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# “Linking the Dots”: Metaphors in the Narrative of Self-Justification by Former President Zuma

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## Abstract

Former South African President Jacob Zuma recently delivered his opening statement at the Zondo Commission in order to address his implication in state capture. Instead of systematically addressing factual aspects, Zuma narrated events in a manner which set him up as strategic key in understanding the “true” reasons for South Africa’s current situation. This article aims to understand the metaphors that build up the conceptual system in terms of which Zuma articulates his self-defence during this appearance, within the broader context of frames and scenarios. Two main frames unite the metaphorical expressions: the frames of warfare and journeys. In order to structure his argument, Zuma capitalises on the way in which these metaphors highlight and hide important factors, but he also manipulates overlapping elements by exploiting the grey area between the literal and metaphorical interpretation of his language.

**Keywords:** metaphor; textual analysis; Jacob Zuma; state capture; Zondo Commission; South African politics

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## 1. Introduction

Mr Jacob Zuma resigned on February 14, 2018 as president of the Republic of South Africa. At the time, he said, “the ANC resolved to recall me as the President of the Republic.” (Zuma 2018) This took place when the allegations of corruption against him mounted, enhanced by the findings of the Public Protector’s reports on improper benefits accrued to the former president during the course of security upgrades to his homestead at Nkandla (Public Protector 2014) and, especially, her report on state capture (Public Protector 2016).

In the build-up to Mr Zuma’s resignation, various apologists put a spin on events to sketch Mr Zuma as the victim of a conspiracy against him, despite mounting public outcry over the course of 2017, particularly after Mr Zuma removed Mr Pravin Gordhan as minister of finance on March 30, 2017 (Shai 2019, 219–220). The “Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture,” which was prescribed by the former public protector, Adv. Thuli Madonsela (Public Protector 2016), has since been instituted under the chairmanship of Deputy Chief Justice Raymond Zondo, and continues to hear testimony about the extent of alleged activities associated with state capture. In July 2019, Former President Zuma himself testified at the commission for the first time and, at the time of writing, was called as witness again but refused to return to the commission.

Mr Zuma’s opponents claim that he abused state resources for private gain and allowed the Gupta family to improperly influence appointments and policy in government, as set forth most forcefully by Pauw (2017). Mr Zuma is not without vocal support, however. His defenders, as Desai (2018) points out, claim that Mr Zuma advanced the cause of Radical Economic Transformation, which was intended to break the stranglehold that White Monopoly Capital had on South Africa and ultimately lead to greater economic opportunity and a significant advance in the fight against poverty. Dlamini (2020), for instance, is of the opinion that Mr Zuma is pursued relentlessly, treated unfairly, and singled out in ways that others are not.

Mr Zuma himself has been a significant voice in this space of contested views, articulating his personal innocence while advancing the view that he is the target of a long-term conspiracy to “character assassinate” him (Zuma 2019a). His argumentation often develops a link between attacks on him as a person and a larger attack on the liberation movement, South Africa as a whole, or Radical Economic Transformation. Desai (2018, 509–510) draws attention to Mr Zuma’s use of liberation tropes in his self-defence, and to the importance of language:

The repertoire of denial by Zuma’s keepers in South Africa was gallingly surreal and typically sycophantic towards the Big Man. Swimming pools became fire-fighting reservoirs ... The criminal enterprise grouped behind the Zuptas that was able to use the language of anti-imperialism and the whiteness of monopoly capital to loot the state has been pushed back.

The use of language to create narratives of interpretation is a key to understanding the political contestations in South African politics. As the infamous example of “fire pool” for “swimming pool” (Pilane 2016) illustrated so poignantly, language can be used to (try to) mislead; but more generally, through the use of metaphor and other textual constructions, language can open a window onto the conceptualisation of the world according to politicians. Lakoff (2016, 4) notes that a “conceptual metaphor is a conventional way of conceptualizing one domain of experience in terms of another, often unconsciously.” Musolff (2016, 4) points out that political metaphors not only serve a referential function, but also convey pragmatic “added value,” such as an evaluation of a state of affairs or an emotional or persuasive appeal to convince the audience that a perceived problem fits familiar experience patterns, and can therefore be understood and resolved. Scholars of political metaphor often combine the analysis of metaphor with tools from critical discourse analysis, an approach that Charteris-Black (2019, 12) calls Critical Metaphor Analysis, to examine how metaphors are used to create rival, contested views of the world. Charteris-Black (2019, 18) argues that the notion of frames, built up by several metaphors and other rhetorical tropes, overcomes an important problem of metaphor interpretation, where one person’s metaphor is another person’s literal statement. Critical Metaphor Analysis thus considers forms of referential and associative meaning that come into play in the language of politics.

This article aims to understand the use of language, especially metaphors and frames (Musolff 2016, Charteris-Black 2019), in the extended opening statement that Mr Zuma (2019a) offered at the Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture (henceforth Zondo Commission) on July 15, 2019, as key text in the rhetorical contestations related to state capture. The next section of the article will review the basic framework for analysis. This is followed by an exposition of the method adopted in this article, before the two major frames, incorporating their constituent metaphors, are presented: the warfare frame, building on the metaphor POLITICS IS WAR, and the journey frame, which includes various metaphors for personal, institutional and national journeys.

## 2. Concepts for Metaphor Analysis in Political Language

Previous research on metaphor in South African political language approached the phenomenon mainly from the perspective of conceptual metaphor theory, following Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) *Metaphors We Live By*. Apart from the celebrated metaphor of the RAINBOW NATION (Tutu 1996), the most prominent metaphors that have been identified are POLITICS IS WAR; the SOUTH AFRICAN NATION IS A BUILDING, a FAMILY or a CHILD GROWING UP; and RACISM IS AN OBSTACLE and RECONCILIATION IS THE DESTINY, both taken from a larger cluster of JOURNEY metaphors (Malan 2008; Van Rooy and Drejerska 2014).

According to Gibbs (2015, 169) one of the criticisms against metaphor identification schemes is “that they are only capable of capturing metaphorical language at a very

superficial level of analysis.” It is possible to identify more substantive patterns of metaphorical thinking by further investigating the semantic and conceptual content of the identified metaphors (Gibbs 2015, 169).

In this article, the study of metaphor is therefore approached within the context of larger theoretical concepts, along the lines proposed by Charteris-Black (2011; 2019) and Musolff (2016). The key concepts form a taxonomy, with frame at the top, scenario in the middle, and metaphor, alongside non-metaphorical referential language, at the most specific level.

A *frame* is a static network of encyclopaedic knowledge that links multiple semantic domains that are associated with a particular linguistic form (Taylor 1995, 87). When applied in the study of political metaphor, a frame represents a schematic conceptual ensemble that highlights those elements and relations between elements that are relevant to the understanding of a particular concept (Musolff 2016, 30). Charteris-Black (2019, 16) points out that framing introduces a form of cognitive bias through its highlighting—it invites the audience to understand a particular problematic in one way (as opposed to other possible ways of understanding), and conveys a moral perspective on the matter at hand.

A frame is built up not only through several metaphors but also through non-metaphorical language in a text. In his study of the political metaphors of Brexit, Charteris-Black (2019, 17–18) illustrates the concept of frame through the example of the family frame. Key metaphors, but also presuppositions and other references, contribute to building a family frame in terms of which the European Union can be understood as a family of nations, and Brexit can be understood as a divorce between the United Kingdom and the European Union.

A *scenario* is a more specific subtype of a frame (Musolff 2016, 30). It is specified in terms of elements and mappings between source and target domains for the metaphors incorporated in the scenario, and it also includes an ethical evaluation of the elements. Charteris-Black (2019, 20) applies the idea of a scenario to the two versions of the Titanic allegory of Brexit, where allegory functions in a similar way to a frame. In one scenario, associated with how the Remain camp thinks, Britain is the Titanic on route to avoidable tragedy through its hubris; in the other scenario, associated with how the Leave camp thinks, the EU is the Titanic and Britain is in a lifeboat, trying to escape before the Titanic hits the iceberg. Frames and allegories can be worked out in more detail in a scenario, and thus multiple scenarios can be associated with the same frame.

Within these scenarios, *metaphors* can be identified that help to build the scenario and offer certain conceptualisations of abstract target domains in terms of more concrete source domains. The source domains are typically located within the frames and scenarios that are built up over the course of a particular piece of political

communication. The view of metaphor developed by Lakoff and his associates is adopted in this study.

### 3. Method

In political speeches, metaphors are not used for their own sake, but as part of a rhetorical act aimed at persuading a particular audience to accept a speaker's point of view. Carver and Pikalo (2008, 3) argue that whereas cognitive linguists usually approach metaphor at utterance level (which is clearly what the MIPVU tries to capture in very precise steps), political scientists are also interested in the wider contexts of statements and discourses. Thus, in this article, a top-down approach is combined with a very specific focus on linguistic evidence, drawing on the MIPVU.

The MIPVU model is the Vrije Universiteit's reworked version of the MIP (Metaphor Identification Procedure) created by the Pragglejaz Group (Steen et al. 2010, 4–5). According to Steen et al. (2010), a word of which the meaning in context is not literal is the starting point for the identification of potential metaphorical expressions. Gibbs (2015, 160–161) explains that the MIPVU covers words with a direct meaning but which still show cross-domain mappings; aims to identify metaphors where the metaphoric meaning is brought about by substitution or ellipsis; acknowledges when a word formation proposes a cross-domain mapping; and aims to include new metaphoric formations. The MIPVU is used in this study in order to prevent especially less obvious metaphors from being overlooked during the identification process.

Whereas the MIPVU focuses on non-basic meanings as a starting point for metaphor identification, we will pursue both metaphorical and literal readings of source domains, which are unified by frames and scenarios, since, as Charteris-Black (2019, 18) points out, one person's metaphor may be another person's literal statement. Where feasible, we will attend to the use of the same source domain as literal or metaphorical in different parts of Mr Zuma's rhetoric. In fact, we will argue that his skilful blurring of the lines between the literal and metaphorical readings of domains contributes to his persuasiveness.

In this article, we therefore firstly identified the main metaphoric domains after individually doing multiple close readings of the text, identifying possible conceptual metaphors and cross-checking our individual findings. During the follow-up readings, we used a basic MIPVU-approach to the data by tagging the relevant lexical items, not excluding the literal material pertaining to similar themes. The manually tagged text was subsequently analysed using WordSmith Tools 7.0 (Scott 2016). Two main frames, namely warfare and journey, could be identified. Where metaphor clusters can be better understood in terms of a scenario or allegory within these frames, this was also indicated in the analysis.

The principal text for analysis is the opening statement that Former President Zuma made at the Zondo Commission on July 15, 2019. This text is particularly appropriate because of the opportunity that Mr Zuma had to state his case without interruption and without the time constraints typically associated with public statements. The overall delivery of the opening statement took approximately two and a half hours, and was based in part on prepared notes, but from the visual inspection of the delivery, there were also clear stretches that were not delivered from the notes. The genre is that of a prepared speech, rather than a read speech. The transcribed text contains approximately 10 757 words, including a small number of interjections by the chairperson and brief responses by Mr Zuma.

A number of words belonging to other metaphorical mappings were identified; for example, Mr Zuma's long-time enemy is presented as a kind of magician as there has been a "wish" that Mr Zuma will "disappear." Due to space limitations, these metaphors are not explored here, although future research with a larger body of texts may well offer perspectives that relate to other metaphors in the text analysed here.

## 4. Analysis

Mr Zuma's opening statement is framed by literal and metaphorical language from the conceptual domain of warfare. There are two simultaneous wars taking place: a war for control of South Africa—either construed as state capture or as the war against White Monopoly Capital—and a war against the person of Jacob Zuma, referred to as the national and personal war, respectively. Embedded in the overall frame of warfare are a number of journeys which different actors undertake to reach specific destinations. These journeys are often intermediate steps in one or both of the larger wars, where the metaphoric language is not the language of a battle, but of physical movement. In both frames, warfare and journeys, there are concrete wars and journeys, such as the armed liberation struggle waged by the liberation movements against the apartheid government, and Mr Zuma's journeys across space during the apartheid period as part of his involvement in the ANC's struggle. In the post-liberation phase, Mr Zuma makes both concrete and metaphorical use of these two domains to frame his defence.

### 4.1 The Warfare Frame

The frame of warfare is built up with reference to the *participants* in a war: a *soldier* (Mr Zuma himself), *cadres*, *spies*, *intelligence organisations*; the *actions* they take: *fight*, *attack*, *recruit*, and *kill* or *assassinate*; and the coordination of *strategy*: *plan*, *conspire* and *plot*. The frequency of keywords (at the level of the lemma) is reported in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Lemmas from the warfare domain

| Element             | Lemma                     | Frequency |
|---------------------|---------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Participants</b> | comrade                   | 36        |
|                     | spy                       | 13        |
|                     | intelligence organisation | 12        |
|                     | chief of intelligence     | 11        |
|                     | cadre                     | 3         |
|                     | soldier                   | 1         |
| <b>Processes</b>    | capture                   | 11        |
|                     | assassinate               | 7         |
|                     | kill                      | 6         |
|                     | fight                     | 5         |
|                     | recruit                   | 4         |
|                     | attack                    | 2         |
| <b>Strategy</b>     | plan                      | 34        |
|                     | conspiracy                | 7         |
|                     | plot                      | 2         |

A number of important metaphors contribute to the construction of the warfare frame. Mr Zuma frames what his opponents does as REMOVING ZUMA FROM A POLITICAL POSITION IS ASSASSINATING ZUMA. The expressions<sup>1</sup> “character assassination” and “assassinate his character” occur seven times in the text, and while Zuma attributes the origin of these words to his opponents, they become a key rhetorical instrument in his explanation of why he has been called to appear before the Zondo Commission. Also consistent with this metaphor is the expression “the idea that Zuma must be put down.” Related to this is the metaphor ZUMA’S DEPARTURE FROM A POLITICAL POSITION IS DEATH, as in Mr Zuma’s statement “This commission according to those who are implementing this must be the grave of Zuma. He must be buried here.” (Zuma 2019a)

The continued use of the appellation Comrade and reference to the Alliance of the ANC with the South African Communist Party and the labour confederation COSATU activates the warfare frame and in their post-apartheid use has become metaphorical rather than literal, because current politics is still seen as war (see also Malan 2008 and Van Rooy and Drejerska 2014 for analysis of the POLITICS IS WAR metaphor).

Ambiguous at the boundary between literal and metaphorical language is Mr Zuma’s liberal use of terms like *spies*, alongside a single use of *enemies*, to refer to his opponents. While the concrete reading of such terms is clear and uncontroversial when referring to participants in the liberation struggle, it becomes ambiguous when the same terms are applied to the political opponents of Mr Zuma within the ANC and in the

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1 Consistent with the MIPVU method for identifying metaphors, we underline those lexical items that are to be interpreted as non-basic, and thus cue the metaphorical reading of the expression that is being cited from Mr Zuma’s address.



larger business community of South Africa in the post-apartheid era. His “evidence” for making these judgements was challenged in court subsequently, e.g. by former minister Derek Hanekom, whom Mr Zuma identified as a “known enemy agent” on his personal Twitter account a few days after his statement at the Zondo Commission, but in such a manner that he made an overt connection between his testimony at the Zondo Commission and his statement about Mr Hanekom. Mr Hanekom took Mr Zuma to court for defamation and won the case. The Durban High Court found against Mr Zuma and contended that the application of the term *known enemy agent* invokes the meaning of “apartheid era spy.” The court held that it is not literally correct to label a political opponent an enemy, and thus that Mr Zuma’s defence that Mr Hanekom acted in a clandestine, disloyal manner to engage in dialogue with political opponents of Mr Zuma both inside and outside the ANC cannot be justified as fair political comment (*Hanekom v Zuma* 2019).

Mr Zuma appealed the ruling to the Court of Appeals and the Constitutional Court, but all the higher courts found in favour of Mr Hanekom. On August 9, 2020, Mr Zuma published the following text on his personal Twitter account—visible to the public at the time of writing:

- (1) On 25 July 2019, I published a tweet which alleges that Derek Hanekom is a known enemy agent. I unconditionally withdraw this allegation and apologise for making it as it is false. (Zuma 2020)

While doing so only after being compelled by the court, Mr Zuma publicly admits that his use of the expression *enemy agent* is not literally true. Individuals implicated as spies in his opening statement at the Zondo Commission have likewise already submitted sworn affidavits to contradict Mr Zuma’s claims. It appears from this that as much as Mr Zuma may himself believe or would like the audience to believe that these claims against fellow members of the ANC are literal truths, the available evidence does not support the claims, and a metaphorical reading is a more appropriate reading of the evidence that the post-apartheid period is trapped in a war that had its origin in the transition period. Thus, the metaphor ZUMA’S OPPONENTS ARE ENEMIES AND SPIES can also be established, as this is clearly how Mr Zuma construes his political opponents. Along similar lines, then, when Mr Zuma speaks of the recruitment of spies, it becomes a metaphor for coordination or organisation among his political opponents, such as when factions within the ANC debated whether or not Mr Zuma should be recalled in the period leading up to his resignation on February 14, 2018. Referring to the post-apartheid period, Mr Zuma claims the following:

- (2) The critical point is that the plan made way back has been working and our enemies in fact have recruited more even than during the struggle. (Zuma 2019a)

It is exactly the literal interpretation of a statement such as (2) that the Durban High Court declared invalid in a constitutional democracy (*Hanekom v Zuma* 2019, 21–23), pointing out that a democracy allows for contestation in parliament, and to a degree

even requires collaboration and common purpose across party-political lines. Judge Pillay specifically argued that:

To link “enemy” to opposition parties would be the antithesis of all that we stand for as a peace-loving, multi-party democracy, historically grounded in our heritage as negotiators of our revolutionary transformation. The adoption of the Constitution symbolises not the end but the continuation of peaceful transformation through dialogue. To regard opposition parties as enemies of the ANC undermines dialogue. (*Hanekom v Zuma* 2019, 22)

And furthermore, quoting Mr Zuma’s own words in his statement to the Zondo Commission and his legal argument, as well as quoting from the Constitution of South Africa, Judge Pillay held that:

As a member of the ANC “for decades”, having “different leadership responsibilities”, including as President, Mr Zuma must know, support and actively advance dialogue and other bridge building practices to achieve the revolutionary aims of our Constitution. As a conciliator entrusted to lead a nation fractured by “strife, conflict, untold suffering and injustice,” Mr Zuma would not reasonably be understood to mean that members of opposition parties are enemies of the ANC. Reasonable, right-thinking people would not anticipate that Mr Zuma would bear such an adversarial disposition towards opposition parties, let alone encourage such antagonism. Mr Zuma’s insistence that “enemy” refers to opposition parties and his detractors is seriously at odds with our constitutional values. If his beliefs prevail, our democracy would unravel. (*Hanekom v Zuma* 2019, 23)

The literal interpretation of the word *enemy* and semantically related ways of characterising political opponents is thus rejected by the court in very explicit terms, leaving only the metaphorical reading as valid interpretation of Mr Zuma’s wording. This is not to deny that, in various cases, the warfare frame functions literally and not metaphorically. Mr Zuma refers to concrete plots to assassinate him through poisoning or suicide bombers, which are presented as actual attempts on his life, e.g. “they planned to murder me,” “people looking to poison me,” “the plan to kill me,” and “this is attempt on my life” (Zuma 2019a).

Having established the warfare frame, with some of its key metaphors, we now turn to the different scenarios within the warfare frame. This first scenario that Mr Zuma develops overtly in his presentation at the Zondo Commission is the *conspiracy* against him. The next scenario is the very notion of *state capture* itself, which competes with the alternative scenario of the war against *White Monopoly Capital* (henceforth WMC).

In the conspiracy scenario, Mr Zuma is the victim and the agents of the three agencies he alludes to at the beginning of his presentation are the opponents who engage in a process to “character assassinate” him. They also work through various proxies: spies, agents within the liberation movement, and opposition parties. The force of this scenario is that Mr Zuma develops a frame for interpreting any opposition to him as evidence of the presumed conspiracy. That this is largely metaphorical, and not to be interpreted

entirely as literal, referential language, is spelled out in specific detail by Judge Pillay in the judgement of *Hanekom v Zuma* (2019).

His personal war is situated in the larger national war to defeat the apartheid state and achieve political liberation, morphing into a subsequent phase to defeat poverty (increasingly reframed as a scenario where the battle is against WMC), in which Mr Zuma is a key soldier in the forces of the ANC. Both these scenarios are traced back to a plan that his opponents made in 1990:

- (3) There was a plan to deal with Zuma and Zuma has been dealt with all the time. In other words, foreign intelligence organisations, and local ones, of course under apartheid, for a variety of reasons thought it was important to deal with this man. It was important for me to state that anything that happened since that time, I've been linking the dots all the time. (Zuma 2019a)

He offers a second-hand report on the planned attack of the WMC enemies as a piece of evidence for the continued conspiracy:

- (4) For an example, one day comrade Mbalula attended an activity in the farm or home of Mr Rupert and when Rupert saw him, he said, Minister Mbalula—when that happened he was the minister of sports—if Zuma takes out, removes Pravin Gordhan we would shut down the economy of this country. You must go and tell him. ... But he said we would shut down ... we would make the Rand flat on the ground. (Zuma 2019a)

Earlier, when he resigned as president of the republic, Mr Zuma was even more explicit about the war against WMC:

- (5) I respect each member and leader of this glorious movement. I respect its gallant fight against centuries of white minority brutality, whose relics remain today and continue to be entrenched in all manner of sophisticated ways, in order to ensure the continued survival of white privilege. (Zuma 2018)

Mr Zuma characterises himself as a soldier and hero through terms like *save, soldier*, and *survived*. Mr Zuma wanted to “save the organisation [ANC] and to save the country,” a dual allegiance that he does not problematise at any point; the ANC and the government are presented as a single role player in the war. Mr Zuma sees himself as a “soldier” who can “take anything”; he has “survived attempts to kill” him, which reinforces his status as key target for the enemies. In his self-presentation, he frequently conflates the events of the concrete, apartheid era war with the metaphorical extension of the same terms to the post-apartheid period.

In the conspiracy scenario, Mr Zuma forces available evidence to fit the interpretative frame. He denies the existence of counterevidence and continues to protest his innocence; his perception of his innocence strengthens the idea of his victimhood: “Zuma must go. What has he done? Nobody can tell. He’s corrupt. What has he done? Nothing” (Zuma 2019a).

The state-capture scenario is the other warfare scenario. In this scenario, the Gupta family and Mr Zuma, together with a number of other ministers and senior government officials, are alleged to have collaborated to enrich themselves and steal resources from the South African state and taxpayer. The expression *state capture* is itself obviously metaphorical, in that capturing is not used in the concrete referential sense of capturing an enemy (and putting them in prison), but of metaphorically capturing the organs of state to direct them in such a way that personal enrichment results.

Mr Zuma does not agree with this version of events, and it is underrepresented in his own statement at the Zondo Commission. However, he occasionally defends himself explicitly against the allegations. His one line of defence is to point to the constructive and legal, if progressive, business ventures of the Gupta family. He sketches the origins of the *New Age* newspaper venture as follows:

- (6) There had been a problem that had worried us, all of us, that in this country the media is very biased. At all material times, it's just critical. It criticises the country, etc. There is no alternative voice. And if people could complain and say I abused them [the Gupta family], that one I could plead guilty. Because I then one day, having known that we have been trying to have business who are progressive to establish a media sort of alternative voice of what is happening. ... I then said them, man, and making a suggestion. Can you try a business, a media business, because we are comrades, we need an alternative voice. (Zuma 2019a)

Mr Zuma presents himself here as the strategist for the good of the country, and the Guptas as progressive businesspeople who align with the cause of the fight against WMC. Shortly after his appearance at the Zondo Commission, Mr Zuma offered a similar line of defence for another of the alleged participants in state capture, Mr Gavin Watson, who died in a car accident. At his funeral, Mr Zuma praised Mr Watson's continued role in economic upliftment as the fight against WMC, rather than as part of state capture:

- (7) I'd like to say as we say goodbye to Comrade Gavin you must be consoled by the fact that here lies a real comrade, a soldier of our struggle, a comrade who understood the need to liberate South Africa but also understood the need to build South Africa to be a better country that takes care of his citizens. A real Democrat revolutionary in practice not just in theory as we have heard. (Zuma 2019b)

Mr Zuma eventually challenges the very concept of state capture at the Zondo Commission by offering a literalist reading of the concept and using that as basis for a *reductio ad absurdum* argument. He labels the notion of state capture as an exaggeration, and part of the conspiracy against him:

(8) So I have a problem that this is not said to be a commission of corruption if you want to specify it with a particular family. So why do you call it a state capture? *Is that expression meaning that the judges are captured*? Is the government captured? Is the Parliament captured? I'm sure people have said I've got views, particularly because one day I was addressing students in the Eastern Cape and these were students of law. And I said to them, just check this for me.

Why would legal people *accept this expression* and work on it? What purpose does it serve? In other words, you are saying to the international community South African judges are captured. All political parties in Parliament are captured. The executive is captured by this family. It's an exaggeration. It is meant to enhance this narrative against Zuma. (Zuma 2019a, emphasis added)

In summary, the metaphors related to warfare integrate into a comprehensive cognitive model which enables Mr Zuma to present a coherent explanation to the Zondo Commission. The explanation is that he is personally being targeted for the strategic intelligence information he has and for his role, and the complementary roles of his fellow soldiers, in fighting for economic emancipation. His opponents are ultimately the remnants of the apartheid government security branch, in concert with foreign security agencies, who share the collective goal of control over South Africa and its people and resources. This model becomes a filter for information and interpretation, in terms of which Mr Zuma can dismiss allegations of corruption against himself and the Guptas, as part of a campaign of misinformation, which therefore are not in need of refutation.

Within the warfare frame, three scenarios emerge that rely on metaphorical constructs. The source domain is the domain of physical war, which is activated by references to the non-metaphorical armed struggle for liberation against the apartheid government. Mr Zuma extends the source domain metaphorically to the target domain of post-apartheid economic transformation and a war against WMC at national level, but also to a conspiracy against him at personal level. In another scenario, the source domain of warfare is used to frame the activities of state captors, but this is the scenario that Mr Zuma denies and defends himself against.

#### **4.2 The Journey Frame**

The journey domain on which the journey frame is based contains clear spatial and dynamic properties: there is a *beginning*, a *path*, and a *destination*, with *obstacles* along the way. *Movement* along the path is also available to construe abstract and concrete processes that require an expression of movement. During a journey, people can move in and out of spaces, joining or leaving the person on his or her journey. This movement is similar to moving in and out of a *container*. The frequency of keywords that instantiate the journey frame are reported in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Lemmas from the journey frame

| Element  | Lemma      | Frequency |
|--|------------|-----------|
| Process, motion  | process    | 9         |
|  | proceed    | 1         |
|  | walk       | 1         |
| Path   | end        | 8         |
|  | begin      | 7         |
|  | towards    | 3         |
|  | up to here | 1         |
| Obstacles  | remove     | 16        |
|  | against    | 12        |
| Spaces (movement in and out of journey at specific points in time and space) | in         | 123       |
|  | come       | 46        |
|  | go         | 32        |
|  | out        | 23        |
|  | back       | 15        |
|  | into       | 5         |
|  | move away  | 1         |
|  | move out   | 1         |

The journey frame, like the warfare frame, offers a construal of the ongoing engagements between Mr Zuma and his opponents. The language of physical movement and orientation points along a route is quite prominent in Mr Zuma's statement. There is extensive movement IN and OUT of spaces (concrete) and positions (metaphorical, e.g. in employment or in political organisations and government). When confronted with obstacles, or when trying to reach particular destinations, Mr Zuma and his opponents "must find a way," and then "reach a point." Sometimes people move into and out of this specific journey according to space, time, and relevance. This notion is similar to that of a container being a sort of demarcated moment on this journey.

The journey frame is structured in several scenarios. Scenario 1 is Mr Zuma's *political journey*, taking the audience with him in his experiences pre- and post-1994, focussing on his role in the ANC and the government. Scenario 2 is Mr Zuma's *road to the Zondo Commission* as destination. Scenario 3 is Zuma's journey to *understand the conspiracy* against him. In the background, there is also the scenario of a national journey towards liberation—first political and later economic.

In the first scenario, Mr Zuma conceptualises his own *political career as a journey*, in which he identifies various important milestones he has reached. Mr Zuma is on a journey through his entire political life, starting with his first engagements in the struggle ("growing up in the ANC"), leading to his imprisonment ("I have paid for my activities, including going to prison"), exile ("left the country"), and return from exile ("one of those sent ahead of everyone"). Once liberation was achieved, he identifies various positions he reached within the ANC: "finding myself finally in the leadership of the ANC," "my specific task was to be the chief of intelligence"; and later also in

government, as he travelled to the career destination of president of the ANC and subsequently president of the country. Various obstacles threatened to prevent his progress on this road, but he continued, working his way through or around the obstacles.

Mr Zuma was also part of the *liberation struggle journey*, where the first phase reached the destination of political liberation, and the second phase, as yet incomplete, is towards economic freedom. The first destination of political transition included all kinds of milestones, such as that the travellers “reached a point where those who were in prison were out, those who were in exile were back.” He presents himself at times as the driving force of this journey, although he has fellow travellers, progressive people and businesspeople, who travel along. In this journey, there are serious plans of others to prevent the country from reaching its destination, construed metaphorically as blocking Mr Zuma’s progress towards that destination.

From Mr Zuma’s perspective, the story that he must be removed “moves around,” and despite obstacles, his opponents think “we must take this fellow out. We must find a way. Here is a commission.” (Zuma 2019a) The *road to the Zondo Commission* is thus a further scenario that particularises the journey frame. Mr Zuma relates the journey that brought him to the commission as follows: “this commission from my understanding was really created to have me coming here” (Zuma 2019a).

The Zondo Commission becomes an important destination, as it offers Mr Zuma a way of setting things right. Although the antagonists on Mr Zuma’s journey would have liked the Zondo Commission to be his “grave,” he uses the Zondo Commission as a way of placing things in perspective so that “at least some truth” is “known.” This journey is not yet completed as Mr Zuma “might come back with other matters” but he “thought it’s just important at this point to take the matter up to here.”

While explaining his political journey, Zuma also construes his own *attempts to understand the conspiracy* against him as a journey. While the conspiracy itself is mainly construed in terms of the warfare frame, Mr Zuma also draws on the language of journeys to construe the actions of his opponents. They plan intentionally to put obstacles in his journey of progress towards leadership positions. Mr Zuma manages to thwart their plans, but they continue to return with another plan to circumvent the obstacles in their journey towards the destination of removing Mr Zuma from political influence, which is construed as being similar to the destination of regaining control over South Africa, wresting it away from the ANC/the people. The opponents clearly start with a plan which Mr Zuma gets wind of in 1990:

- (9) ... just to go to the point straight, starting in 1990 when we were already inside the country, I received a report, an intelligence report, which was saying there were three intelligence organisations that met, had a meeting, to discuss me and had a plan to begin in 1990 a process of character assassination of Zuma.

Mr Zuma's elaboration of his journey in understanding the conspiracy is further expressed in the following examples: "That's the beginning of the process that has put me where I am today. And I thought it was important to go through this, whatever else would be the end of your process, but at least some truth should be known." (Zuma 2019a) The "plan" points to a clear starting point, which set in motion various events that led to his being at an interim destination of his appearance in front of Judge Zondo, which can be construed as a milestone close to the final destination in this "process" of having his "character assassinated."

Mr Zuma's opponents are journeying towards securing South Africa as a prize. The ANC itself was an obstacle on the opponents' road during the apartheid years, and in recent years, progressive businesspeople like the Guptas became obstacles. Mr Zuma himself is the main obstacle on this road "because if he's there he would use the information he has to either expose or stop our people from going forward." (Zuma 2019a) He is therefore a strategic point of attack in order to "remove" him too. In this sense, he forms the defence and fortifies his integral role securing his importance in uncovering the truth, saving South Africa.

The opponents' plan meets with specific obstacles, such as their misunderstanding that the 1990 ANC conference would be an elective rather than a consultative conference, which necessitates a new plan, a "fallback plan." Looking back, Mr Zuma tells Judge Zondo that "the issue of Zuma must resign, Zuma must leave the leadership started way back as part of this plan." The journey to unseat him continues to meet with obstacles, usually in court, where a judge finds "in favour of Zuma," but then they revise their plan and find another route to reach their destination of removing him from power. The journey frame once again allows Mr Zuma to make salient and incorporate into a systematic account evidence that supports his claims, while allowing (or compelling) him to exclude information to the contrary. For instance, every judicial finding in his favour (except the acquittal on the rape charge in 2006) was overturned on appeal. In his journey, he construes obstacles that prevent him from reaching his destination(s), leaving no conceptual space to engage with his own potential missteps.

In the various journey scenarios, metaphors where organisations such as the ANC and the government are construed variously as paths or as containers come to the fore. One may either be travelling along a career path in an organisation, or one may find oneself inside or outside of a container like the government, and be moved into or removed from a position in government. The various metaphorical journeys are complemented by language that denotes actual material journeys as well, which establishes the journey frame even more firmly.

The construal of information as something material which can be exchanged is clearly evident from this way of talking: "the reason why we wanted to character assassinate Zuma's character was because he has a lot of information that he holds." (Zuma 2019a) Not only information, but also people can be moved into and out of positions. Going



back to 1990, Mr Zuma claims his opponents were worried about “when will he use this information,” and therefore “they took a decision that Zuma must be removed,” hence “they were engaging in this plan and this conspiracy,” which resulted in him being “removed” as the ANC’s head of intelligence in 1991, again “removed” as deputy president of the country in 2005, and ultimately “removed” as president of the country in 2018. The movement into and out of political positions is also illustrated when Zuma refers to certain events: “And of course Tambo moved out and Tata Madiba came in as the president.”

This movement is presented not just on a metaphoric level, but also on a literal level. For example, Zuma explains that his enemies came from outside and inside South Africa: “Two of these organisations came from two different big countries, and one of them came from inside South Africa” and “There’ve been people sent from outside the country to come and kill me.”

In the various journey scenarios, Mr Zuma himself is usually the main traveller. Sometimes it seems as if there is a conflation between whose journey he is truly describing: Is it his own personal journey, or that of the ANC, the state or the country? One can therefore identify similarities with the conflation between who the main role-players on the “us”-side in the war metaphor are and whom Mr Zuma regards as being the main travellers.

The journey metaphors provide means to talk about goals and obstacles in a less combative way than the warfare metaphors. The two sets of metaphors are used in largely overlapping functions, but it seems that for sets of connections between events and interpretations, the journey metaphors provide an easier means of construal and expression. The warfare metaphors are close to the material reality in that the war against apartheid was indeed a material war too. Likewise, the journey metaphors find grounding in the physical movement of people in and out of the country and other spaces, and extends into abstract domains like career positions into and out of which Mr Zuma moved. The coherence of Mr Zuma’s own movements, material and abstract, but also the coherence of his opponents’ goals—and an easy way of construing obstacles within goal-oriented action—all follow from the conceptual tools made available by the various journey metaphors employed.

## 5. Conclusion: Mr Zuma’s Use of Metaphor

Mr Zuma frames his self-defence in terms of metaphors and concrete, referential language in which warfare and journeys play an important role. In the warfare frame, he develops two scenarios in self-defence: the conspiracy scenario in which foreign powers in collusion with apartheid-era operatives attempt to assassinate his character, and a war on WMC, where the enemies attack and attempt to neutralise the soldiers struggling for economic liberation. He rejects the second scenario, state capture, as an exaggeration, sidestepping the possibility of metaphorical language by arguing against

a literalist reading. He also largely argues as if his conspiracy and war-on-WMC language is concrete rather than metaphorical, although the courts found that his language cannot be taken as literal truth. While couched in legal, rather than linguistic, metalanguage, the court interpretation of Mr Zuma's language points to only two possible interpretations of the warfare frame: either Mr Zuma is being deceitful, or his language has to be understood metaphorically.

In the journey frame, Mr Zuma develops several scenarios that depend on journey metaphors. He construes his own career path in the ANC and government as a journey (to the top), embedded in the larger journey of the South African nation to political and subsequently economic freedom as destination. His opponents and their plans form obstacles to both himself and the country. He also construes his appearance before the Zondo Commission as the destination of a journey on which his opponents have embarked. Finally, his attempts to understand the conspiracy against him are at times construed as a journey of discovery.

The exact interpretation of metaphorical language is an interesting challenge in Mr Zuma's self-presentation. At times, he overtly acknowledges the possibility of metaphorical language but steers away from it, e.g. when he argues in connection with the concept state capture:

(10) Now I don't know because I never went to any school. I take things perhaps literally.  
(Zuma 2019a)

By suggesting that he takes things literally, he invites the audience to take his own pronouncements literally as well. He further enhances the invitation to understand him literally by extensively using literal, concrete references alongside the "metaphorical" allusions in his own defence. Thus, alongside the metaphorical aspects of warfare, he refers to concrete events in the liberation war, and then invites the audience to see the post-liberation period as an extension of the concrete war against the apartheid government, complete with spies and assassination attempts. In a similar vein, alongside the metaphorical journey scenarios, he makes frequent reference to physical travelling and physical movement of people into and out of the country, or into and out of prison.

Mr Zuma is perhaps best interpreted as adopting an ambiguous stance towards the use of metaphor. He offers the apology that he might not understand certain abstract moves in the arguments of others, when he claims, "I take things perhaps literally" (Zuma 2019a). Building on such literalism, he defends himself against claims that he "auctioned" the country off by exclaiming "What an exaggeration from a lawyer. He can't tell you auction what. What, did I auction Table Mountain? Or auction Johannesburg? I don't know" (Zuma 2019a). One reading of Mr Zuma's argument is that he makes a category mistake (Blackburn 2005, 55–56) because he does not understand that his opponent is referring to the figurative category or aspect of the word *auction*, and not the literal. He therefore tries to refute the argument by giving an

argument based on the literal meaning of the word. However, the defence that he does not understand non-literal meanings is quite disingenuous when judged against the control he has over the metaphors elsewhere in his opening statement, and his literalist interpretation is deemed invalid by the courts. A less charitable reading of his argumentation is that he makes use of the “straw man” logical fallacy (Kreeft 2014, 79): He misrepresents his opponent’s argument in an extreme form, not intended by the opponent, in order to have a kind of absurd target to argue against.

Mr Zuma deftly manipulates metaphors by exploiting the grey area between literalist and metaphorical readings. He exploits the full framing power of warfare and journey metaphors, thereby highlighting those pieces of evidence that support him and hiding contrary evidence. Yet he invites his audience to interpret his claims in the most concrete terms possible, particularly as far as the conspiracy against him is concerned, driven by “spies” like Mr Hanekom. He is “linking the dots all the time,” but on his own terms as he continues to animate and unite his supporters around him. Whether his self-defence stands up to legal scrutiny is for the Zondo Commission to decide, and not a matter to be decided on linguistic grounds.

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