'PUSHING BACK AGAINST THE PUSHBACK' WAR and JOURNEY metaphors in UN Secretary-General António Guterres' Commission on the Status of Women speeches

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Abstract – This paper investigates the role of metaphors of WAR and JOURNEY in shaping the understanding of key themes related to women and girls' rights as articulated by UN Secretary-General António Guterres at the annual sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). By analysing Guterres' opening CSW speeches from 2017 to 2023, this study applies a theoretical framework rooted in cognitive linguistics and metaphor theory to explore the conceptual mappings used in these two metaphorical domains. The analysis reveals that the metaphors of WAR and JOURNEY effectively capture the complexity and multifaceted nature of challenges in women's rights. The metaphor of WAR emphasises the urgency and significance of taking proactive measures to achieve gender equality, portraying women's rights as a battle that requires collective action guided by women. In contrast, the metaphor of JOURNEY acknowledges the existence of structural barriers and highlights the need for transformative action and long-term progress. Additionally, from a rhetorical viewpoint, the study uncovers a shift from portraying women as victims to active agents of change. The metaphors used by Guterres emphasise the leadership role of women in the forefront of the fight for their rights, while recognising the global responsibility and collaborative efforts necessary to address deep-rooted forces of misogyny and patriarchy. However, the paper also underscores a notable absence of explicit references to concrete actions in Guterres' speeches. This omission could be attributed to the nature of the corpus being examined, but it is also believed that incorporating these references would have added more content and credibility to the speeches. While metaphoric language generates awareness and challenges power dynamics, it is essential to critically evaluate the translation of these metaphors into tangible policies and actions.

Keywords: WAR metaphors; JOURNEY metaphors; United Nations; Women's rights; Secretary-General speeches.

1. Introduction

This work explores the role of WAR and JOURNEY metaphors in shaping the understanding of women and girls' rights as articulated by Secretary-General António Guterres in his capacity as a representative of the United Nations (UN). It seeks to investigate their significance, underlying messages, and impact on raising awareness and shaping policies concerning women and girls' rights.

Metaphors are powerful tools for communication, since they bridge the gap between abstract concepts and tangible reality (Cameron 2003; Lakoff, Johnson 1980; Semino 2008; Steen 2019; Thibodeau, Boroditsky 2011). They make complex ideas more accessible and relatable by evoking vivid mental images, emotions, and associations (Lakoff, Johnson 1980).

In the context of women and girls' rights, metaphors play a crucial role in framing discussions, shaping public perception, and mobilising support (Jordan 2016; Winter 2008). The UN, as a global advocate for human rights, often uses metaphorical language

to capture attention, shape attitudes, and foster a collective drive for change (Aljowaily 2015; McEntee-Atalianis 2011). Its Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a key institution dedicated to promoting gender equality worldwide. Through its annual sessions, it facilitates dialogue, policy development, and the sharing of best practices across sectors like education, employment, healthcare, and political participation. At each CSW session, the UN Secretary-General delivers an opening speech that sets the Commission's agenda, highlighting progress achieved, addressing challenges, and outlining priorities. These speeches often employ vivid metaphors to emphasise the essential role of women's empowerment in building a more just, inclusive, and sustainable world.

As the current UN Secretary-General, António Guterres has prioritised Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) on gender equality and women's empowerment, placing women at the centre of Agenda 2030 (Gkalitsiou, Kotsopoulos 2023; Martín de la Rosa, Lázaro 2019). In his impactful 2023 CSW speech, he boldly stated that achieving gender parity remains a daunting task, projecting a sense of a long-lasting battle and journey that is "300 years away" from reaching its goal (*The Guardian* 2023).

Analysing Guterres' speeches in this context provides valuable insights into the UN's strategies, progress, and challenges in achieving SDG 5, thereby enabling a deeper understanding of the organisation's approach to the issue. It is against this background that this paper will conduct a systematic analysis of a corpus of the opening speeches to the CSW delivered by Secretary-General Guterres from the beginning of his term (2017) to 2023. Through this study, the metaphorical expressions used by the Secretary-General will be identified and their source and target domains deciphered, enabling an examination of the conceptual mappings connecting these domains (Lakoff, Johnson 1980). This process will allow for the exploration of the symbolic and cultural connotations embedded within the metaphors, as well as their rhetorical and persuasive effects in the discourse on women's rights.

The study will use a theoretical framework rooted in cognitive linguistics and metaphor theory. Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) work on conceptual metaphor will provide a foundation for understanding how metaphors structure cognition and shape our comprehension of complex concepts. Additionally, Charteris-Black's (2013) research on analysing political speeches through the lens of metaphor will offer valuable insights into the rhetorical and persuasive effects of metaphoric language.

By examining the metaphors used by the UN in the context of women's rights focusing on the metaphors of WAR and JOURNEY, this paper hopes to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role and impact of metaphoric language in shaping perceptions, influencing societal attitudes, and driving collective action. The findings of this study may contribute to positive outcomes not only within the UN but also in the broader global discourse on women's rights, empowering stakeholders to critically evaluate the potential of metaphors to promote inclusive and transformative social change.

2. Metaphors

As posited by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors act as mental frameworks, influencing our cognitive processes and reasoning concerning diverse phenomena, by establishing figurative associations that enrich our understanding (Gibbs 2014). They possess an exceptional ability to stir emotions, engage the senses, and ignite intellectual curiosity (Gibbs 2014; Ortony 1975). Through their vibrant language, metaphors enhance communication and leave a lasting impact (Charteris-Black 2013; Goatly 2007).

'Pushing back against the pushback': WAR and JOURNEY metaphors in UN Secretary-General
António Guterres' Commission on the Status of Women speeches

353

From a socio-linguistic perspective, metaphors wield considerable power in influencing collective attitudes towards social issues (Charteris-Black 2013). Their rhetorical potency enables communicators to imbue concepts with specific connotations and trigger particular emotional responses (Charteris-Black 2013; Steen 2019). In the context of women's rights, metaphors can reconfigure dominant discourses, question deeply ingrained stereotypes, and advocate for alternative viewpoints (Koller 2008; McConnell 1991). At the same time, they serve as cognitive shortcuts, providing accessible entry points into complex and often sensitive topics (Koller 2008). On the other hand, if chosen ineffectively, they can engender an adverse outcome, perpetuating and fortifying prejudiced perceptions concerning gender, thereby enhancing discrimination and impeding the progress of women's rights (Rodriguez 2009; Scotto di Carlo 2022, 2023). For instance, objectifying metaphors or those portraying women as victims or in need of rescue may undermine women's empowerment and agency (Martín de la Rosa, Lázaro 2019; Rodriguez 2009; Scotto di Carlo 2022).

From a cultural standpoint, metaphors possess the unique ability to transcend cultural boundaries, acting as bridges between different cultures (Charteris-Black 2013). They tap into universal human experiences, emotions, and archetypes, enabling individuals from diverse backgrounds to connect through shared ideas and values (Kövecses 2015). Therefore, in the context of diplomatic discourse, metaphors concerning women's rights facilitate cross-cultural dialogue and understanding by providing common reference points that resonate with people's lived experiences (Koller 2008) and create a space for mutual recognition and solidarity (Aljowaily 2015).

Within the broader field of discourse analysis (Van Dijk 2006), the analysis of conceptual metaphors in political and diplomatic discourse examines the intricate interplay between text, language, social context, and cognitive representation, which are all pivotal in understanding issues of gender equality. Recognising these critical perspectives highlights the need for sensitivity and awareness in the use of metaphoric language to avoid unintentionally perpetuating gender inequalities.

3. Theoretical background, methodology, and corpus

This analysis combines Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff, Johnson 1980) and Critical Metaphor Analysis (Charteris-Black 2004). The former involves mapping a familiar source domain onto an abstract target domain. For instance, the metaphor 'love is a journey' maps the source domain of physical travel onto the target domain of romantic relationships. This metaphorical mapping enables us to grasp and conceptualise love in terms of a journey with its 'ups and downs', milestones, and destinations. By identifying the source domains used to conceptualise and discuss women and girls' rights issues, the analysis explores the cognitive aspects of their metaphorical representations.

In addition to Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the analysis relies on the principles of Critical Metaphor Analysis (Charteris-Black 2004), which provides a lens for exploring the social and political dimensions of metaphors in depth. By unraveling the gendered aspects of metaphors and their relationship to power dynamics, Critical Metaphor Analysis enhances our understanding of how metaphors can either perpetuate gender stereotypes or contribute to positive social change and the advancement of women and girls' rights. It allows for an exploration of how metaphors are used to influence power dynamics and shape social or political realities and investigates who benefits or is disadvantaged by the

metaphors and how they contribute to the maintenance or challenge of existing power structures.

By examining both the cognitive dimensions through Conceptual Metaphor Theory and the socio-political dimensions through Critical Metaphor Analysis, this multifaceted approach enables a nuanced examination of the complex metaphorical discourse within the UN.

As for the methodology applied, the study used the Pragglejaz metaphor identification procedure (MIP) (2007), which consisted of the following steps:

1. A comprehensive reading of the corpus to establish a general understanding of the documents;

2. Identification of the individual lexical units in the text, focusing on words or phrases that potentially carried metaphorical meanings;

3. Analysis of the meaning of the identified lexical units in context, considering their usage within sentences and possible metaphorical interpretations.

4. Annotation of target words bearing a metaphorical meaning, using QDA Miner (2023), a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software developed by Provalis Research, which provides a range of features that helps manually organising, coding, retrieving, analysing, and visualising qualitative data.

5. Creation of a frequency table including the total number of metaphors detected in the speeches and their distribution across each speech;

6. Qualitative analysis of the most prominent metaphors.

The qualitative analysis section of this work focuses on the thematic aspects of the speeches and the metaphorical construction of the Secretary-General's political image across his inaugural speeches to the annual CSW meetings. After selecting the most frequent and notable metaphors, it was decided to focus on those framing women's rights as WAR and JOURNEY, which were the most frequently used source domains. Their analysis was conducted using the frameworks offered by Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Critical Metaphor Analysis, seeking to gain insights into the broader processes of meaning-making and the ideologies embedded in the metaphors found in the corpus (hereinafter 'CSWcor'). It is important to note that while the MIP follows a systematic approach, the present study does not aim to be a corpus-driven quantitative analysis, but rather a qualitative assessment.

4. Results

The total number of metaphors used in CSWcor amounts to 108, with a distribution of 14.81% (2017), 13.89% (2018), 13.89% (2019), 8.33% (2020), 12.96% (2021), 8.33% (2022), and 25.93% (2023), and therefore a major presence of metaphors in the most recent speech, dated 2023.

CSWcor		
Speech	**Tokens**	**Metaphors**
CSW 2017	1075	14.91%
CSW 2018	1056	13.89%
CSW 2019	1451	13.98%
CSW 2020	837	8.72%
CSW 2021	1279	12.95%
CSW 2022	1126	8.72%
CSW 2023	1331	26.83%
Tot.	8155	100%

Table 1
CSWcor.

Although CSWcor is relatively small in size, the obtained results provide an opportunity to explore the use of metaphors in Secretary Guterres' annual speeches to the CSW since the beginning of his term. Additionally, it allows assessing any potential variations in his approach to the topic over the course of these years.

While the extensive examination of every metaphor goes beyond the scope of this study, it is crucial to concentrate on conceptual metaphors that have a specific purpose within the discourse, aligning with Charteris-Black's (2013) notion of 'purposeful' metaphor. As can be seen from Table 2, the main source domains used by Guterres for women's rights are JOURNEY/MOTION ALONG A PATH (44%) and WAR/STRENGTH metaphors (15.6%). None of the other source domains reached 10%. For this reason, the study will focus on these first two categories.

Metaphor Source Domains	
Source Domains	**%**
JOURNEY/MOTION ALONG A PATH	44%
WAR/POWER/STRENGTH	15.6%
OBJECTS	9.17%
CONSTRUCTION	7.34%
SOUND/SILENCE	6.42%
PEOPLE	5.55%
ANIMALS/PLANTS	3.66%
DANGER/DISEASE	2.75%
MACHINE	2.75%
CHEMICAL REACTION	0.92%
SPORTS	0.92%
DEATH	0.92%

Table 2
Metaphor source domains in CSWcor.

The JOURNEY/WAR dichotomy has been extensively studied in various discourse fields. Semino *et al.* (2017) conducted a pivotal large-scale study on this topic in the health field, according to which WAR metaphors are commonly used to depict difficult or dangerous problems, emphasising the seriousness of the effort and portraying the problem as an

enemy to be defeated. On the other hand, JOURNEY metaphors portray positive change as forward movement, goals as destinations, and problems as obstacles along the way. Although Semino's studies (2008, 2017) focused on the use of WAR and JOURNEY metaphors in online texts by cancer patients and health professionals, some of their findings can be applied to the field of diplomacy as well. JOURNEY metaphors empower individuals when they are in control of the journey but can be disempowering when the route is challenging and they have no control over the obstacles they encounter. WAR metaphors empower individuals when they are portrayed as active fighters or warriors, but can be disempowering when they are depicted as passive, vulnerable, or defeated. Metaphors of WAR not only emphasise competition, aggression, and the pursuit of victory against an enemy, but can also convey moral judgments, casting certain actors as heroes or villains (Semino 2008). This framing can have significant implications when dealing with political or religious adversaries. In contrast, the JOURNEY metaphor evokes ideas of growth, learning, and transformation, while recognising the non-linear nature of progress, acknowledging that individuals may experience periods of advancement, stagnation, and even setbacks. The JOURNEY metaphor captures the complexity of the development process, acknowledging that growth involves twists and turns that contribute to the overall achievement of a goal. The following sections will now analyse the use of these two source domains as used in CSWcor.

4.1. WAR metaphors: Women's are fighting for their rights

When describing women and girls' rights, WAR metaphors empower by evoking resilience and activism. They highlight the need for mobilisation, determination, and challenging oppressive systems. They underscore the struggle against inequality, discrimination, and injustice, portraying women as warriors (and victims) battling against social, cultural, and political enemies. They foster unity, shared purpose, and collective resistance. Just like any other war, the one for women's rights requires fighters, allies, and enemies, as we will be discussed below.

4.1.1. Women's rights as a WAR: Fighters and allies

The strategic use of WAR metaphors shapes the UN discourse on women's rights as a battle, with fighters, allies, and enemies. Incorporating metaphors associated with warfare, such as depicting "sexual violence, forced marriage, human trafficking, and virtual enslavement" as (not so metaphorical) "weapons" (Ex. 3) and suggesting that multilateralism regarding their rights is "under fire" (Ex. 4), these metaphors create a sense of ongoing conflict (Gustafsson and Hommerberg 2020). They also highlight resistance (Semino 2008) and women's proactive role, emphasising that they are on the "frontlines for fairness" (Ex.1) "fighting for everyone's rights" (Ex.2). By using this war-related framing, the intention is to portray women's rights as a pressing societal issue that requires a collective and dedicated effort, underscoring its gravity and urgency (Gustafsson and Hommerberg 2020).

1. Every day, **you are on the frontlines for fairness** – for a more just and decent world. (CSW2017)

2. **Women and girl climate activists fight** for everyone's right to a liveable climate.   (CSW2022)

3. Sexual violence, forced marriage, human trafficking and virtual enslavement – these are **weapons of physical and psychological warfare** in today's world.   (CSW2017)

4. Multilateralism is **under fire**.   (CSW2019)

This strategic metaphorical framing fosters a collective identity and empowers the audience to combat for women's rights. It nurtures unity and shared struggle, as seen in the metaphor "we will never give up fighting for them" (Ex. 5), reaffirming the UN's commitment to supporting women's struggles. It also highlights the active role of women themselves, portrayed as leaders in championing their rights (Ex. 1 and 2), in a battle in which the UN assumes the role of advocacy, symbolised by its commitment to "strongly supporting" women in their fight (Ex. 6).

5. We will never give up **fighting for them**.   (CSW2023)

6. **We are to give our strongest support** to the women and girls of the world as **they fight for their rights**.   (CSW2018)

These metaphors serve as a rhetorical tool to emphasise the crucial role of the UN in supporting women's efforts and inspiring belief in their ability to create meaningful change for gender equality (Gustafsson, Hommerberg 2020). An important theme conveyed through WAR metaphors is the UN's endorsement of women's equality. For instance, the metaphorical expression of "saluting" women for raising their voices (Ex. 7) highlights the significance of acknowledging and honouring individuals and organisations dedicated to promoting women's empowerment, using a term borrowed from military discourse. By "saluting" women, recognition is conveyed along with the importance of celebrating the achievements and contributions of those involved in advancing women's rights.

7. I thank you and **salute** you for raising your voices for women's equality and dignity around the world.   (CSW2017)

It must be noted that one prominent theme of Guterres' speeches centers on the notion of women's agency and activism, which depicts women as metaphorical 'warriors' in the face of climate crises (Ex. 1) and as "**leaders**" (Ex. 8) for a "sustainable future":

8. **Women and girls must lead** for a sustainable future.   (CSW2022)

This imagery evokes women's resilience, determination, and readiness to confront challenges. By portraying women and girls as active participants in the battle, these metaphors emphasise the importance of recognising their contributions and fostering their involvement in finding solutions. Previous studies (Johnson 2021) have highlighted the tendency to depict women as victims in UN speeches and resolutions. However, Guterres' speeches skillfully emphasise women's agency as catalysts for their rights and transformative change. This approach aligns with contemporary scholarship that advocates for moving away from victimhood narratives and instead acknowledging and amplifying women's active role in shaping their own future (Anderson 2022). By portraying women as "fighters", Guterres underscores their ability to drive meaningful progress.

4.1.2. Women's rights as a WAR: Who is the enemy?

While women are depicted as "warriors" supported by the UN ally, the 'enemy' remains quite abstract and ideological. This vagueness might be attributed to the diplomatic nature

of UN institutions, which requires a cautious approach when addressing specific countries or actors. In CSWcor, only the State of Afghanistan is explicitly mentioned for its 'erasure' of women from public life (Ex. 9), while other countries are referred to more generally as "in many places" (Ex. 10) or "other (places)" (Ex. 11).

    9.In **Afghanistan**, women and girls have been erased from public life.   (CSW2023)

    10. **In many places**, women's sexual and reproductive rights are being rolled back. (CSW2023)

    11. **In others**, police prey on vulnerable women.   (CSW2023)

Within the specific context of Afghanistan, the metaphor of "women and girls being erased from public life" (Ex. 9) serves as a poignant depiction of the systemic exclusion and marginalisation endured by women in this region (Lakoff 1993). Through this metaphor, the Secretary-General highlights the gravity of the situation of this state and the imperative of fostering inclusive environments that value women's participation (McConnell 1991), eliciting emotional responses and empathy, compelling stakeholders to take action to address the dire situation faced by Afghan women. The selective approach of not explicitly mentioning other specific countries may be due to diplomatic considerations, as the UN aims to maintain constructive relationships with its member states or because the issue is a world-wide concern. By addressing the issue in a general manner, the UN Secretary-General's speeches aim to maintain a broad focus on promoting women's rights without singling out individual countries or jeopardising diplomatic relations. However, it is crucial to recognise that the issues highlighted in the examples are not limited to countries traditionally associated with a lack of respect for women's rights. These challenges persist globally, including in Western nations, as demonstrated by recent developments such as the enactment of restrictive anti-abortion laws in the United States (UNHR Office of the High Commissioner 2023) potentially referenced in Example 10, or to episodes of police abusing their power against women in countries such as India (Restless Beings 2023), but also in Great Britain (Burns *et al.* 2023). It is vital to acknowledge that institutional violence against women exists in various parts of the world, requiring comprehensive efforts to address this pervasive issue that is not limited to the so-called 'global south'.

      In most instances, the enemy is a personified ideology, namely 'patriarchy' and 'stereotypes':

    12. **Patriarchy is fighting back**.   (CSW2023)

    13. Centuries of **patriarchy, discrimination, and harmful stereotypes** creating a huge gender
        gap in science and technology.   (CSW2023)

The strategic portrayal of patriarchy as an enemy probably serves two purposes in the Secretary-General's discourse. It avoids oversimplifying the issue as a binary opposition between men and women, enabling a more nuanced understanding of the deeply ingrained structural and cultural imbalances that hinder women's rights and impede progress towards gender equality. This perspective acknowledges patriarchy as a complex system of power dynamics. The phrase "the patriarchy is fighting back" (Ex. 12) highlights the ongoing resistance encountered in dismantling patriarchal systems, symbolising the continuous struggle for gender equality. By referring to "centuries of patriarchy, discrimination, and harmful stereotypes" as the cause of the "significant gender gap" (Ex. 13), the Secretary-General acknowledges the persistence of power structures and societal

'Pushing back against the pushback': WAR and JOURNEY metaphors in UN Secretary-General
António Guterres' Commission on the Status of Women speeches

359

norms that perpetuate gender inequalities, while emphasising the collective determination to overcome these barriers (McConnell 1991). Another enemy that emerges is "power imbalance": metaphors associated with this theme illuminate the historical and cultural origins of power disparities between genders. They draw attention to the lasting influence of patriarchal systems and norms in perpetuating gender inequality. As Guterres summarises, after all, "gender equality is a matter of power" (Ex. 14):

14. **Gender equality is** a question of **power.** (CSW2022)

From a critical perspective, power-related metaphors are used to depict gender equality as a struggle against deep-seated power imbalances. This framing suggests that the unequal distribution of power, stemming from patriarchal structures and societal norms, is at the core of gender disparities. By employing such metaphors related to warfare and power, the speaker encourages an examination of power dynamics and the systemic barriers that contribute to the persistence of gender-based inequalities. They prompt individuals to critically reflect on the systems and structures that uphold and reinforce unequal power relations, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the complex factors involved in achieving genuine gender equality (Cameron 2007). Example 15 vividly conveys this concept:

15. The Commission on the Status of Women is Commission on the **Status of Power.** (CSW2019)

The metaphor equating the Commission on the Status of Women to the Commission on the Status of Power suggests that achieving gender equality necessitates confronting and transforming existing power structures. It highlights the understanding that the struggle for gender equality goes beyond mere recognition and representation, extending to the redistribution of power and agency. Overall, these metaphors reveal that these structural enemies are still present. They illuminate the dual nature of women's roles as both catalysts for change and recipients of the negative consequences arising from patriarchal structures. They underscore the intricate complexities and inherent contradictions within the pursuit of gender equality, as women simultaneously challenge patriarchal systems while navigating the repercussions these systems impose on their lives. In the battle for women's rights, women's "voices" are being "silenced" worldwide by a personified 'patriarchy', as exemplified in Ex. 16 and 17:

16. Patriarchy excludes women and **silences their voices**. (CSW2022)

17. **Women's voices remain missing** from the highest levels of leadership. (CSW2021)

Depicted metaphorically as a silencing agent, patriarchy is a force that perpetuates gender inequality by suppressing women's voices and inhibiting their participation in public discourse. This metaphor underscores the need to challenge power structures, creating inclusive spaces for women's voices to be heard and valued in decision-making processes. They shed light on the historical suppression of women's agency. As a matter of fact, in the Secretary-General's 2019 speech to the CSW, reference to Odysseus' son silencing his mother and confining her to weaving reflects the systemic exclusion of women from positions of authority and influence:

The truth is that, in the celebrated classics in ancient Greece and Rome, speech was quite literally defined as the business of men. Homer begins his epic with the son of Odysseus telling his mother to shut up and go back to weaving. (CSW2019)

Similarly, the comedic portrayal of women leading the state in Aristophanes' play symbolises the historical dismissal and trivialisation of women's leadership abilities:

> Aristophanes wrote a play about women leading the state. It was a comedy. And, of course, we know that this isn't ancient history. (CSW2019)

These references highlight the long-standing challenges faced by women in breaking free from societal expectations and gendered roles, calling for a reevaluation of entrenched biases and stereotypes.

Another theme that emerges from the metaphors is the pervasive issue of exclusion and marginalisation faced by women in decision-making processes. The metaphorical portrayal of women being largely excluded from metaphorical and non-metaphorical "decision-making rooms" (Ex. 18) highlights the systemic barriers that hinder their meaningful participation:

> 18. Women and girls continue to be largely **excluded from decision-making rooms**. (CSW2022)

By emphasising this exclusion, these metaphors draw attention to the urgent need for gender-responsive and inclusive decision-making structures that value diverse perspectives and empower women to contribute to policy formulation and implementation.

Also in his 2019 speech, after reference to Odysseus, Guterres tells the following pun, which reveals the difficulties encountered by women in the gender gap, for which a thought becomes an important point only if voiced by a man:

> You may be familiar with a cartoon of a group of executives sitting around a conference table – all men, one lone woman. The woman has just made an important point – followed by a long pause. In the cartoon, finally, the boss pipes up and says "that's an excellent suggestion, Ms. Triggs. **Perhaps one of the men here would like to make it**." I suspect many of you have had similar experiences. (CSW2019)

Against historical silencing, marginalisation, and exclusion, the metaphorical weapon to be used to win seems to be 'empowerment' (Ex.19), and 'participation', which is "normally never given, but needs to be taken" (Ex. 19-21):

> 19. Power is normally never given; **power normally needs to be taken**.   (CSW2018)

> 20. **When women meaningfully participate in peace processes**, **the chance of sustainable peace goes up** by 35 percent over 15 years.   (CSW2017)

> 21. Women's equal participation is the **game-changer** we need.   (CSW2021)

Women are catalysts for change, and the Secretary-General encourages them to assert themselves and fight for equality to fulfill their potential. These metaphors emphasise the need for inclusivity, equal representation, and a balanced distribution of power, and advocate for breaking down barriers and creating an environment where women can thrive and contribute to society.

Overall, the use of WAR metaphors in Guterres' speeches has a positive effect of highlighting empowerment and activism. They convey a sense of resilience and determination in the fight for women's rights, emphasising collective effort and the challenge to oppressive systems. They depict women as active warriors rather than passive victims, fostering resistance and solidarity against inequality, discrimination, and injustice.

However, while the UN has expressed 'support' for women's rights initiatives, there is a growing demand for substantive action and a deeper commitment to addressing systemic issues that perpetuate gender inequality. Symbolic gestures must be accompanied by tangible change and collaboration with stakeholders to dismantle barriers hindering progress in women's rights, an aspect on which the UN has been working, responding to the demands of numerous feminist organisations for increased action and less rhetoric (Open Democracy 2018).While it exceeds the intended scope of this type of speeches to delve into detailed descriptions of measures taken or to be taken to guarantee women's rights, it is important to acknowledge that mentioning such information more could have had a significant impact on enhancing the effectiveness of these addresses. Moreover, while WAR metaphors can be effective rhetorical tools, it is important to balance their use with other framing strategies that promote a nuanced understanding of gender equality. This includes highlighting collaboration, acknowledging diverse voices and experiences, and fostering inclusive dialogue to address underlying structures that sustain gender inequality. Guterres' approach seems to align with these principles by preferring the use of JOURNEY/PATH metaphors, as will be explored in the following paragraph.

4.2. Women's rights as a JOURNEY: A destination that is 300 years away

The quantitative analysis has revealed that the JOURNEY/PATH metaphor is the most prevalent source domain used in CSWcor. It emphasises the ongoing nature of the struggle, the milestones achieved, and the remaining challenges to overcome in women's rights, because drawbacks, as will be seen in this section, are very frequent.

It was chosen to combine JOURNEY and PATH metaphors, since they are both associated with spatial movement (Semino 2008) and offer a conceptual framework for understanding goals as destinations, actions as forward motion, obstacles as impediments to progress, and failure as regression from a destination. In the field of political and diplomatic activities, Charteris-Black (2004) and Semino (2008) suggest that the use of JOURNEY metaphors serves as a rhetorical strategy to evoke notions of progress, development, and collective action. By portraying women's rights as a JOURNEY, the UN emphasises the dynamic nature of the struggle and conveys the idea that societal change is an ongoing process rather than a fixed endpoint.

The analysis of the data reveals four main components in the conceptualisation of women's rights as a JOURNEY: activists and supporters of women and girls' rights (e.g. women, the UN, the CSW), obstacles (e.g. patriarchy, misogyny), measures enacted/to be enacted (e.g. more women in UN positions), and rights themselves (e.g. right to equal opportunities).

4.2.1. Women's rights as a JOURNEY: Women as leading travellers, followed by the UN

The metaphorical portrayal of women as leaders in CSWcor consistently emphasises their agency and capacity to drive positive change. For instance, women's role as "leaders" along the "track" of the post-COVID-19 "recovery" process (Ex.22) and along "the way" for "a sustainable future" (Ex.23) underscore the active role women play in the UN's agenda on advancing progress. These metaphors empower women, acknowledge their contributions, and inspire others to support and follow their lead (Ex. 24). They are "active travellers" along the journey, challenging the stereotypical perception of women as victims of the lack of their own rights:

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$\mathcal{L}$inguaggi

22. Over the past year, **women leaders have put countries on track for recovery**.   (CSW2021)

23. Women and girls must **lead the way for a sustainable future**.   (CSW2022)

24. The Commission on the Status of Women **is leading the way**.   (CSW2018)

Regarding the UN itself, it is portrayed as a supportive entity along the JOURNEY. Once again, the metaphorical language of "support" emphasises the UN's steadfast dedication to assisting and endorsing individuals or causes that strive for gender equality. These metaphors of guidance create an image of the UN as a paternalistic figure, as evident in Ex. 25, where the UN Secretary-General takes on this role in the first person. By juxtaposing patriarchy, the primary obstacle to women and girls' rights, with the imagery of the Secretary-General as a hypothetical father figure "supporting" women along "every step of the way", the UN conveys a sense of protection, guidance, and paternal care. This reinforces the idea that the UN stands alongside women, helping them overcome challenges encountered at every stage of their progress.

25. This brings me to my third message: The United Nations and **I will personally support you every step of the way.**   (CSW2017)

Metaphors including first-person pronouns such as "we"/ "us" (Ex. 26) and the word "together" (Ex. 27) emphasise the call for collective support in advancing women's rights, suggesting the UN's determination to provide resources, advocate for change, and foster collaboration. In the case of Ex. 28, 29, and in multiple other instances throughout CSWcor, the Secretary-General uses the theme of inclusiveness combined with the metaphor of "pushing back against the pushback" that women encounter along the way, joining metaphors of resistance, strength (WAR), and motion (JOURNEY).

26. But **there is a long way to go** and **we need to do it together**.   (CSW2017)

27. **Together**, we have a chance to **leave behind entrenched exclusion** and build a just and equal future.   (CSW2018)

28. There is a pushback on women's rights; **we must push back on the pushback**.   (CSW2022)

29. Together, **let's push back against the push back on misogyny** and **forward for women**, girls, and our world.   (CSW2023)

By skillfully combining these metaphors, the speeches effectively highlight the importance of women's leadership and the pivotal role played by the UN as advocates and supporters in the pursuit of women's rights. Against women being "left behind" along the path to obtaining their rights, the UN calls for action to leave "entrenched exclusion behind" instead, as mentioned in Ex. 30:

30. Together, we have a chance to **leave behind entrenched exclusion** and build a just and equal future.   (CSW2021)

This rhetorical juxtaposition serves to galvanise individuals and organisations, fostering a collective commitment to dismantling systemic barriers and building an inclusive society where women's rights are upheld and respected. In the portrayal of women as the leaders of their own rights, there is a deliberate effort to dispel the notion of victimhood that has historically surrounded them. Nevertheless, it is imperative that the UN not only embraces

'Pushing back against the pushback': WAR and JOURNEY metaphors in UN Secretary-General
António Guterres' Commission on the Status of Women speeches

363

this empowering narrative but also demonstrates tangible and impactful measures in addressing the challenges posed by states that obstruct the advancement of women's rights, which are inherently human rights, and therefore concern everyone.

4.2.2. Women's rights as a JOURNEY: Too many obstacles along the way

The analysis of JOURNEY metaphors reveals significant challenges and barriers along the path to women's rights. Some metaphors highlight the presence of obstacles that impede progress, such as "male chauvinism" that "blocks women" (Ex. 31) and "some governments enacting laws that curtail women's freedoms" (Ex. 32). These metaphors underscore the entrenched nature of these obstacles, emphasising the deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes and regressive policies that hinder women's rights and have negative impacts on individuals and society ("it hurts everyone"-Ex. 31).

31. **Male chauvinism blocks women** – and that hurts everyone. (CSW2017)

32. Some governments are enacting **laws that curtail women's freedoms**. (CSW2017)

CSWcor highlights the alarming reversals and setbacks women and girls' rights have faced during the COVID-19 crisis. Metaphors depict the progress towards gender equality as not only "stalled" but also "reversed" (Ex. 33) by the pandemic, which is symbolised as "a crisis with a woman's face" (Ex. 34).

33. Progress towards gender equality has **stalled or reversed.** (CSW2020)

34. As the world marks International Women's Day in the midst of a global pandemic, one stark fact is clear: **the COVID-19 crisis has a woman's face**. (CSW2021)

This metaphor aligns with the UN's report on violence against women as a "shadow pandemic" of COVID-19 (UN Women 2020), emphasising the widespread nature of gender-based violence exacerbated by the crisis. It serves as a reminder that women have been on the frontlines as healthcare workers, caregivers, and essential workers, facing higher risks and bearing the burden of care giving responsibilities, often while living with their abusers. Other metaphors highlight the "rollback" of legal protections concerning issues like domestic violence and female genital mutilation (Ex. 35-36), as well as the reduction of civic space and indirect discrimination against women (Ex. 37). These metaphors draw attention to the uphill battle of safeguarding and expanding women's rights and underscore regressive actions and the erosion of hard-won progress.

35. In many places, women's sexual and reproductive rights are being **rolled back**. (CSW2023)

36. **Rollback of legal protection** against domestic violence and female genital mutilation. (CSW2017)

37. **Rolling back laws**, reducing civic space, and indirect discrimination against women. (CSW2020)

In highlighting these challenges, the Secretary-General's speeches underscore the global repercussions of rolling back women's rights. A world where women's rights are not achieved is depicted as a "lost world" (Ex. 38) lacking direction, amidst centrifugal ("Big

challenges growing outward") and centripetal forces (people turning inward) that have disrupted its trajectory:

> 38. **The World is lost**. The World needs direction: **Big challenges growing outward, but people turning inward**.   (CSW2019)

Against this loss, women's equal participation is depicted as "a game-changer" (Ex. 39), reflecting the transformative potential of empowering women in decision-making processes and societal advancements, since they have put countries "back on track" for recovery (Ex. 40).

> 39. Women's equal participation is the **game-changer** we need.   (CSW2021)

> 40. Over the past year, **women leaders have put countries on track for recovery**. (CSW2021)

However, the destination is far from being reached. Metaphors related to time and distance accentuate the slow pace of change and the widening gap in achieving gender equality. Statements like "achieving parity among Heads of Government will not be reached until 2150" (Ex.41) and "on the current track, UN Women puts gender equality 300 years away" (Ex. 42) convey the magnitude of the task at hand, emphasising the urgency for accelerated action to bridge the gender gap and ensure equal opportunities.

> 41. Achieving parity among Heads of Government **will not be reached until 2150**. (CSW2021)

> 42. On the current track, UN Women puts it **300 years away**.   (CSW2023)

Another obstacle along the way is the impact of technological exclusion. Phrases like "as technology races ahead, women and girls are being left behind" (Ex. 43) and "we cannot let the Silicon Valleys of our world become Death Valleys for women's rights" (Ex. 45) exemplify the digital gender divide, which is making gender equality "grow more distant" (Ex. 44).

> 43. Because as **technology races ahead**, **women and girls are being left behind**. (CSW2023)

> 44. Gender equality is **growing more distant**.   (CSW2023)

> 45. We cannot let the **Silicon Valleys of our world become Death Valleys** for women's rights.   (CSW2023)

In an era in which "big data is the new gold" (Ex. 46), these metaphors draw attention to the increasing importance of data-driven technologies and their impact on various aspects of life. The 'Silicon Valleys' metaphor (Ex.45) employs powerful imagery to highlight the potential consequences of gender inequality within the technology sector. It warns against a scenario where women's rights and opportunities are stifled within the epicenters of technological innovation, urging for proactive measures to safeguard and promote gender equality in the technology industry and underscoring that gender equality is not only a moral imperative but also crucial for societal and economic progress, as inequality and exclusion are deemed "a commercial and moral dead end" (Ex.47):

> 46. Big Data is the **new gold**.   (CSW2023)

> 47. Many technology leaders, especially women, know that **inequality and exclusion are a**

Lingue e Linguaggi

moral and commercial dead end.   (CSW2023)

Other metaphors related to big data underscore the gendered implications of technological developments. For instance, the metaphor "big data results in products and services that bake in gender inequality from the start" (Ex. 48) amplifies the significance of technology in perpetuating and strengthening gender disparities. Even at the outset of the development process, women face inherent initial disadvantages, akin to a disadvantageous starting point in a race. Consequently, it emphasises the need for a critical examination of the design and implementation of technological solutions to prevent the replication or exacerbation of existing gender inequalities.

48. Big data results in products and services that **bake in gender inequality from the start**. (CSW2023)

The verb 'bake' suggests that gender inequality is inherently present or ingrained in the design, development, or structure of these products and services. It indicates that it is deeply rooted and systemic, rather than being a superficial or accidental outcome. The choice might be linked to the Secretary-General's emphasis on the systemic obstacles encountered by women along the way, rather than individuals or states.
Yet, Ex. 49 personifies 'big data' once again removing agency (and responsibility) from those who are actually responsible for "turning a blind eye" towards women's rights:

49. Big   data   **turns   a   blind   eye**   to   women   altogether. (CSW2023)

4.2.3. Women's rights as a JOURNEY: How can we reach them…and what exactly do we want to reach?

While generally lacking specific details, Secretary-General Guterres' speeches do mention some general measures to promote women's rights. For instance, in Ex. 50, he announces "new steps" to address "sexual exploitation and abuse committed under the UN flag", and references "accelerating progress on the Beijing Platform for Action" (Ex. 51). It is important to note that more extensive discussions of these actions are likely found in other relevant documents, with only brief mentions provided in the inaugural CSW speeches. Yet, more reference would have perhaps strengthened the agenda and the UN's position towards the issue.

50. We have announced ambitious **new steps** to help end sexual exploitation and abuse committed under the UN flag.   (CSW2017)

51. **Accelerate the implementation** of the Beijing Platform for Action.   (CSW2020)

Regarding the focus on rights themselves, Secretary-General Guterres appears to emphasise gender parity over equality when discussing women's rights. This is evident in Guterres speech to the Group of Friends on Gender parity "gender parity in our personnel is *the only way* to achieve gender equality in our work" (UN Press 2022), later on transformed into 'a vital step' for the 2023 CSW speech (Ex. 52):

52. Gender parity in our personnel is **a vital step** towards gender equality in our work." (CSW2023)

Lingue e Linguaggi

The United Nations' focus on gender parity reflects a specific emphasis on achieving equal representation and participation of women in decision-making positions and leadership roles. While gender equality encompasses a broader concept that aims for equal rights, opportunities, and treatment for individuals of all genders, gender parity specifically addresses the underrepresentation of women in positions of power and influence. When monitoring progress assessment, the Secretary-General proudly emphasises that in terms of gender parity, the UN staff is "on track to meet their targets" concerning gender parity (Ex.53), which was proudly "reached ahead of schedule" (Ex.54):

> 53. **We are on track** to meet our targets.   (CSW2018)

> 54. Gender parity at the senior-most levels was **reached ahead of schedule**.   (CSW2021)

The UN's emphasis on gender parity might be driven by several reasons. It addresses the power imbalance between men and women in positions of authority, acknowledging historical underrepresentation of women in leadership roles. Striving for gender parity aims to rectify this imbalance and distribute power more equitably. Symbolically, gender parity represents the value and importance of women's voices and perspectives in shaping policies and decisions. It conveys the message that women are equal participants in society and should have an equal say. Achieving gender parity also serves as inspiration for future generations by providing visible role models and demonstrating that women can excel in leadership positions. Women in power encourage and motivate others to aspire to similar roles, fostering long-term gender equality. It harnesses the talents and experiences of women, leading to more effective decision-making. However, it is essential to recognise that gender equality definitely encompasses a broader range of issues beyond representation, such as economic opportunities, education, healthcare, and freedom from violence. Gender parity is certainly a critical component within the larger framework of gender equality, addressing specific gaps while paving the way for comprehensive progress; however, it is not the only one.

Moreover, the metaphors used to articulate the means of achieving these rights often have a certain degree of vagueness. They emphasise the importance of women "pushing", "inspiring", and "making a difference" (Ex.55 and 56). These metaphors encourage active engagement, resilience, and the belief that individual actions can contribute to positive change.

> 55. **Keep pushing. Keep inspiring. Keep making a difference**.   (CSW2017)

> 56. Together, **let's push back against the push back** on misogyny and forward for women, girls, and our world.   (CSW2023)

These rights can be achieved also by putting women 'at the center' of this JOURNEY. References to "meaningful participation in peace processes" that makes "chance of sustainable peace 'go up'" (Ex.57) and viewing "pandemic recovery as an opportunity to chart a path towards an equal future" (Ex.58) emphasise the importance of collaboration among various stakeholders. These metaphors underline the necessity for inclusive decision-making processes, cooperation between different actors, and leveraging opportunities for systemic change.

> 57. When women meaningfully participate in peace processes, the chance of sustainable peace

'Pushing back against the pushback': WAR and JOURNEY metaphors in UN Secretary-General
António Guterres' Commission on the Status of Women speeches

367

        goes up by 35 percent over 15 years.   (CSW2017)

58. Pandemic recovery is an opportunity to chart **a path to an equal future** for women and men.   (CSW2021)

However, as previously said, these speeches concerning women's fundamental rights and the means to achieve them lack some precision, primarily due to their non-binding nature within the UN. To comprehensively evaluate the UN's concrete actions in promoting women's rights, further research in the realm of diplomacy and politics is essential, employing a distinct corpus that enables a more thorough analysis. This is particularly crucial considering the criticism leveled against the UN by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), which asserts that the organisation is "strong on parity and weak on rights" (Open Democracy 2018). During the opening session of the 61st Commission on the Status of Women (2017), Guterres called on civil society to hold the UN accountable for these promises and continue advocating for change. Responding to this call, ICRW has started to compile a yearly progress report ("report card") on behalf of the Feminist UN campaign. These reports assess the Secretary-General's achievements and commitments, comparing them to the recommendations provided by the campaign to advance women's rights and gender equality at the United Nations. In the first 2017 UN Feminist report on Secretary-General Guterres, he was criticised for a perceived absence of transformative change:

> His statements could stand to be more rights-based, however, referring to women not just as victims of violence and discrimination but also as agents of change worthy of meaningful engagement and investment. Guterres has not provided the vocal and visible support that the agency UN Women needs. (Open Democracy 2018)

Since the 2018 report card, the UN appears to have shifted its rhetoric regarding women, from being the victims of their own fate to central actors in their pursuit of rights, and this study further confirms this transformation. However, it is noteworthy that the majority of these speeches still tend to emphasise women's rights only in terms of parity, and more specifically within the UN institution. While notable progress has been made in areas such as achieving gender parity within the UN's leadership, there is limited mention of action in other domains.

4.2.4. Women's rights as a JOURNEY: BUILDING the PATH as we go

In the conceptualisation of women's rights as a JOURNEY, some attention must be devoted to the BUILDING metaphor (7.34%). As suggested by Charteris-Black (2004), both building and travelling involve progression towards a predetermined goal, since they both involve covering a surface. Analysing the metaphors on BUILDING rights, it can be observed that the metaphors present in CSWcor highlight the negative consequences of extremist ideologies that perpetuate the subjugation of women and deny their rights. Phrases like "extremists have built their ideologies around the subjugation of women and girls" (Ex.59) draw attention to the harmful beliefs and systems that oppress women. These metaphors underline the need to dismantle such ideologies to ensure the construction of rights and equality.

59. **Extremists have built their ideologies** around the subjugation of women and girls and the denial of their rights.   (CSW2017)

The solution offered by the UN is included in the metaphors that emphasise the importance of BUILDING equality to enable women to fulfill their potential. Expressions such as "by building equality, we give women a chance to fulfill their potential" (Ex. 60) signify the transformative power of equal rights and opportunities.

60. By **building equality**, we give women a chance to fulfill their potential.   (CSW2018)

These metaphors suggest that constructing a society where women's rights are respected and protected benefits not only women themselves, but also contributes to the overall stability and progress of societies.

A significant role is played by measures against violence, such as expressed in the metaphors that draw attention to the need for action and programmes to address specific challenges, such as femicide, where women are killed with impunity. The phrase "we have already begun to build programs that address femicide" (Ex.61) reflects the proactive approach required to combat violence against women.

61. We have already begun to **build programs that address femicide** in Latin America – where women are killed on a daily basis with widespread impunity.   (CSW2018)

The Secretary-General also emphasises that it is necessary to keep building on progress and alliances. Phrases like "building on the progress we have already made" (Ex.62) and "now is the time to build alliances" (Ex.63) emphasise the need for continuity, collaboration, and collective action.

62. I am determined to **build on the progress** we have already made.   (CSW2018)

63. Now is the time to **build alliances** and stand together for women's rights.   (CSW2020)

By framing the pursuit of gender equality as a construction project, the UN implies that progress requires deliberate effort, systematic approaches, and collaboration among stakeholders. This positioning emphasises shared responsibility and engagement from individuals, organisations, and societies. Building metaphors depict progress as an incremental process, highlighting the accumulation of efforts and the need for patience and persistence. Women's rights are somehow a JOURNEY along a path that is still under construction and that women and allies are BUILDING along the way.

Overall, the JOURNEY metaphors create a narrative of progress, highlighting the distance that still needs to be covered to achieve gender equality. This acknowledgement helps to mobilise support and maintain momentum for the cause by portraying it as an unfinished endeavor. It suggests that progress is not linear but involves twists, turns, and setbacks along the way, requiring resilience and determination to navigate through them. This framing encourages a long-term perspective and fosters the understanding that achieving gender equality is a complex and gradual process.

5. Conclusions

This study has overviewed the metaphors used in UN Secretary-General's CSW speeches regarding women and girls' rights. The findings highlight the diverse thematic elements that effectively capture the complex challenges in this context. In CSWcor, women and girls' rights are portrayed as a matter of power, emphasised by the metaphors of WAR and

'Pushing back against the pushback': WAR and JOURNEY metaphors in UN Secretary-General António Guterres' Commission on the Status of Women speeches

369

JOURNEY. These metaphors underscore the need to address structural discrimination, patriarchy, and misogyny, contributing to the gender power gap. WAR metaphors emphasise the urgency and importance of a resolute response to expedite the realisation of women's rights. Terms like "battle", "fight", and "force" in the speeches reflect a proactive and progressive stance towards achieving this goal. A positive outcome is that the analysis of the parties involved in this metaphorical war confirms a shift in the UN's rhetoric on women's rights from framing women as victims to viewing them as agents of change. This shift aligns with the feminists' calls for a more active role for women. While the previously prevailing framing of WOMEN AS VICTIMS prepared readers to accept the solution of offering protection and evoked sympathy, the more recent framing of WOMEN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE strengthens the idea of women taking on key roles. Women are portrayed as leaders at the forefront of the battle for their rights, receiving support from the paternalistic figure of the UN. The UN recognises misogyny and patriarchy as structural enemies and emphasises global responsibility and collaboration.

However, it is worth noting that this type of speeches lack substantial reference to concrete actions or rights. The emphasis seems to be on achieving gender parity rather than explicitly protecting rights. Despite commitments to involve women in peace processes, a disparity remains between rhetoric and reality. Secretary-General Guterres has committed to achieving gender-equal representation in senior leadership positions within the UN by 2021 and across the entire UN system "well before 2030", endorsing a new System-Wide Strategy on Gender Parity (Open Democracy 2018). However, it is important to recognise that women's rights and gender parity are not synonymous. As the feminist report 2018 noted (Open Democracy 2018):

> But a recurring theme of our evaluation is that women's leadership is not the same thing as women's rights. Yes, the Secretary-General is building a more representative team, but that team must still support women's rights throughout the UN and hold rights violators accountable. Women's leadership is not the same thing as women's rights.

Assessing the UN's capacity to translate these words into tangible actions and policies is of utmost importance. However, it is important to note that this study did not aim to undertake such an evaluation, and therefore, it cannot provide insights into this aspect.

The second part of the analysis focussed on the primary source domain of JOURNEY, conveying an acknowledgment of structural barriers and the need for transformative action. This metaphor suggests a genuine intent to bring about substantial changes within the UN, promoting gender equality and empowering women. It has revealed how the metaphor of JOURNEY highlights the challenges faced in achieving gender equality, such as setbacks, the reversal of progress, erosion of protective legislation, curtailed civic space, and indirect discrimination against women. These manifestations emphasise the urgency of overcoming regressive forces that impede progress and potentially delay the realisation of women's rights for hundreds of years.

The metaphorical journey embarked upon in the pursuit of gender equality has been blocked by various intersecting challenges, including health and environmental crises, and technological disparities. These obstacles, coupled with the regressive actions stemming from patriarchal and conservative forces, have engendered a climate of stagnation and setbacks. Rather than propelling forwards, the journey appears to be characterised by severe retrogression. As a consequence, the achievement of SDG 5, which pertains to gender equality, seems increasingly distant and elusive. Nonetheless, the metaphorical notion of "pushing back against the pushback" conveys a resolute message, emphasising the paramount importance of resistance and active counteraction. It serves as

a call to persevere along the path despite the obstacles encountered. The combination of the JOURNEY and CONSTRUCTION metaphors seems to hint at the idea that women and their advocates must build their own path towards the goal, as they go, even if the enemies are building obstacles along the way. These metaphors evoke a sense of potential and aspiration that celebrate women's limitless abilities and infinite ambitions, encouraging them to embrace their potential and strive for greatness.

Taking into consideration Semino's (2008, 2017) findings on the outcomes of WAR and JOURNEY metaphors in the health context and applying them to the realm of women and girls' rights, it can be said that Guterres' prevalent use of JOURNEY metaphors instead of WAR metaphors can be more effective for several reasons, which can be summarised as follows:

1. Inclusiveness and Collaboration: Journey metaphors emphasise collective progress, growth, and shared experiences. They promote a sense of inclusiveness, recognising that everyone can participate in the journey towards gender equality. Women's rights are not an adversarial struggle against men but a collaborative effort to achieve equality and justice for all.

2. Non-violent Communication: War metaphors often evoke aggression, conflict, and a winner-takes-all mentality. On the other hand, journey metaphors foster peaceful and constructive dialogue. They encourage empathy, understanding, and open-mindedness, enabling individuals to engage in meaningful conversations without feeling defensive or attacked.

3. Long-Term Perspective: Journey metaphors highlight the long-term nature of social change. They acknowledge that progress towards women's rights is an ongoing process, involving various stages, setbacks, and milestones. By framing the discourse as a journey, it encourages patience, resilience, and the recognition that societal change takes time.

4. Empowerment and Self-Determination: Journey metaphors emphasise personal growth, empowerment, and self-determination. They recognise that women should have agency in shaping their own paths and defining their roles in society. Women's rights should be seen as a journey of self-discovery, self-expression, and the pursuit of personal aspirations, rather than as a battle against external forces.

5. Positive and Inspirational Tone: Journey metaphors can create a positive and inspirational atmosphere, motivating individuals to take action and work towards a better future. They can inspire hope, unity, and a shared vision of a more equal and just society. War metaphors, on the other hand, can generate feelings of anger, division, and hopelessness.

By using journey metaphors to discuss women's rights, we can foster constructive dialogue, encourage collaboration, and promote a more inclusive and empowering narrative that resonates with a broader audience.

Of course, other studies in the political and diplomatic fields should assess the tangible outcomes and results achieved under the Secretary-General's leadership in promoting women's rights within the UN, which goes beyond the scope of this work. While these speeches are important, it is essential to evaluate the actual progress made in areas such as women's representation in leadership positions, policy changes, resource allocation, and the implementation of gender-responsive programmes and initiatives. This assessment can contribute to a transparent and accountable evaluation of their efforts towards advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

As the fight for women's rights continues, the UN's use of metaphoric language

'Pushing back against the pushback': WAR and JOURNEY metaphors in UN Secretary-General
António Guterres' Commission on the Status of Women speeches

371

will remain an ongoing and integral part of its diplomatic discourse. Through the continual scrutiny and refinement of the metaphors employed, the UN can use their inherent power for transformation, propelling the advancement of the women's rights agenda and forging a world that is characterised by greater equity and inclusivity for all.

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'Pushing back against the pushback': WAR and JOURNEY metaphors in UN Secretary-General
António Guterres' Commission on the Status of Women speeches

373

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