

## Direction Metaphors in Political Discourse: Imran Khan and the Rhetoric of Change

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### Abstract

*Journey Metaphors are among the most pervasive source domains used both in daily life and in political discourse as they follow a clear-cut source-path-goal schema where the direction is a fundamental element. The cross-domain mapping between source and target domains is a means of gaining insight into the cognitive activity of the speaker. Metaphors of the journey are widely used in the political discourse generated by Imran Khan with special emphasis upon direction. Metaphorical expressions identified from speeches of Imran in both English and Urdu language have been analyzed using the Critical Metaphor Analysis approach given by Charteris-Black (2005) where linguistic metaphors have been interpreted semantically, pragmatically and in cognition to generate conceptual metaphors. Khan's obsession with direction activates the PAKISTAN IS OFF TRACK conceptual metaphor necessitating a journey of change under his leadership. He highlights the failures of others to evoke images of a destructive past from which freedom becomes essential.*

### Key Words

Direction Metaphors,  
Journey Metaphors,  
Conceptual Metaphors,  
Political Discourse.

### Introduction

Metaphors used by politicians in the Pakistani context are structured in cognition and manifest in the discourse generated by them. Political leaders using both Urdu and English languages, by and large, activate conceptual metaphors of similar patterns in both languages in the political context. These conceptual metaphors – realized through metaphorical expressions – are mental schemata typically influenced by cultural factors rather than language. Therefore, mental structures based on shared settings, religious background, social and cultural environment activate conceptual metaphors that reveal not only the ideology of the politicians, but provide insight into their political practices. Cognitive processes wrapped in layers of linguistic metaphors are unpacked through an analysis of discourse which includes the context of its production. Political practices revealed through the non-literal language of the leaders provide ample insight into the social practices of a region. Imran Khan, in his political speeches, makes extensive use of metaphorical expressions pertaining to the direction which this study analyses in order to reveal the political ideology of change and therefore the underlay of his political practices. This, as a result, allows us to observe how metaphors of direction – as a linguistic device – are structured and function in the political discourse produced by Khan within the Pakistani context and how the concept of change evoke empathy from the audience. Also, it provides insight into the cognitive activity of Imran Khan through the activation of conceptual metaphors.

Imran Khan, in his speeches, uses metaphorical expressions that allow his intentions to be conveyed in an implicit manner. Since metaphor, according to Charteris-Black (2004), is a means by which politicians use metaphors to model adaptation to change and are employed for criticism of over-controlling regimes of power, Khan activates mental scripts that harp about the model of change that his party proposes by mainly highlighting the failures of mainstream political parties of Pakistan and criticizing their wrong policies.

The simple style that he employs include very few tokens of metaphorical expressions and as a result draws from a limited number of source domains. We can find the central theme of change that he uses by highlighting previous failures and draws great emotional gratitude from it that has the effect of strengthening an evaluation. The special focus on the journey of the nation taking on

a 'wrong direction' metaphors contributes to evoking an image of Khan as a guide from among the masses.

Excessive use of metaphors pertaining to specific source domains reveals obsessions such as in the case of Imran Khan, the frequent use of metaphors from the direction source domain provides insight into the cognitive process that evokes a sense of change by conceptualizing direction as a means of breaking free from a destructive past. The list of activated conceptual metaphors is provided that allows us to delve into the cognitive process of the speaker as they are considered as links between language and the mental process thus providing information about the prevalent mindsets of the Pakistani politicians.

### **Framework and Methodology**

This study uses the Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) approach given by Charteris-Black (2005) to qualitatively analyze metaphorical expressions pertaining to the journey/direction used by Imran Khan. CMA draws upon the semantic, pragmatic and cognitive domains of interpretation for analysis. Metaphors are identified using the Pragglejaz identification method for metaphors (PragglejazGroup, 2007). The study provides a discussion on metaphorical expressions drawn from journey and direction source domain in both Urdu and English and generates a list of conceptual metaphors.

### **Analysis**

The Major source domain that Khan draws most of his metaphorical expressions is journey/direction that covers a total of 39% of the total metaphors. Here the journey metaphor also includes direction, seen as a part of the journey. This includes the metaphorical use of words such as 'up', 'down', 'beyond' etc.

### **Journey Metaphor**

The journey metaphor is among the most pervasive source domains used as it emerges from a pervasive, everyday human experience. This has been elaborated by Lakoff and Johnson (1989), (p 60-61) as:

*Our understanding of life as a journey uses our knowledge about journeys. All journeys involve travelers, paths traveled, places where we start, and places where we have been. Some journeys are purposeful and have destinations that we set out for, while others may involve wandering without any destination in mind, consciously or more likely unconsciously, a correspondence between a traveler and person living life, the road traveled and the 'course' of a lifetime, a starting point and a time of birth, and so on.*

The journey metaphor was first introduced into cognitive linguistics by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) through the metaphor LOVE IS JOURNEY that is explained through expressions such as "our relationship is at a crossroads". Later on, the LIFE IS JOURNEY metaphor developed to give a much wider and general concept of journey that was traced to its literary and biblical origins by Lakoff who explains how the choice of the two paths pertaining to 'good' and 'evil' are provided where God is the 'guide' and death the point of 'departure'. This concept was then altered and structured as PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY IS TRAVELLING ALONG A PATH TOWARDS A DESTINATION (1993).

The journey metaphors are more frequently used as they provide a very clear cut schema that one can easily draw upon from everyday experiences. Journey source follows the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL image schema where it is easy to decipher the elements of the journey that include any movement that involves a beginning point, an endpoint, a place in between and a direction that is taken in the process.

### **Direction Metaphor**

The majority of journey metaphors used by Khan signify direction. This clearly indicates an obsession with direction rather than a starting or even the ending point that is more significant in the course of a journey. The words such as 'going down', 'rising up', 'beyond', 'downward', 'straight', and phrases such as 'wrong direction', 'take a wrong road' indicate Khan's preference of keeping track of where one is headed just as the conservatives had a preference of employing the journey metaphor to refer to the movement forward in time, thus adding a temporal dimension whereas, in labor discourse, movement is always seen as having spatial dimensions (Charteris-Black, 2005). In the study of spatial concepts in political metaphors Chilton asserts, what is *closer* to the speaker is good whereas what is *distant* from the speaker is classed as bad. In the direction metaphors used by Khan that are spatial in nature, going *up* is correct whereas, going *down* is wrong. This is explained in the following examples:

The moment the captain went down, the team went down with him\_(S2A23)

*I found in cricket when the chips were down the entire team looked towards the captain (S2A22)*

In both the above examples, by using cricket as a target domain, Khan emphasizes the directionality of how a leader ought to proceed. A leader has the great power to be a person who contributes in both the success and

failure of his people in such a way that if the leader is capable it is only then that success comes to the people and if he is incapable then they are sure to fail, thus projecting himself as a capable leader. Churchill too had presented himself as a heroic leader inspired by a sense of moral self-righteousness through the use of the following metaphor quoted by Charteris-Black (2005).

“...the Prime Minister led us forward in a great body into a struggle against aggression, against wrongdoing, faithlessness and cruelty from which there is no going back.”

Khan through his evocative language highlights the influence of a leader, thus painting himself as a successful leader who will deliver to the nation as he had already delivered while being a captain of the cricket team. His use of cricket as a target domain allows the audience to draw upon the Pakistani victory of 1999 which is the only time Pakistan won the cricket world cup.

Most of the following metaphors are what Lakoff and Johnson termed as ‘orientational’ metaphors as they have a spatial orientation, for example; ‘up-down’, in-out’, ‘front-back’ etc. They are rooted in our physical experience but they may vary from culture to culture in the value and significance attached to them.

### Upward Orientation

We use sensory-motor experiences to form concepts of abstract ideas such as time, emotions etc. which is why conceptual metaphors are present in embodied representations (Casasanto, 2009). Therefore, spatial dimensions are very often used as they are a fundamental part of our perceptual and motor experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 1980). Speakers of English and other languages, form a conceptual framework of time through mapping the concept of future in ‘front’ and the past at the ‘back’ (Sell & Kaschak, 2011) or in some cases the future is ‘right’ and the past ‘left’ (Santiago, Román, Ouellet, Rodríguez, & Parez-Azor, 2010). Considering the Pakistani context, the use of orientational metaphors by Khan indicates that any agreeable event in the political journey in Pakistan is ‘up’. This is in accordance with the conceptual metaphor of HAPPY IS UP introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). The metaphor that arises from the given metaphorical expressions in Khan’s political rhetoric is PROGRESS IS UP. The UP/Down spatial dimension provides a rich conceptual system which can be observed in what Lakoff and Johnson assert that there are some metaphorical concepts such as happiness, health, virtue, consciousness etc. that are mapped as ‘up’ whereas the opposite concepts of evil, illness, vice, unconsciousness etc. are mapped as ‘down’ (1980).

In (S1A2) the ‘going up’ of Tehreek-e-Insaf (Khan’s political party) indicates the increasing popularity of Khan’s party. ‘Political party’ is the target domain that Khan employs here. It is seen that anything that is rooted in our experience makes more sense and is easy to understand whereas, anything that violates the basic human experience is difficult to understand (Langston, 2002). The upward direction also denotes a positive experience that is much easy for the audience to capture and retain in comparison to negative experiences, thus in political rhetoric persuading the audience of one’s own strengths through positive reinforcement is something of the norm. Khan’s need to highlight the importance and the growing strength of his party resonates with his need to come to power. Further, Khan draws upon the opposite pole of the direction continuum to explain the status of the other political parties in comparison. This projects two opposing images simultaneously so that its effect is doubled.

All the poles are reflecting that all the other parties are going down and the only party that is going up is of course the tehreek-e-insaf (S1A2)

The conceptual metaphor PROGRESS IS UP is realized in sentences (S1A3) and (S1A8) by the words ‘picked it up’ and ‘rising up’ that are orientational metaphors that use the ‘lawyers’ movement’ as the target domain. Drawing upon the significance and the popularity of the lawyers’ movement, Khan links it up with progress.

The cameras picked it up and turned it into an issue (sacking of CJ) (S1A3)

Unfortunately, a counter-revolution took place. This movement was just rising up when one of the main players, the convener... The elections got legitimized and so the movement went down(S1A8)

But when he was at the peak of his power (S2A14)

The phrase ‘picked it up’ indicates that it is at a lower status that has to be picked ‘up’ and thus adding to its importance. In sentence (S1A8) again the lawyers’ movement is in a state of progress shown by the word ‘rising up’. Metaphorical concepts are built along the up/down axis as in the case of ‘HAPPY IS UP, GOOD IS UP etc. (Lakoff & Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 1980) as they refer to the human character that reaches up or down as a result of their own action rather than being controlled externally and that most ‘up’ metaphors carry positive power whereas the down carries negative. Communication through body movements, according to Darwin’s theory of evolution, occupies an exalted status as emotions embody action schemes for example joy is denoted by upward body movement and on the other sadness shows downward body movement (Atkinson, Dittrich, Gemmill, & Young, 2004).

What has happened if the level of awareness in public has been rising all the time (S1A18)

I thought one day my people will rise and want change. (S2A33)

Examples (S1A18) and (S2A33) draw on the 'knowledge paradigm' as the target domain. This is mapped upon the direction metaphor for its realization. The 'rising' levels of knowledge of the people that were not well aware of the political situation become a fundamental ingredient in progress. This helps build an image of the audience as receptive and knowledgeable.

### **Downward Orientation**

The following examples from the speeches employ the downward direction metaphors while drawing upon the target domains of 'economy' and 'governance'. Khan highlights As the economic situation goes down...as inflation rises, unemployment rises, more and more the law and order situation is broken down (S1A24)

*A leader never compromises on his dreams, the moment you compromise it's a downward spiral (S2A8)*

There's always a temptation during bad times to accept something lesser than your dream and that's where, as I said, the downward slide starts (S2A17)

the economic situation of the country that is a doing of the previous political administrations, thus there is an underlying political intention in the use of such metaphors. The use of words such as 'goes down, 'downward spiral' and downward slide' all signify a definite deteriorated and negative aspect of the concepts that they map from the target domain. Khan puts emphasis on the qualities of a leader and portrays the negative side of the concept. He then moves on to cite an example of how a good leader should behave, thus portray himself as an able and trusted leader. In example (S2A17) that draws upon the target domain of governance, he once again draws attention to what fatal consequences the nation can face during the event of bad governance. These examples are in accordance with the conceptual metaphor LACK OF CONTROL IS DOWN given by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) thus indicating that the concept of power is mapped upon the vertical dimension.

The conceptual metaphor that can be drawn from the orientational metaphors stressing the lower end of the vertical scale is; NATIONAL POLICIES ARE DOWN. The policies of the government that are highlighted by the above-mentioned metaphors reveal the negative aspect and understanding them with the downward direction lexicons used metaphorically. Here highlighting the policies as down Khan advocate the emergence of policies in the future that will be 'up' according to Lakoff 's conceptual metaphor SUCCESS IS UP (1980). Example (S2H1) provides another aspect of LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor where matrimonial undertakings are a part of the journey of life. The time period through which the government is passing as referred by Khan as the 'honeymoon' period.

The use of orientational metaphors of vertical dimension shows how coherent mental frames occur in speech. The frequent use of these up/down metaphors given in Table 1 follows the same concept as in other cultures. It may be noted that the use of the English language by a non-native may have an influence over the concept that it provides, and also the fact that the speeches selected have been delivered in the UK and Singapore to the non-indigenous audience also may bear influence upon the context. However, the analysis of the Urdu speeches of Khan will reveal a more indigenized perspective and use of metaphors and mental frames.

### **Forward/backward Metaphors**

The forward and backward movement is another central concept while drawing upon the journey metaphor. Khan however only employs the forward movement metaphors of which only three instances are available.

Jinnah...he spoke straight (S2A20)

20 years ago we became the frontline state for the US (S3A9) We ended up taking the easy way out and made ourselves the frontline state and ended up in this mess (S3A13)

These metaphors on one side describe a changed position while on the other they provide the direction in which the change takes place. In the second and third phrase, the metaphor 'frontline' maps upon the target domain 'ally in war'. Frontline state can be understood as the number one state as frontline can be defined as someone at the forefront and in the first position. It can also be conceptualized as 'ally in war is a friend'. The fact that Pakistan jumped into a war that was not meant for its frontiers, but was entirely the doing of the US is being highlighted here to score political points against the previous regimes. The decision to be involved in the war on terror according to Khan was the worst possible one taken by General Musharraf. Khan's rhetoric highlights the mistakes of other leaders that do not conform to the set standards of a good political leader whereas standing out as the only sane voice in the country. The metaphorical phrases 'easy way out' and 'we ended up in this mess' augment given concept by classifying them as something incompetent and slack. Also, being an ally in war will bring chaos and disorder. Thus the conceptualization takes on the addition of 'ally in war is the friend that will bring chaos'.

These examples, however, cannot be considered as the movement forward as there is no movement in being at the 'frontline'. It is more of a static state. In most cases, the forward movement is perceived as a positive aspect and backward as negative which is due to the reason that a journey entails the movement from point A to point B.

In case the movement does not occur, the journey is halted as the distance between A and B remains the same. This lack of purposeful activity will thus be perceived negatively.

### Wrong Direction

Since "Our unconscious system functions like a 'hidden hand' that shapes how we conceptualize all aspects of our experience" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 3) the systematic use of a metaphor thus reveals how these concepts manifest in the language that we use. The metaphoric use of 'reached' to map the concept of 'political problems/bad governance' as a target domain to exemplify that the trajectory followed by the country will lead to the wrong destination. Since journey entails the movement from A to B where B is the destination, Khan asserts that Pakistan has already 'reached' to a destination that was selected by leaders who have been involved in bad governance. Lakoff (1980) sees the journey as a PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY IS TRAVELLING ALONG A PATH TOWARDS A DESTINATION whereas in Khan's rhetoric, the journey instead of being purposeful has lost its purpose and thus leads the masses astray.

The use of the words such as 'reached', take a 'wrong road' and 'wrong direction', '*ghalat chalay gaye*'; Khan refers to the journey of the nation that according to him has been derailed. These metaphors give rise to the conceptual metaphor PAKISTAN IS OFF TRACK.

You can always come up with wrong analysis and go take a wrong road (S2A19)

80% of the people think we're going in the wrong direction (S2A35)

*Humain sochna chāheye ke kidher hum that chalay gaye* (S1H16)

We should think about where we went wrong

### Movement

The following phrases taken from the speech of Khan serve as the underlying concept for the metaphor PROTESTS ARE GROWING MOVEMENTS. Here the movement referred to is the lawyer's movement and the protests are those carried out for it.

Under Asif Zardari the people's party government the all parties movement was renewed for the reinstatement of the chief justice and this time the movement grew (S1A9)  
this time the movement grew...in the second attempt (S1A10)

The fact that the movement grew, is seen as an ability to increase in size, height, maturity and age just as if it were human, thus igniting a special interest in the process. The use of the target domain of protests, therefore, is explained through the conceptual metaphor of movement. This reveals an underlying conceptual metaphorical mapping that compares the target domains of personification, orientation and animal with the conceptual domain of movement. Movement signifies a journey, and this is just another milestone in the journey of life.

In the metaphors given below, there is evidence of the concept of POLITICAL CHANGE IS THE WAY FORWARD. Change in the Pakistani political scenario is a sought after a dream that is synonymous to hope. This underlying concept of change is a fundamental ingredient in Khan's rhetoric. So the belief that something different is in store for the people of Pakistan creates a sense of ethos. Also, what the mainstream political parties have done so far is disastrous, therefore the need for change is a high priority and the only party offering change is Khan's. Change is the most popular slogan upon which Khan's party stands, Khan paints himself as a harbinger of change. The piper blowing the whistle of change. The physical experiences are sharper in contrast to the emotional ones are the ones that are central in terms of our body functions (Lakoff & Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 1980). This change is across the board (S2A34)

I thought one day my people will rise and want change. (S2A33)

### Conclusion

Journey metaphors evoke a sense of change, breaking up from the past, especially when the past is associated with destruction. In this kind of a scenario, Koteyco and Clarke assert that appeals of embarking on a brand new journey are made by the politicians (2009). But the past is normally described positively whereas the journey metaphors are employed to indicate the smooth and continuous transition from one phase to another. Khan, however, highlights a destructive past and calls upon for a new journey towards a better and progressive goal. This is what he calls as the long-awaited 'change' that the people are in wait of. Calling out to people to embark on a journey of change under his leadership Khan evokes the image of breaking free from the past infested by bad policies and corruption induced management of the elected parties thus leading to disaster. He further positively constructs the popularity his party has gained all over the country and terms it as the beginning of that 'change'.

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