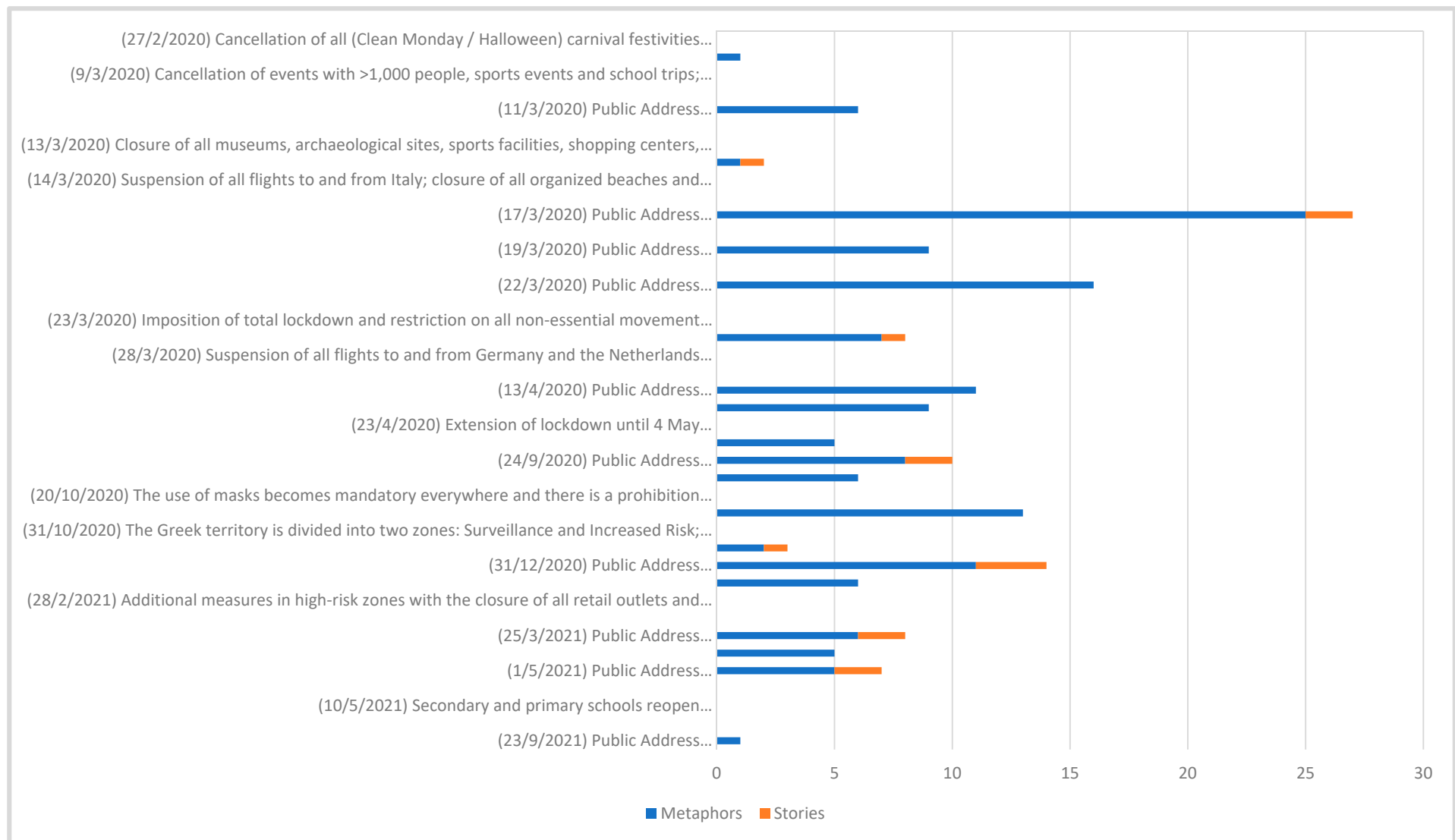
Reflecting on the timeline of events presented in Table 4, as well as the numerical assessment of metaphors per speech, we will attempt to provide an explanation of the cases where the utilization of metaphors and storytelling was significantly pronounced. Figure 4 presents the number of metaphors and stories used by the Greek PM in his speeches, positioned in the timeline of events (and containment measures) that took place. As we can see, there are specific cases where the number of metaphors and stories used was much more pronounced. These cases seem to be connected to the severity of the health crisis.

On 17 March 2020, the Greek PM used the highest number of metaphors and stories in his address. On 16 March 2020 (the previous day), the containment measures effected by the Greek government were the suspension of all services in areas of religious worship of any religion or dogma; the closure of retail shops; the closure of borders, and the suspension of all flights to and from Albania and North Macedonia; the suspension of all flights to and from Spain; the prohibition of all cruise ships and sailboats docking in Greek ports; and the imposition of a 14-day home quarantine on those entering the country. This package of measures was stricter and harsher than ever before, especially the closure of places of religious worship of any religion or dogma. For Greek Orthodox Christians (the dominant dogma in Greece), it was a measure that had never been implemented before, and the fact that Orthodox Easter (the most significant event for Orthodox Christians) was approaching made it even worse. In his address on 17 March 2020 (one day after the measures were effected), the Greek PM used 25 metaphors (conceptual, absolute, extended, and dead/cliché metaphors), 15 of which were war metaphors, as well as 2 stories. This was the date when the PM used the most metaphors and stories in all of his addresses. It makes absolute sense, as this was the most important and difficult date; at that time the Greek people needed to understand why the measures were so strict and how dangerous the pandemic was for them in order to accept them. Moreover, the PM's message had to be understood by citizens of all ages and be clear about the eminent threat that had occurred, in order to gain their trust and make the implementation of the restrictive measures both possible and effective.

One week later, on 22 March 2020 the PM announced the additional closure of all hotels (except three each in Athens and Thessaloniki and one per regional unit), along with the closure of all parks, recreation areas, and marinas. Moreover, further measures were announced the next day in the form of the imposition of a total lockdown and restrictions on non-essential movement throughout the country. Now the freedom to circulate seemed to have been lost for all. Not even a park was left open for walks, and a total lockdown followed. In his address on the same day, he used 19 metaphors in total (war, conceptual, extended, absolute), the second-highest number used in his speeches.

In his addresses on April 2020, when the time of Greek Orthodox Easter had arrived, the PM used a high number of metaphors and stories, including a lot of religious metaphors. His speeches were inspired by the Bible "Bearing one another's burdens, as the Apostle Paul called for". He also spoke about the Resurrection ("The light of the Resurrection will light our way until life returns, step by step, to its normal rhythms") and the Holy Week. "This year, the Week of Passions (the Holy Week) lasted more than fifty days. But the Resurrection now lights the way for the joyful exit from the storm of the pandemic", showing optimism and hope that soon citizens will return to their normal lives.





**Figure 4.** Number of Metaphors and Stories used by the Greek PM in his speeches Positioned in the Timeline of Events.

In Greece, the ease of the measures and “re-opening” after the pandemic’s first phase started on 4 May 2020 and were gradually put in place until September. However, on 23 September 2020, the number of new laboratory-confirmed cases of the disease and the total number of cases had once again begun to rise significantly and continued to do so until the end of October. The Prime Minister, in his public speech on 31 October 2020, used the fourth-largest number of metaphors and stories in one speech. He used metaphors to explain that he “is not allowed to close his eyes to the harsh reality”, “the coronavirus knew how to slip through the cracks of the negligence of a few, undermining the efforts of the many”, “The good weather holidays stopped to be Greek citizens ally”, and that “there is another battle to be given”. His speech was essentially about introducing new measures for the containment of COVID-19: The Greek territory was divided into two zones instead of four: Surveillance and Increased Risk, mandatory mask use was imposed both indoors and outdoors, restriction of traffic from 12:00 in the evening to 5:00 in the morning, implementation of 50% teleworking scenarios in the public and private sectors, complete tele-education in universities, no rallies allowed, and of course, as always, observing distances and personal hygiene. In this case, a total of 16 metaphors of all types were used in his speech.

On 31 December 2020, the Prime Minister’s public message for the new year also involved a lot of metaphors (12) and stories (3), taking third place in the total number of metaphors and stories used in one speech. In a short story about the upcoming year, he explained that it was going to be “a dense year, closing old wounds and opening new horizons”. He also mentioned that just as the Greeks once met the great currents of nation-states, democracy, and the rule of law, they all must listen to the message of their times: growth for all with dynamism, extroversion, and respect for the environment. The difference at that time was that the vaccine had arrived in Greece, and so he also used a short story about it as he explained that “the passport to a better life is already here: The vaccine is our shield, and the baton of health that the new year takes over from the departing one. . . . Now, therefore, is the time to maturely cross the bridge between the end of the war with the coronavirus and the beginning of the battle for progress. A bridge, however, that is fraught with pitfalls. That is why we must cross it slowly and steadily”. He finally talked about his personal experience with the vaccination—that he was vaccinated quickly, easily, and safely. In fact, he has personally seen and vouches for the abilities of Greece’s doctors and nurses, and he urges the citizens more fervently to trust him by facilitating their work until the end of this great ordeal.

Based on the above, we find that the intensity of the usage of metaphors and storytelling by the Greek PM in the context of the COVID-19 crisis fluctuated according to the severity of the health crisis in Greece. Moreover, both the intensity and the selection of the types of metaphors and stories used also corresponded to the contextual characteristics of the specific time in terms of, e.g., significant religious or other co-occurring events.

#### *4.2. Usage of Metaphors and Storytelling by the President of Ukraine during the Ongoing Conflict*

We gathered and analyzed the Ukrainian President’s addresses (twenty-five in total) to international parliaments in the context of the conflict in Ukraine during the three initial months of the recent invasion. From the onset of the invasion on 24/2/2022, the Ukrainian president began to organize addresses to parliaments internationally in an attempt to recruit the aid of allies internationally. In the first three months of the conflict (until 31/5/2022), the Ukrainian president addressed the parliaments of twenty-five countries across the world. All statements were first gathered from the official website of the President of Ukraine (<https://www.president.gov.ua>, accessed on 15 February 2023) and their content was analyzed, before proceeding to their categorization and assessment.

#### 4.2.1. Identification of Metaphors and Storytelling Instances in the Ukraine President's Addresses

Analyzing the Ukraine President's addresses qualitatively, we found that he often used both conceptual and theme-based metaphors in his speeches, as well as storytelling.

As per the Conceptual Metaphors taxonomy, the utilization of structural, orientational, ontological, absolute, extended, and dead (cliché) metaphors was evident. We offer the following representative examples: *"Black Pages of history"* and *"Warm attitude"* (structural), *"Hide under other countries' flags"* (orientational), *"Sacrificing our lives in the name of the future" / "Bare hands" / "Tear our country apart"* (ontological), *"Leave this market flooded with our blood"* (absolute), *"No. It burned the plane, it burned the iron. It destroyed matter, not soul. The shell, not the essence. Not freedom. Not dignity. Not independence"*. (extended), *"Historic steps, next step in our planet"* (dead/cliché). It is worthy to note that frequent repetition was made in some of the metaphors employed, such as *"Black pages of history"*, *"Warm attitude"*, *"Darkest time"*, *"It is hell"*, *"The world is destabilized"*, *"Tear our country apart"*, while specific words such as the word *"blood"* were also frequently included in the metaphors employed.

Moreover, the Ukrainian president utilized both positive and negative stories. For example: *"Filiki Eteria, founded in our Odesa, has played a role in the history of your country, which cannot be overestimated. And I urge you now, openly, to create such a new union of friends, which will be able to save the Ukrainians and Greeks of the south of our state. Which will be able to help Mariupol"*. (positive storytelling), *"Remember September 11th. A terrible day in 2001, when evil tried to turn your cities into a battlefield. When innocent people were attacked. Attacked from the air. In a way no one expected"*. (negative storytelling).

Therefore, based on our initial analysis, we find that the use of metaphors and storytelling is both evident and pronounced in the Ukrainian President's statements in the context of the ongoing conflict with Russia.

#### 4.2.2. Types of Metaphors and Stories in the Ukrainian President's Addresses

After their identification, the metaphors were first analyzed according to the conceptual metaphor taxonomy. The results of this categorization can be reviewed in Table 5.

Reviewing the table above, we found that the conceptual metaphors used by the PM in his speeches were more than 4 per speech. As per their type, they were structural (30.4%, >1 per speech), orientational (9.8%, 0.4 per speech), ontological (18.6%, almost 1 per speech), absolute (8.8%, more than 1 every three speeches), extended (18.6%, almost 1 per speech), or dead (cliché) (13.7%, >1 every two speeches). We found that no metaphors also belonged to the theme-based taxonomy.

Utilizing the evidence shown in Tables 5 and 6, we review the total summed instances of the utilization of metaphors, along with the stories that were included in the context of storytelling within the Ukraine President's speeches.

Reviewing the table above, we find that, in total, more than one story was included in every speech (1.44 per speech). The only types of stories used were either positive (25%, or almost 1 every three speeches) or negative (75%, or more than 1 in every speech) stories. The instances of metaphors were threefold compared to stories.

**Table 5.** Utilization of Metaphors by the Ukraine President in his Addresses: Analysis per Subtype, based on the Conceptual Metaphors taxonomy.

Date	Place & Title of Speech	Subtypes of Conceptual Metaphors						Sum (All)
		Structural	Orientalational	Ontological	Absolute	Extended	Dead (Cliché)	
8/3/2022	Address by the President of Ukraine to the Parliament of the United Kingdom	3	-	2	-	-	-	5
11/3/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in the Sejm of the Republic of Poland	2	-	1	-	-	1	4
12/3/2022	Address by President of Ukraine to Italians and all Europeans	1	-	1	1	-	-	3
15/3/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in the Parliament of Canada	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
16/3/2022	Address by President of Ukraine to the US Congress	4	-	4	1	1	-	10
17/3/2022	Address by President of Ukraine to the Bundestag	-	4	-	-	1	-	5
19/3/2022	Address by President of Ukraine to the people of Switzerland	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
23/3/2022	Speech by the President of Ukraine at a joint meeting of the Senate, the National Assembly of the French Republic, and the Council of Paris	1	1	-	1	-	-	3
23/3/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in the Parliament of Japan	2	-	1	-	2	-	5
24/3/2022	Speech by the President of Ukraine at the Riksdag in Sweden	1	1	-	-	1	1	4
29/3/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in Folketing (Denmark)	1	-	-	1	-	3	5
30/3/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in the Norwegian Storting	1	-	1	1	1	1	5
31/3/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in the States General of the Netherlands	-	-	1	2	2	-	5
31/3/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in the Australian Parliament	3	-	1	1	1	-	6
4/4/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in the Romanian Parliament	-	2	-	-	1	1	4
5/4/2022	Speech by the President of Ukraine in the Cortes Generales of Spain	1	-	1	-	2	-	4
7/4/2022	Speech by the President of Ukraine in the House of Representatives of Cyprus	-	-	1	-	-	2	3
7/4/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in the Parliament of Greece	1	-	1	-	1	-	3
8/4/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in Eduskunta, the Parliament of Finland	1	-	1	-	-	-	2
11/4/2022	Speech by the President of Ukraine in the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea	2	-	-	-	1	1	4
13/4/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in the Riigikogu, Estonian Parliament	3	1	-	-	1	-	5
21/4/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in the Assembly of the Republic, Parliament of Portugal	1	1	-	1	-	1	4
26/5/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in the Saeima of Latvia	1	-	2	-	-	1	4
27/5/2022	President of Ukraine addressed the citizens of Belarus	-	-	-	-	2	2	4
31/5/2022	President of Ukraine address to the Parliament of Belgium	1	-	1	-	2	-	4
<b>Total *</b>		<b>31</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>Average **</b>		<b>1.24</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>0.76</b>	<b>0.36</b>	<b>0.76</b>	<b>0.56</b>	<b>4.08</b>
<b>% ***</b>		<b>30.4%</b>	<b>9.8%</b>	<b>18.6%</b>	<b>8.8%</b>	<b>18.6%</b>	<b>13.7%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* All metaphors identified were categorized in strictly only one of the contextual metaphor subtypes. \*\* Average number of instances per speech/public address for the twenty-five speeches analyzed. \*\*\* Percentage of instances based on a total of 102 instances of metaphors (all types).

**Table 6.** Utilization of Different Types of Metaphors and Stories by the Ukraine President in Public Addresses.

Date		Metaphors	Storytelling			Total (Metaphors & Stories)
			Negative	Positive	Sum	
8/3/2022	Address by the President of Ukraine to the Parliament of the United Kingdom	5	1	-	1	6
11/3/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in the Sejm of the Republic of Poland	4	1	-	1	5
12/3/2022	Address by President of Ukraine to Italians and all Europeans	3	2	2	4	7
15/3/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in the Parliament of Canada	0	2	-	2	2
16/3/2022	Address by President of Ukraine to the US Congress	10	2	-	2	12
17/3/2022	Address by President of Ukraine to the Bundestag	5	-	-	-	5
19/3/2022	Address by President of Ukraine to the people of Switzerland	1	1	1	2	3
23/3/2022	Speech by the President of Ukraine at a joint meeting of the Senate, the National Assembly of the French Republic, and the Council of Paris	3	1	-	1	4
23/3/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in the Parliament of Japan	5	1	1	2	7
24/3/2022	Speech by the President of Ukraine at the Riksdag in Sweden	4	1	-	1	5
29/3/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in Folketing (Denmark)	5	1	-	1	6
30/3/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in the Norwegian Storting	5	1	1	2	7
31/3/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in the States General of the Netherlands	5	1	-	1	6
31/3/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in the Australian Parliament	6	1	-	1	7
4/4/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in the Romanian Parliament	4	2	1	3	7
5/4/2022	Speech by the President of Ukraine in the Cortes Generales of Spain	4	2	1	3	7
7/4/2022	Speech by the President of Ukraine in the House of Representatives of Cyprus	3	1	-	1	4
7/4/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in the Parliament of Greece	3	1	1	2	5
8/4/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in Eduskunta, the Parliament of Finland	2	1	-	1	3
11/4/2022	Speech by the President of Ukraine in the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea	4	1	-	1	5
13/4/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in the Riigikogu, Estonian Parliament	5	-	-	0	5
21/4/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in the Assembly of the Republic, Parliament of Portugal	4	1	-	1	5
26/5/2022	Speech by President of Ukraine in the Saeima of Latvia	4	-	1	1	5
27/5/2022	President of Ukraine addressed the citizens of Belarus	4	1	-	1	5
31/5/2022	President of Ukraine address to the Parliament of Belgium	4	1	-	1	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>102</b>	<b>27 (75% **)</b>	<b>9 (25% **)</b>	<b>36 (100% **)</b>	<b>138</b>
<b>Average *</b>		<b>4.08</b>	<b>1.08</b>	<b>0.36</b>	<b>1.44</b>	<b>5.52</b>
<b>% ***</b>		<b>73.9%</b>	<b>19.6%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>26.1%</b>	<b>100%</b>

\* Average number of instances per speech/public address for the twenty-five speeches analyzed. \*\* Percentage of instances based on a total of 36 instances of stories (all types). \*\*\* Percentage of instances based on a total of 138 instances of metaphors and stories (all types).



#### 4.2.3. Intensity of Usage of Metaphors and Storytelling by the Ukrainian President during the Crisis

Reviewing the evidence in Tables 5 and 6, we see that the usage of metaphors and storytelling was not evenly distributed across all of the Ukraine President's public statements. In some cases, many instances occurred, while in others only a few.

In order to attempt to explain this fact, we will turn to examine the progress of the Ukraine crisis in connection to the dates and countries where the speeches were delivered. Table 7 includes a timeline of the progress of the recent crisis in Ukraine until today.

**Table 7.** A month-by-month timeline of the first year of the 2022–2023 conflict in Ukraine (February 2022–January 2023). Adapted from Euronews ([Askew 2023](#)).

Date	Progress and Events of the Conflict
February 2022	<i>The invasion begins:</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Russia invades on 24th February.</li> <li>• The Ukraine President films himself walking through the streets of Kyiv, delivering the message: "I am here. We will not lay down any weapons".</li> <li>• The EU opens its doors to hundreds of thousands of refugees from Ukraine</li> </ul>
	<i>Shockwaves from the invasion reverberate around the world:</i>
March 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food and energy prices climb as attention turns to the wider impact of the war. There are pointed concerns about the cost of living in the West, while food security becomes a worry across huge swathes of the developing world.</li> <li>• Russian forces encounter stubborn resistance around Kyiv and their advance starts to splutter and stall.</li> <li>• Evidence of potential war crimes brought to light as Russian forces pull back from areas around Kyiv such as Bucha.</li> <li>• Russia's push to capture the Ukrainian capital fails.</li> </ul>
	<i>A new phase of war:</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Russian missile strike hits a train station in Kramatorsk on 8 April, killing at least 50 civilians—including women and children—and wounding more than 100.</li> </ul>
April 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Russia pivots towards the east as it launches a new offensive to seize the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.</li> <li>• A suspected Ukrainian missile sinks the flagship of Russia's Black Sea Fleet, the Moskva.</li> <li>• Nearly two-thirds of Ukraine's children are already displaced by war, according to the UN.</li> </ul>
	<i>NATO grows:</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sweden and Finland unveil their bids to join NATO, although there is political opposition from Turkey and Hungary which will continue all year.</li> </ul>
May 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Russian President Vladimir Putin has cited NATO expansion as one of the main reasons for invading Ukraine, but it appears the invasion has had the opposite effect of strengthening the Western military alliance.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Russia holds its yearly Victory Day Parade on 9 May to mark the USSR's defeat of Nazism in the Second World War.</li> <li>• In a rare glimpse of lighter news, Ukraine wins the Eurovision song contest, though Italian police reveal the event was targeted by Russian hackers.</li> <li>• Fighters in the Azovstal steel mill—the last pocket of Ukrainian resistance in Mariupol—hoist up the white flag and surrender.</li> </ul>
	<i>100 days of war:</i>
June 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100 days of war have passed. Tens of thousands of dead, millions were uprooted from their homes, and Ukraine's historical and cultural sites were devastated by fighting.</li> <li>• Nike leaves Russia, becoming the latest in a string of Western brands to exit the country over the war. Experts say these high-profile departures, along with international sanctions, are crippling the Russian economy.</li> <li>• Up to 181 million people in 41 countries could face acute food insecurity and outright famine, UN projections show, as a global food crisis is looming, with millions of tons of Ukrainian grain languishing in silos since the start of the war.</li> <li>• Ukrainian forces recapture Snake Island, a tiny islet off the coast of southern Ukraine in the Black Sea.</li> </ul>

Table 7. Cont.

Date	Progress and Events of the Conflict
	<i>Russia advances in the East:</i>
July 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The last city in the eastern Luhansk region is captured by Russian forces.</li> <li>Ukraine's embattled forces focus on defending Donetsk, the second part of the prized Donbas, a heavily industrialized region in eastern Ukraine, that has become the site of the biggest battle in Europe in generations.</li> <li>Inflation reaches record highs in the Eurozone, with the euro and the dollar reaching parity (1 EUR = 1 USD).</li> <li>Russia begins to periodically shut down the Nord Stream gas pipelines to increase pressure on Europe. European leaders alarmed on the edge of an energy crisis ahead of winter.</li> <li>Ukraine and Russia agree to a landmark deal allowing Ukrainian grain to be exported across the Black Sea, a major breakthrough aimed at easing the global food crisis.</li> <li>HIMARS missiles from the US begin hitting Russian ammo depots, logistics, and command and control systems.</li> </ul>
	<i>Gas exports to Europe stop:</i>
August 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Amnesty International publishes a report that accuses Ukraine of riding roughshod with civilian life by placing its military in residential areas.</li> <li>Powerful explosions rock an airbase in the Russian-occupied Crimea peninsula. No side explains the string of blasts, which destroy several Russian planes and damaged more than 80 buildings.</li> <li>Ukraine and Russia have been flirting with catastrophe at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in southern Ukraine for months. But now UN chief Antonio Guterres says the pair should stop their "suicidal attacks" on the nuclear plant, saying both sides should end fighting there.</li> <li>A suspected car bomb goes off in Moscow killing a TV commentator, though observers think her father—considered a close associate of the Russian President—may have been the intended target.</li> <li>All gas exports to Europe are halted on 31 August, with Russia's state-owned energy giant Gazprom citing maintenance work on the Nord Stream 1 pipeline. Prices surge immediately.</li> </ul>
	<i>Mobilization:</i>
September 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ukraine launches a rapid counter-offensive in the northeastern Kharkiv region, sending Russian units into retreat.</li> <li>The Ukraine President raises the Ukrainian flag in the war-scarred city of Izium on 10 September. Occupied by Russia for six months, it is a big strategic win for Kyiv.</li> <li>Putin announces a "partial mobilization" of 300,000 troops to fight in Ukraine, triggering a mass flight of Russians escaping conscription into neighboring Georgia and Kazakhstan.</li> <li>The US claims "hundreds of thousands" of Ukrainian citizens are being forcibly deported to Russia in a "series of horrors".</li> <li>Almost 1200 protestors are arrested in cities across Russia after the call-up. Many of these demonstrations are in areas populated by Russia's ethnic minorities, who claim they are disproportionately targeted by the draft.</li> <li>Russia officially annexes Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia on 30 September, and declares that they will be part of Russia "forever".</li> </ul>
	<i>Sabotage:</i>
October 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A large explosion tears through a bridge linking Russia and Crimea, which serves as a major supply route for Moscow's forces fighting in Ukraine. Kyiv does not take responsibility for the blast, though Russia points to "Ukrainian terror".</li> <li>Russia begins bombing Ukraine's energy infrastructure, knocking out power and heating ahead of winter. Military analysts suggest to Euronews that this is a "strategy of escalation" intended to "break the national morale".</li> <li>The war in Ukraine and rising inflation plunge an additional four million children (2.8 million of which are Russian) into poverty, according to an October report by UNICEF.</li> </ul>
	<i>Kherson recaptured by Ukraine troops:</i>
November 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ukrainian troops pour into Kherson on 11 November. The southern port city was one of the first to fall to Russian forces, during the early days of the war.</li> <li>Poland is put on high alert after a blast near the Ukrainian border kills two people. It turns out the deadly explosion was caused by a Ukrainian air defense missile.</li> <li>Inflation in Europe eases but remains in painful double digits, hitting 10% in November.</li> <li>NATO promises to admit Ukraine into the Western alliance, though there are considerable doubts over when Kyiv will be allowed to join.</li> </ul>

Table 7. Cont.

Date	Progress and Events of the Conflict
	<i>Grim warnings for spring:</i>
December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ukraine President visits the US—his first state visit outside the country since the start of the war.</li> <li>• US President declares that Ukraine will “never be alone” and promises to send Patriot air defense systems to help Ukraine stave off Russian attacks on its energy infrastructure. The US had been reluctant to supply this long-range weapon to Ukraine over fears of inflaming tensions with Russia.</li> <li>• Moscow warns Washington about sending more weapons to Kyiv.</li> <li>• Ukrainian authorities raise fears that Russia may try to take Kyiv again in the New Year, after its abortive offensive at the start of the war.</li> <li>• On Christmas Day, the Russian President declares that Russia is “ready to negotiate” with Ukraine—a demand ruled out by leaders in Ukraine. The Russian president publicly uses the word “war” to refer to his country’s invasion for the first time.</li> </ul>
	<i>Tanks, tanks, tanks:</i>
January 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amid mounting political pressure, Germany finally agrees to supply Ukraine with Leopard 2 battle tanks, paving the way for the US and other NATO allies to follow suit. Some hailed the move as a significant boost to Kyiv’s war effort though others questioned if the number of tanks was enough and whether Ukraine would be able to use them effectively. Russia characterized the move as a “blatant provocation”.</li> <li>• Almost as soon as the tank deliveries got the green light, Kyiv began asking for fighter jets.</li> <li>• After months of gritty fighting, Ukraine admits withdrawing from the eastern town of Soledar. Moscow has portrayed the fight as key to seizing the strategic town of Bakhmut and the prized Donbas region. But the importance of the salt-mining town is debated by some.</li> <li>• Russia and Belarus begin joint drills, sparking fears that Moscow could use its ally to launch a fresh ground offensive in spring.</li> </ul>

Reflecting on the timeline of events presented in Table 7 as well as the numerical assessment of metaphors per public address, we will attempt to provide an explanation of the cases where the utilization of metaphors and storytelling was significantly pronounced. Figure 5 presents the number of metaphors and stories used by the Ukrainian President in his addresses, positioned in the timeline of events (and containment measures) that took place. As we can see, there is some fluctuation in the number of metaphors and stories used during the different phases of the war, while in some specific speeches, the utilization of metaphors and stories is particularly pronounced.

Reviewing the timeline of events in the Ukraine crisis, along with the utilization of metaphors and stories by the Ukraine President, at first glance we found no obvious direct connection between them. The intensity of the usage of both metaphors and stories, in this case, seemed to have been based more on the differing cultural and historical characteristics of the people in the countries where he spoke. However, the visualization offered in Figure 5 provides additional insight. We see that the use of metaphors and stories by the Ukraine President was somewhat more pronounced during the first month after the invasion (March) than the second (April), while in the third month (May), the total number of metaphors and stories kept to a somewhat more basic level (5 per public address). Moreover, the number of speeches delivered also declined each month.

What may be inferred is first that the systematic and strong utilization of metaphors and stories has been successful in convincing nations worldwide to align with and provide support to Ukraine throughout this crisis. Indicatively, it is evident that the use of metaphors and storytelling was much more evident in the speeches delivered during the first month after the onset of the crisis when the events were more shocking and the need to recruit worldwide support and allies was more pronounced. Indicatively, during his address to the US Congress (16/3/2022), the Ukraine president used almost twice as many metaphors and stories (12 in total) than in any other case. The success of this strategy seems to have been recorded through the continued and increasing support of the US towards Ukraine from then on, above all other countries, which culminated in his visit to the US in December 2022, which in turn led to the provision of very valuable support for his country.



**Figure 5.** Number of Metaphors and Stories used by the Ukrainian President's addresses are Positioned in the Timeline of Events.

In essence, the President of Ukraine has already managed to win over international public opinion by doing something extremely simple: using communication as a weapon and enriching his speech with metaphors and stories. He has already spoken in more than twenty national parliaments, and the beginning of each speech is a reference to the number of days of the war, a narration about a victim, and a reference to World War II. He focuses on a characteristic element of a country's culture or an important historical event and tries to link them to his narrative about the situation in Ukraine. For example, in Finland, a country with a tradition of education, he spoke about the destruction of schools and educational institutions in his country by the bombing. A characteristic of his speech in Germany (Bundestag, Germany) is that the metaphors he used had the word "wall" in them. In countries like the USA, he makes a reference to the 11th of September 2001 ("9/11"); in Greece, he spoke about the Filiki Etaireia that was established in Odessa to fire up the Greek revolution for independence in 1821; and in Israel, he talked about the Nazis. To the French, he spoke of freedom, equality, and fraternity. To the English, he repeated the Shakespearean "to live or not to live".

In every one of his speeches, he uses metaphors and storytelling to convey the message of the heroism of the Ukrainian people, to stop the war, and for the rest of the world to support Ukraine both during the war by providing weapons and military equipment, and when it tries to rebuild itself after the end of the war. He is considered a master at conveying short messages through a few words or phrases that are memorable, repetitive, and quotable by the media. Recent examples include: "When you attack us, it will be our faces you see, not our backs". "The fight is here. I need ammunition, not a ride". "If we win, and I am sure we'll win, this will be the victory for the whole democratic world". "This will be a victory for our freedom. This will be the victory of light over darkness, of freedom over slavery".

Besides the speeches in the National Parliaments, it is worth mentioning his speeches, filled with metaphors, at the Grammy Awards on 3rd April 2022 and at Stanford University on 22nd of May 2022. "Fill the silence with music", Ukraine's President pleaded in his address to musicians and the public at the 64th edition of the Grammys in Las Vegas. He stated that: "The war. What is more opposite to music? The silence of ruined cities and killed people", "Our musicians wear body armor instead of tuxedos. They sing to the wounded in hospitals. Even to those who can't hear them. But the music will break through anyway. We defend our freedom. To live. To love. To sound". "On our land, we are fighting Russia which brings horrible silence with its bombs. The dead silence Fill the silence with your music. Fill it out today to tell our story. Tell the truth about this war on your social networks, and TV. Support us, in any way you can. Any - but not silence. And then peace will come".

At Stanford University, the beginning of his speech was: *"I am grateful to you for your interest and for such a number of sincere and caring bright eyes that I see now, see today. I see people in front of me, people who are not in bulletproof vests, who are not in helmets and who are not in bomb shelters. There are no wounded by enemy shelling among you. I am very glad. Glad for you. And this meeting of ours cannot be interrupted by an air alarm signal, because California is not threatened by Russian missiles. But, unfortunately, this is not the case in Ukraine". And he continues by saying "Now I use words that each and every one of you read and hear very often in the media, in books. "Struggle for freedom", "myth", "Russian army", "war", "survived", "trenches", "path", and "peace". Each of these words seems to be immediately clear. But do you feel all their depth now?". "A child from Mariupol, a city that was completely destroyed by Russian shelling. This little boy in the evacuation was very grateful to all those who sheltered his family and other residents of Mariupol. He really wanted to thank those who helped. He invited everyone to pay a visit to him. He said—come to us next summer, to Mariupol. And he says: yes, there is no more city ... but the sea is left! And this story is about life. Which is sure to win. And which matters most, in fact, for each and every one. And this story is about a man who remains sincere and grateful even in the most terrible circumstances because he is a free man". "Every day you should not just ask yourself another question, but be sure to find the answer: who matters most and why? This is the*



*main question for me: who matters most and why? Take care of yourself, your family, loved ones, and friends. Take care of the world”.*

Based on the above, we find that the frequency of public addresses to international parliaments and the intensity of the usage of metaphors and storytelling therein by the Ukrainian President during the ongoing conflict seemed to have the tendency to decline to some degree. However, it kept to a basic level in all speeches. Perhaps this may be attributed to the fact that the war remained active and ongoing, with no evident fluctuation as to its intensity either. At the same time, we also found evidence that the selection of the types and content of metaphors and stories used seemed to significantly correspond to the contextual characteristics of the specific country to which the speech was addressed, in terms of, e.g., significant cultural or historic circumstances and events of the past or present.

#### 4.3. Cumulative and Comparative Findings from Both Cases

Based on our analysis, we find that both leaders made frequent and extensive use of both metaphors and storytelling in their public addresses. According to the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the Greek PM's public addresses during the COVID-19 pandemic, we found that he regularly used different types of both metaphors and storytelling (more than five occurrences per speech on average). The occurrence of metaphors was far more frequent than storytelling (more than tenfold). An average of more than seven metaphors were included in each one of his speeches, compared to a little more than one story in every two speeches. As per their types, the most frequently occurring types of metaphors in his speeches, according to the conceptual metaphors taxonomy, were on average: structural (more than two per speech), ontological (almost two per speech), extended (almost one and a half per speech), absolute, and dead (cliché) (almost one per speech for each). At the same time, almost a third of the aforementioned metaphors were also theme-based, centered around war and religion. In fact, the PM made extensive use of war metaphors (almost two per speech), religious metaphors (more than one every two speeches), and much less use of game metaphors (only one used within the twenty-one speeches analyzed). As per the use of storytelling, the stories used were more positive (almost one every two speeches) than negative (almost one every three speeches) in their nature.

According to the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the Ukraine President's speeches in the context of the Ukraine crisis of 2022, we found that he also regularly used different types of both metaphors and storytelling (almost eight occurrences per speech on average). However, in this case, although the occurrence of metaphors was also more frequent than storytelling, the difference was less pronounced (less than threefold). An average of more than four metaphors were included in each one of his speeches, compared to almost three stories in every two speeches. As per their types, the most frequently occurring types of metaphors in his speeches, according to the conceptual metaphors taxonomy, were, on average, structural (more than one per speech), ontological (almost one per speech), extended (almost one per speech), dead (cliché) (more than one every two speeches), and absolute (more than one every three speeches). At the same time, in contrast to the Greek PM's case, we found that none of the metaphors employed by the Ukrainian president could also be categorized in the theme-based categories in the taxonomy (i.e., war, religion, or game). Finally, the instances of metaphors in the Ukrainian president's speeches were overall threefold compared to stories.

The fact that compared to the Greek prime minister's speeches, in the Ukrainian president's speeches, there is no mention of “war”, “religion”, or “game & sport” metaphors may be attributable to the fact that using metaphors on war when speaking about war would be a paradox, speaking about religion to nations with different religions would be problematic, and using game metaphors in the context of war might be inappropriate. The reason is that any reference to words like battle, war, or weapons is real and not metaphorical when a country is actually at war. The fact that there is no mention of religion may be due to the fact that his speeches are addressed to different states, customs, and traditions and not to the people of a country with a strong majority of one religious

dogma, as was the case with the Prime Minister of Greece addressing Greek citizens (in their majority Christian Orthodox). Finally, there is no mention of game metaphors in the Ukraine President's speeches and only one such mention in the Greek PM's addresses, as it is difficult to compare both war and a severe health crisis with a game.

As per the use of storytelling, we found that it was much more extensive by the Ukrainian president than in the case of the Greek PM. Moreover, the stories used by the Ukraine President were more negative (more than one in every speech) than positive (almost one in every three speeches) in their nature—the opposite of the use of storytelling by the Greek PM, where the stories used were more positive (almost one every two speeches) than negative (almost one every three speeches) in their nature. Therefore, we find that perhaps in the case of wartime communication, negative stories may be preferable to positive stories, while in health crises the opposite may be true. Positive stories talk about victories, fulfilled desires, and wishes and can help in the creation and sharing of vision and objectives, team and community building, and creating an understanding of the standpoints of others, while negative stories talk about danger, problems (solved or unsolved), and defeat and can help in conveying the facts and new knowledge, as well as understanding and changing the terms of present reality, through the description of mistakes, moments of ignorance, and difficulties people had to overcome (Denning 2004; Mládková 2013). Therefore, it seems that—no matter the difference in the balance between positive and negative stories—the utilization of both positive and negative stories is advisable in both cases of war-related crises, as well as other non-war-related crises. Moreover, the Ukrainian President tended to make more extensive use of formal stories (mainly *chronicles* and *accounts*) in his speeches.

Apart from the types of metaphors and stories employed, having reviewed the significant events that took place during the times when the speeches were made, we also found differences in the variation in the intensity with which metaphors and storytelling were used by the Greek PM and Ukrainian President. More specifically, we found that in the case of the Greek PM, significantly more metaphors and stories were employed in those instances when the surrounding situation was more severe and harsh measures needed to be imposed. This variation in the intensity of the utilization of metaphors and stories in connection to surrounding conditions was also corroborated to an extent, but not as expressed in the Ukrainian President's speeches. Apart from his speech to the US Senate, where twice the metaphors were employed than in any other speech, in all other cases, the number of metaphors and stories employed by the Ukraine President was comparable. However, a tendency to use more metaphors and stories was recorded during the first month of the conflict than in the second month, while in the third month, the number was kept at a basic level. Apart from that, we found that the frequency of public addresses to international parliaments by the Ukrainian President during the ongoing conflict significantly declined over time (more speeches were delivered in the first month, fewer in the second, and least of all in the third). However, it kept to a basic level in all speeches. Perhaps this may be attributed to the fact that the war remained active and ongoing, with no evident fluctuation as to its intensity either. At the same time, we also found evidence that the selection of the types and content of metaphors and stories used seemed to significantly correspond to the contextual characteristics of the specific country to which the speech was addressed, in terms of, e.g., significant cultural or historic circumstances and events of the past or present.

The fact that the use of metaphors and stories remained above a basic level in all speeches, combined with the fact that the level of fluctuation was limited, may perhaps be attributed to the fact that in the case of Ukraine, the crisis was and remained intense throughout the period analyzed, as the conflict was ongoing and never ceased. Therefore, for instance, the pronounced utilization of metaphors and stories in the US speech (compared to all other speeches) may also be attributed to the fact that the support from this ally in specific was much more pronounced and important compared to other allies. However, this remains to be confirmed, as the otherwise constant utilization of adequate metaphors and stories with comparable levels of intensity may also be connected to the

individual style of this specific leader. Finally, the strategy of both leaders towards varying their intensity of utilizing metaphors and stories in their speeches seems to have paid off, as in both cases the motivational and engagement results recorded were positive, both by the press as well as through their practical impact.

## 5. Discussion & Conclusions

Metaphors and storytelling are widely considered powerful tools that can be utilized for the enhancement of leadership effectiveness. Accordingly, history has recorded numerous cases where leaders (be they company or country leaders) have resorted to using them in order to more effectively and clearly convey their thoughts, captivate, and convince their audience, and especially more so in times of crisis. In the present study, we investigate the following research question: *“What types of metaphors and storytelling techniques do political leaders use in contemporary times of crises, and to what extent? Does the intensity with which political leaders use metaphors and stories fluctuate based on the severity of the crisis faced?”*.

We adopt a case study research methodology to analyze the statements of two country leaders in contemporary times of crisis as per their content in different types of metaphors and stories (both qualitatively and quantitatively: the prime minister of Greece during the COVID-19 crisis and the president of Ukraine during the 2022–2023 conflict with Russia. Both cases were purposefully selected, as they represented cases where the success of the communication strategy followed was widely and internationally acknowledged and acclaimed. The Greek PM’s communication strategy was acclaimed by international media as he managed to convince and motivate the citizens to follow the imposed measures, including social distancing. On the other hand, the Ukrainian President is a remarkable paradigm, based on his success in leading his country in times of conflict and war. That has a lot to do with what he says and how he says it, and has helped him convince parliaments worldwide through his speeches, towards gaining international support.

Different categories and taxonomies of metaphors and stories have been suggested in the literature. Moreover, several different types of metaphors and stories with different foci and content have been used in leaders’ discourse during crises in the past. However, existing taxonomies offer different perspectives that have found use in past studies within the same context. Hence, in this study, we have constructed and utilized our respective taxonomies of metaphors and stories by combining and synthesizing different views toward better categorizing the use of metaphors and stories by political leaders in particular.

Reviewing our most important findings, we deduce that the use of metaphors and storytelling is both evident and pronounced in both the Greek PM’s statements in the context of the COVID-19 crisis as well as the Ukrainian President’s addresses to parliaments internationally in the context of the ongoing conflict with Russia. Both leaders regularly used different types of both metaphors and storytelling, but the occurrence of metaphors was far more frequent than storytelling. As per their types, the most frequently occurring types of metaphors in their speeches, according to the conceptual metaphors taxonomy, were structural, ontological, extended, absolute, and dead (cliché). At the same time, in the case of the Greek PM, almost a third of the aforementioned metaphors were also theme-based, around war and religion, and much less around games. On the contrary, we found that none of the metaphors employed by the Ukraine President could also be categorized into the theme-based categories in the taxonomy (i.e., war, religion, or game)—perhaps due to the fact that using metaphors revolving around war when speaking about an actual ongoing war would be a paradox while speaking about religion to nations with different religions would be problematic, and using game metaphors in the context of war might be inappropriate. As per the use of storytelling, the stories used were either positive or negative in nature. In the case of wartime communication, negative stories may be preferable to positive stories, while in health crises the opposite may be true (as reflected by the mix of stories employed by the two leaders). However, no matter the difference in the balance between positive and negative stories, the utilization of both positive and negative stories is advisable in both cases of war-related crises, as well as other non-war-related

crises. Moreover, as per their content, the use of formal stories (mainly *chronicles* and *accounts*) has been recorded.

We also find that there is an indication that the intensity of the usage of metaphors and storytelling seemed to fluctuate according to the level of severity of the crisis faced. However, although it existed, the fluctuation in the intensity of the usage of metaphors and storytelling by the Ukrainian President was less pronounced than in the case of the Greek PM. Perhaps this may be attributed to the fact that the war remained active and ongoing (with limited fluctuation as per its intensity), whereas the COVID-19 crisis was characterized by bouts and waves. However, as the need to recruit allies was more severe in the initial stages of the conflict, both the number of speeches to international parliaments and the tendency to use metaphors and stories in the corresponding addresses tended to be higher. Finally, both the intensity and the selection of the types of metaphors and stories used seemed to also correspond to the contextual characteristics of the specific time in terms of, e.g., significant religious or other co-occurring events in both cases. In the Ukraine President's case, for instance, we also found evidence that the selection of the types and content of metaphors and stories used seemed to significantly correspond to the contextual characteristics of the specific country to which the speech was addressed, in terms of, e.g., significant cultural or historic circumstances and events of the past or present.

### 5.1. Theoretical & Practical Contribution

Our findings contribute to the existing theory in four ways. First, combining insight from existing taxonomies, we have provided two combinatory taxonomies—a taxonomy of metaphors and a taxonomy of stories—that can be utilized in the context of studies that analyze the utilization of metaphors and storytelling, especially by leaders. Second, we have confirmed and provided additional support for the fact that, as already evident from past research, political leaders indeed use metaphors and storytelling in times of crisis. Third, we have provided insight with regard to the types of metaphors and stories that have successfully been used by leaders in times of crisis to engage and motivate. Finally, our research has added to the existing literature by providing evidence that the use of these tools (metaphors and storytelling) by leaders becomes more intense as the situations of the crisis faced intensify. This insight may be used by researchers to conduct similar investigations in the future, taking into account both the types of metaphors and/or stories that can be investigated in analyses of leaders' communication patterns. Apart from their theoretical value, our findings also bear significant practical contributions. First, the taxonomy of metaphors and stories that we provide can be utilized in order to organize and articulate the delivery of speeches by leaders in the future. Moreover, according to our findings, in times of crisis, future leaders would gain by employing both metaphors and storytelling with increasing intensity/frequency according to the severity of the situation faced, to gain the trust of and convince their audience to support their decisions, as well as earn their support for a shared cause. At the same time, should the audience share common backgrounds (such as culture or religion), it is also suggested that the theme of the metaphors and stories employed by the leaders be shaped to fit their audiences' shared cultural/ethnic/religious/historical background and/or shared values and beliefs.

### 5.2. Study Limitations & Suggestions for Future Work

As with all research, our findings have their limitations. First, the strength of, our study results is limited by the fact that they stem from the analysis of two specific cases in the context of two different crises. Moreover, although longitudinal in nature, our investigation has been conducted within a limited timeframe. Finally, our work has been based solely on data analysis, without the capability to intervene in any way or design the utilization of metaphors or storytelling by the leaders we analyzed ahead of time.

Based on the reported limitations, we suggest that, accordingly, future researchers can benefit by focusing on conducting their research with a broader sample of leaders, across a wider timeframe, or in the context of a variety of crises. Moreover, experimental designs

could lead to the production of more quantitatively rich results. For instance, we expect that organizing experiments where the amount and type of metaphors and storytelling utilized by the leader in each of their addresses can be regulated by the researchers would lead to additional interesting insight. We also note that, although it is difficult to explicate the number of meanings expressed by individual metaphors, more closely examining the meanings of individual metaphors can offer great insights into both the structure and functions of metaphorical language in general (Gibbs 2015). Since in our research, we have not investigated the effectiveness of using various forms of narration and metaphors separately, future researchers can benefit by testing the effectiveness of using different forms of narration and metaphors in practical contexts (either in isolation or in combined sets). Future research may also focus on attempting to directly map the suggested connection between the intensity of the utilization of metaphors and stories and the severity of the situation faced, as well as its effect, more accurately. In essence, future work may hence focus on also testing the hypothesis that “the worse the crisis situation, the more metaphors and stories leaders use to effectively convey their message” through experimentation. Towards that end, designing studies that include regulated use of metaphors and stories, preferably with the parallel observation of control groups, is suggested.

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