

Persuasive Strategies in the Twitter Accounts of American Political Figures

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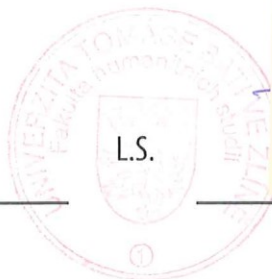
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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá přesvědčovacími strategiemi, které jsou využívány na twitterových účtech amerických politiků. Skládá se z teoretické a praktické části.

Teoretická část popisuje rozdíly mezi propagandou a přesvědčovacími principy, Aristotelovy modely přesvědčovacích principů, přesvědčovací strategie používané v politice a využití Twitteru v rámci politického diskurzu. Dále se zabývá postupy, které byly aplikovány při analýze korpusu. Praktická část obsahuje analýzu, která pojednává o způsobech použitých k ovlivnění čtenářů vybraných twitterových zpráv.

Klíčová slova: přesvědčování, přesvědčovací strategie, politický diskurz, Twitter, Joe Biden, ideologický čtverec, metafory, emotivní slova, legitimizace

ABSTRACT

This bachelor thesis deals with the persuasive strategies of American political figures in their twitter accounts. The thesis consists of a theoretical and analytical part.

The theoretical part discusses the difference between propaganda and persuasion, Aristotle's modes of persuasion, persuasive discourse in politics, and the use of Twitter in political discourse. It also deals with the methodology of the analysis. The analytical part involves an analysis of persuasive strategies used by the American presidential candidate Joe Biden to influence the followers of his Twitter messages.

Keywords: persuasion, persuasive strategies, political discourse, Twitter, Joe Biden, Ideology Square, metaphors, emotive vocabulary, legitimation

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's/Master's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years Twitter has become a compelling platform for American politicians. It allows them to quickly interact with people through short messages and thus ensure the fast transmission of information to keep their audience updated about current issues.

With the growing popularity of the use of Twitter among politicians, the interest of researchers to analyze this field of communication increased as well. The biggest increase in research happened after US Presidential Election 2016 thanks to the winning candidate Donald Trump, who used Twitter as the main platform for his campaign communication (Yaqub et al. 2016). But even before that, Barack Obama had been known to be actively using Twitter as a major communication medium (Hendrick and Denton 2010), which was also a subject of interest of many researchers as Sousa and Ivanova (2012) or Solop (2010). Trump's rhetoric, which helped him to win US Presidential Election 2016, was also a subject matter of research in linguistics (Kayam 2018, Ott 2017). Since the US Presidential Election 2020 is taking place this year, many candidates followed the footsteps of Donald Trump and tried to exploit Twitter as a campaign media platform. That creates the opportunity to analyze the rhetoric of current candidates to indicate if their rhetoric is efficient enough to help them win Presidential Election 2020.

This thesis describes persuasive strategies utilized by one of the candidates for Presidential Election 2020, Joe Biden, in his Twitter messages posted over the period from December 2019 to March 2020.

The first part of the thesis describes how persuasion is related to propaganda, when and where persuasion originated from and in what forms, and how individual persuasive strategies are used in political discourse.

The second part of the thesis is concerned with the analysis of the most liked tweets selected over the previously mentioned period. Four persuasive elements of Biden's rhetoric were analysed: (1) metaphor use, (2) emotive vocabulary, (3) positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation, and (4) legitimation strategies.

The thesis concludes with a summary of findings.

I. THEORY

1 PERSUASION IN POLITICS

The persuasion of masses in politics requires the use of propaganda (Bernays 1928, 29). Propaganda is a tool used in an attempt to influence the opinion of masses (Snow 1998, 66). In politics, propaganda is spread through political campaigns and further disseminated to all kinds of fields: business, education, social services, and many others. Even though politics extensively uses propaganda, it has been the slowest one to transform its methods to conform and meet the changing demands of the public. Despite its slow progress, the use of propaganda is a crucial part of political life especially if it is customized to the mentality of the targeted groups. That being said, if a politician wants to be successful in their persuasion, they must understand the public very thoroughly. They must know precisely what the public wants and how to deliver it (Bernays 1928, 29). However, those are usually not the politicians themselves who create the perfect speeches that could reach their audiences. Those speeches are usually created by the so-called ‘spin-doctors’ (Wodak 2009, 577). ‘Spin-doctors’ working with the politicians are, for the most part, officers who communicate the party’s ideology through which they aim to persuade people of their version of the truth (Partington 2018, 9).

1.1 The Difference between Propaganda and Persuasion

Jowett and O’Donnell (2012) define propaganda as: “The deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist” (7). Propaganda means are used to promote or disseminate certain ideas that shape perception of an audience (Jowett and O’Donnell 2012, 3), and its main goal is to create the desired state in the audience’s mind (Jowett and O’Donnell 2012, 6-7). The strategy of propaganda is always planned in a manner to promote the ideas in the best interest of the propagandist but not necessarily in the best interest of the audience (Jowett and O’Donnell 2012, 31). Propaganda is also usually defined as “organized persuasion” (DeVito 1986, 239). However, I would argue that is not necessarily the best definition, because there is a difference between propaganda and persuasion.

According to O’Donnell and Kable (1982), persuasion is “[a] complex, continuing, interactive process in which a sender and a receiver are linked by symbols, verbal and nonverbal, through which the persuader attempts to influence the persuadee to adopt a change in a given attitude or behavior because the persuadee has had perceptions enlarged or changed” (9). This means, that unlike propaganda, persuasion should be mutually beneficial and should

satisfy not only the persuader's needs (some kind of objectives that they have set) but meet the needs of the persuadee as well. Persuadee in persuasion must accept or refuse the message sent to him by a persuader. Persuadee decides to accept or refuse the message based on their existing repertoire of experiences, beliefs, information, and attitudes. That means if the persuader wants to be successful, they need to build their speech up on some elements that the audience already believes in. Overall, persuasion is more satisfying than propaganda for both parties involved (Jowett and O'Donnell 2012, 32-33).

1.2 Aristotle's Modes of Persuasion

As Partington (2018, 3) says, democratic politics is 'the art of persuasion'. The art of political persuasion is a rhetoric strategy that originated from Ancient Greece (Partington 2018, 3-4). Until the early 20th century persuasion and rhetoric were seen as synonyms (Jowett 2012, 39). Nevertheless, there is an essential difference between them. Rhetoric represents the hearer's view on the act of communication. Persuasion represents the intentions of the speaker and whether a favorable outcome for both parties is reached (Charteris-Black 2005, 9).

To reach a favorable outcome during a speech, it requires the use of the three components of persuasive argumentation. Those are discussed by Aristotle in his *Rhetoric*: ethos, logos, and pathos.

1.2.1 Ethos

According to Aristotle (2010), *ethos* is dependent on the personal character of the speaker. If there is not enough evidence of what the speaker says is true, we decide to believe him or not to believe him based on his ability to appear credible. However, his ability to appear credible should be attained during the speech. Aristotle (2010, 7) argues that the speaker's ability to appear credible is the most important means of persuasion. In contemporary times *ethos* is associated with the value system of the speaker. When the speaker's value system is communicated to the audience, the rhetoric becomes persuasive (Charteris-Black 2005, 103). Speaker's value system or personality can be communicated by identifying with the audience and impressing the audience with the speaker's individuality. Individuality is created by the vocabulary the speaker decides to use, intonation, and structural organization during their speech. However, there is more to ethos than just the way the persuader communicates with their audience. Ethos also involves a position and a tone the speaker takes towards a particular issue (Burke 2014, 9).

In contemporary argumentation, it is a common technique that opponent tries to delegitimize the speaker's ethos with the help of argument fallacies such as *ad hominem* fallacy, which will be discussed later on, to lower speaker's credibility (Walton 2006, 122).

1.2.2 Logos

The second element of persuasive argumentation is *logos*. That is the ability of the speaker to present acceptable logical arguments to prove the truth or what seems to be the truth (Aristotle 2010, 7-8). A speaker should produce valid and strong arguments that support their thesis. The arguments must be communicated in an appropriate form to the audience. That can be done by the use of argumentation means such as enthymematic reasoning or rhetorical examples. Using enthymematic reasoning means giving hints to the audience without explicitly stating the premises. The audience, therefore, is expected to realize those premises that are not explicitly stated. On the contrary, while using rhetorical examples the premises are stated explicitly, for example, with the help of an analogy (Burke 2014, 22). During enthymematic reasoning, the speaker must customize their speech to the ability of understanding and knowledge of the audience. Consequently, the speaker's main goal is not as much to build up arguments in their speech on actual reality but on the reality of their audience (Aristotle 2010, 9).

1.2.3 Pathos

The third component of persuasive argumentation is *pathos*. It refers to the appeal to the emotions of the audience. Every speaker who wants to persuade their audience and reach their objectives must know how to evoke the correct emotions. To achieve this goal, the persuader should understand which emotions are the most powerful and know about the techniques of appealing to them (Aristotle 2010, 8). Aristotle (2010) described that on an example of the emotion of anger: "Here we must discover (1) what the state of mind of angry people is, (2) who the people are with whom they usually get angry, and (3) on what grounds they get angry with them" (34) to demonstrate that all of these three points must be known to the speaker otherwise it would be impossible to evoke the emotion of anger. The same concept applies to all other emotions (Aristotle 2010, 64).

1.3 Persuasive Discourse in Politics

There are many ways and methods of persuasion. Legitimation which is an acceptable reasoning for past or present actions (van Dijk 1998, 255) is one of them. In this section, I

will discuss legitimizing and delegitimizing persuasive strategies and how are they connected to the ideological square described by Teun A. van Dijk (2011). I will also discuss what emotional vocabulary and metaphors, which are popular tools used by political figures, will be elaborated on.

1.3.1 Legitimation

A social act usually accomplished through text or speech within an institutional context is known in Critical Discourse Analysis as legitimation (van Dijk 1998, Wodak 2009, Chilton 2004). Legitimation exists within informal context as well, but it would be more likely identified as a justification, explanation or account. Notwithstanding the context, it is a strategy in which a speaker tries to reason their actions and explain why those actions are socially acceptable. Legitimation is used when the speaker expects others to disagree or criticize their actions.

In normal courses of events, when institutional power or authority is not being challenged, legitimation is not necessary. But when a crisis occurs, legitimation becomes one of the strategies exerted by crisis management. Crisis management aims to legitimize their institution and in-groups and delegitimize out-groups (van Dijk 1998, 255-257).

Van Dijk described the concept of legitimizing in-groups and delegitimizing out-groups as one of the main persuasion strategies used in politics (van Dijk 2011, 396) and it shall be discussed in more detail further.

1.3.2 The Ideological Square

Van Dijk (2011) described a persuasion strategy of legitimation in ideological communication as an “Ideological Square”. It is a strategy of ideological discourse control. It views the distinction between the way in-groups and out-groups and how the groups are displayed in political discourse. In speeches or texts those groups are usually described by pronouns *Us* and *Them* (Van Dijk 2011, 396-397). In-groups are represented by the *Us* pronoun and they are viewed as the good and innocent ones. Out-groups are represented by the *Them* pronoun and they are viewed as the evil enemy (Oddo 2011, 289). The ideological square has four complementary strategies (see Fig. 1):

Emphasize *Our* good things

Emphasize *Their* bad things



Figure 1. The Ideological Square (qtd. from van Dijk 2011)

These meta-strategies show that members of a particular group will define their own group in a positive light with the usage of, for example, hyperboles and euphemisms. On the contrary, they will speak about their competitors or opponents (out-group) in the negative light (van Dijk 2011, 396-397). According to van Dijk (2011, 397-398) highlighting negative characteristics of an out-group might be accomplished, for example, by:

- **Negative topics** – describing *Them* as breaching our norms and values;
- **Level of description** – *Their* negative properties or actions (negatively) described in much more detail than *Ours*;
- **Implications** – use of proposition suggesting negative implications about *Them*;
- **Denomination** – differentiating *Them* from *Us* by naming *Them* as: strangers, immigrants, Others, enemies, and others;
- **Predication** – the attribution of negative characteristics to *Them*; and others.

These are just a few examples of how to emphasize negative characteristics about *Them*. But *Them* might be derogated not only by emphasizing negative characteristics but also by visual, phonological, and structural means (van Dijk 2011, 398), such as:

- **Superstructures** – placing *Them* in the first position in headlines or leads, using argumentation fallacies such as *ad hominem* and others;
- **Visual structures** – type, size, color of letters and headlines, photographs showing *Them* in negative actions, and so on;
- **Rhetorical moves** – repetition, rhymes, alliterations to emphasize negative meanings about *Them* (van Dijk 2011, 398).

It is possible to use the same means and strategies for self-legitimation of in-groups and their members (van Dijk 2011, 399).

1.3.3 (Mis)labeling

In order to reach political advantage, it is possible to employ terminology, which allows the speaker to refer to a person, a group, or a policy in an inaccurate and/or derogatory manner. (Mis)labeling, sometimes referred to as name-calling, is a strategy of misinforming the

audience. Labels are usually general terms which meaning is strongly negatively connotated. When an idea, an event, or a person is associated with a negative label, people tend to reject it without further consideration of its real value and merits (Molek-Kozakowska 2010, 6-7). As a contemporary use of labels, Molek-Kozakowska (2010, 7) mentions how former president Bill Clinton was labeled as *a womanizer* or candidate in the U.S. Elections of 2004 John Kerry as *a flip-flopper*. Both labels employed were aimed to discredit them. However, labels can be used in positive self-presentation with the involvement of euphemisms (Molek-Kozakowska 2010, 7). Euphemism is a substitution of offensive or unpleasant expression for one more agreeable or inoffensive (Merriam-Webster, 2020). For example, naming *failure* as *incomplete success* is an example of political euphemism.

1.3.4 Metaphors

Metaphors are an essential part of understanding the world. With the help of a metaphor, it is possible to create new meanings and realities (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 196). It is the most basic part of the cognitive process which influences how we understand different concepts. This understanding of concepts is dependent on reference to another concept, that has been understood before (Machin and Mayr 2012, 163). In other words, metaphor is a comparison in which a certain quality attributed to one entity is transferred to another entity (Partington 2018, 128). Lakoff and Johnson (2003, 253-254) call the original entity possessing certain quality as a *source domain* and the entity to which a certain quality is transferred to as a *target domain*. Partington (2018) refers to the quality that is being transferred as a *basis of resemblance* (128). Machin and Mayer (2012) demonstrated this concept in the sentence:

“The heart is the mechanism that pumps oxygen around the body to feed the important organs of the body” (163).

In this case, **the heart** is a *target domain* and to describe how it works (*the basis of resemblance*) it was represented by **a mechanism** that serves as the *source domain*.

However, if the heart is with the use of metaphor described as a mechanism, then it becomes viewed as if the heart was constructed of components. And if one of the components fails, the whole heart will fail as well. But this view on heart would be impossible in Chinese medicine since it is more holistic, and they view the organism as a whole (Machin and Mayr 2012, 163).

This is the reason why metaphors are appealing to politicians. They have the ability to hide certain aspects of different concepts and thus shape the conveyed message in a way that suits

their agenda (Peclová and Lu 2018, 67). Metaphors have an enormous power of shaping our perception of reality (Machin and Mayr 2012, 164-165). The most effective and persuasive use of metaphor is in combination with other figures of speech, especially with the semantic relation of contrast. Contrast has the power of making a human brain associate together completely opposite things, and these associations then construct a cause-effect relationship. For example, Margaret Thatcher used metaphors in a way in which Socialism was associated with negative social phenomena and as a result, the negative social phenomena were seen as a cause of Socialism (Charteris-Black 2005, 197). Another reason why metaphors are persuasive is their power to connect particular concepts through analogies, which act as proof for backing the argument (Charteris-Black 2005, 198). Consequently, the use of metaphors in persuasion is so effective because it allows the hearer to participate in an interpretation – to understand what the speaker actually means. This engagement of hearer in discourse creates a bond between them and the speaker in a joint act of meaning creation (Charteris-Black 2004, 13). Another reason is that by the use of metaphors, the speaker is able to evoke emotions (Macagno and Walton 2019, 233).

1.3.5 Emotive Vocabulary

Emotive vocabulary or rather emotive words (also can be called ethical words) are one of the most powerful means of persuasion due to their power to trigger our emotions. They influence how reality is perceived, decisions are made, our attitudes and choices are shaped (Macagno and Walton 2014, 5). However, it should not be mistaken with so-called “emotion words”. Emotion words refer directly to emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger, joy, ... (Charaudeau 2008 cit. from Bourse 2019). For example, words as “terrible” or “horrible” would be considered as emotion words because they directly refer to the emotion that they evoke, such as fear or disgust which makes them purely evaluative (Macagno and Walton 2019, 233).

However, emotive words have those evaluative features hidden their connotation, which serves more like an accessory rather than having this evaluative component included directly in their definition (Macagno and Walton 2019, 246). Connotation can be thought of as a common attribute associated with a particular word (Mill 1868, 219). Macagno and Walton (2014, 39) discuss how different associations with a word can evoke different emotions. As an example, Macagno and Walton (2019) discuss the words “cur” and “dog”, and they say that the distinction between those two words “is a distinction between ‘emotive meaning’, which is the potentiality of a word, and the cause thereof, which can be usually found in the

values associated with the denotation (the “ethical” dimension), but not necessarily” (232). The word “cur” carries a negative evaluation of the referent (dog), but the evaluation is not a part of the definition and that makes the word emotive (Macagno and Walton 2019, 233). However, the emotive meaning of words can be altered by changing a prototypical context in which the word is usually used (Macagno and Walton 2019, 246). This strategy was named by Stevenson (1938) as a persuasive definition. He defined it as “explicit or implicit redefinitions of ethical words, aimed at redirecting their emotive meanings to states of affairs that would not be normally denoted by them” (Stevenson 1938, 332). The strategy was used, for example, by Donald Trump in his Hilton Head Island speech from 2016, where he altered the meaning of the word “genius”, in which, traditionally, the evaluation of the referent is positive. Through irony, he altered the meaning from “very great and rare natural ability or skill” to “a very ordinary capacity” (Macagno and Walton 2019, 236-237).

2 METHODOLOGY OF ANALYSIS

2.1 Use of Twitter within Political Discourse

Twitter is a widely used social media platform allowing the messages of 140 characters or less to reach other people. Due to its simplicity and immediacy, Twitter perfectly fits in today's rushed world. It is a fast channel where new information can be acquired. Stieglitz and Dang-Xuan (2013) defined Twitter as “a form of microblogging in which entries typically consist of short content such as phrases, quick comments, images, or links to videos” (219). Thanks to the specific feature of hashtags that Twitter has introduced, users are able to search a particular topic they are interested in. Social network also allows “retweeting” through which information is shared between multiple users. Pragmatically, retweeting is not used only to transmit information but also to express an agreement or disagreement with an issue or to amuse a specific audience (Boyd et al. 2010). These features made Twitter popular in political discourse.

Nowadays a major change in traditional political communication is happening and the power of political communication through social media is increasing. The first link between the internet and politics appeared in late 2002 thanks to the usage of blogs (Chadwick 2008, 3-5). As a form of microblogging, Twitter is currently becoming more and more popular within the political context. It has become a legitimate communication channel exploited by political institutions such as political parties or politicians (Tumasjan et al. 2011, 402). For example, the US Congress members use Twitter for sharing a piece of information that would be normally communicated by their office in other media (Golbeck et al. 2009, 1-2). In the recent years, Twitter also became a huge part of political campaigns during elections. The first one who employed Twitter in his US presidential election campaign was Barack Obama in 2008. He tweeted mainly about major campaign announcements (Hendrick and Denton 2010, 40-45). Twitter also played an important role during the US presidential election of 2016. Both main candidates, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, used Twitter as a medium through which they spread information concerning policy points (Yaqub et al. 2016, 613-614). These days Twitter is, once again, used by presidential candidates as a part of the campaign for the upcoming US Presidential Election 2020.

2.2 Material

This thesis aims to analyze the tweets of Joe Biden who have been running against Donald Trump in the US Presidential Election 2020, to find out what types of persuasive strategies

are used in the candidate's tweets. Joe Biden is a member of the Democratic Party. He is a former Vice President of the United States of America (2009 – 2017). However, his political career had started much sooner. In 1972, when he was 29 years old, he was elected to the U.S. Senate to represent Delaware and become one of the five youngest senators in American history (Britannica, 2020). He entered the Presidential Election 2020 as the Democratic Party nominee.

The analysis was done on 50 tweet samples, collected over the period of December to March 2020. The choice of this period is connected with the Twitter option that enables to see only a certain number of tweets that have been posted. The criteria under which the messages were chosen are based on the number of likes and retweets. For instance, the most popular tweet in the corpus (JB 45) received 234.8K likes. The lowest number of likes in our corpus is 51.5K. The analysis is focused on tracing the persuasive elements and strategies that made the tweets so popular among the audience.

2.3 Steps of the Analysis

The analysis was conducted in four areas: metaphor analysis, search for emotive vocabulary using the Sentiment Analysis, the creation of the Ideological Square and lastly reconstruction of legitimation strategies.

Firstly, the corpus was analyzed for metaphors. While analyzing metaphors, it is important to keep in mind that “[i]f one were to ask ten metaphor scholars to count the metaphors a text, they would almost certainly arrive at different answers. Similarly, experience shows that even the same analyst can produce different counts of metaphors on different days” (Charteris-Black 2018, 213). Though metaphor recognition is an ultimately subjective process (Charteris-Black 2018, 220), we attempted to minimize deviations by following an appropriate approach for metaphor analysis.

The cognitive semantic approach was used for the analysis of metaphors (Lakoff and Turner 1989, Kövecses 2010, Charteris-Black 2004). I selected and analyzed only those metaphors that were related to the political discourse and not those which would be considered as metaphors from the linguistic point of view but would have no value for rhetoric purposes. For example, such as metaphor as “*we move into the New Year*” that Biden mentions in his tweet on January 1, 2020 was disregarded for its lack of persuasive potential. From a linguistic point of view, it is a metaphoric presentation of the conceptual metaphor TIME IS A MOVING OBJECT (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 46). However, for my cause, that metaphor is insignificant because it is not related to a political issue. An example of a politically-related metaphor

would “*We are in the battle*” because it is about a political campaign and therefore the metaphor is used for persuasion.

The next step was to analyze the emotive vocabulary used by the candidate. Emotive words have the power of triggering emotions; thus, the words are loaded with an emotional connotation. Those connotations display the attitude of a writer. To find out if the emotional connotation is positive or negative Sentiment Analysis (Taboada et al. 2016) was used. I have chosen to examine emotive words applying a lexicon-based approach (Pajupuu et al. 2016, 126; Kolchyna et al. 2015, 8). This approach is done with the help of dictionaries specialized in emotional connotation, to be able to determine if the connotation is negative or positive (Pajupuu et al. 2016, 126; Esuli and Sebastiani 2006). These dictionaries have pre-calculated polarity of words (Kolchyna et al. 2015, 7). I chose SentiWordNet¹ for the analysis of emotiveness. The SentiWordNet Dictionary works by assigning the emotive word positive and negative SentiScore, which is a decimal number in the range from 0 to 1 (Esuli and Sebastiani 2006). Whichever score is closer to 1 determines the polarity of the word. The more the SentiScore is, the more neutral the word’s emotiveness is. In my analysis, only words in which SentiScores differed more than 0.124 were counted as negative or positive.

The third step is the corpus analysis based on Van Dijk’s (1998) socio-cognitive approach of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation known as Ideological Square. Van Dijk (2006, 125-126) proposed an overview of discourse structures and strategies used for the creation of the Ideological Square in a discourse. Those were used as a guide for analyses. However, few changes were done due to a specific form of the examined corpus. Only strategies fitted for the written corpus composed of tweets were applied.

Analysis of the overall strategy was done with regard to the meaning of the message, form of presentation and type of speech act. The tweets were analyzed for positive presentation/action of Us and negative presentation/action of Them. The criteria for the analysis are divided into three main levels: Meaning, Form, and Action.

The first level, the meaning level, embraces the choice of topics, local meanings, and lexicon by the candidate. I focus on how Biden selects and shifts negative topics about Us to positive ones or positive topic about Them to negative ones (van Dijk 2006, 125-126). The examination of local meanings requires the analysis of propositions that are manifested explicitly or left implicit. Anything that might reflect negatively on the in-group tends to be

¹ The application is available at <https://github.com/aesuli/sentiwordnet>.

left out and anything that can potentially harm out-group will be explicitly stated (van Dijk 1998, 268-269). I applied the criteria of precision, graduality, and level: hypothetically, good things about Us and negative things about Them will be described precisely with an emphasis on detail, whereas negative things about Us and positive thing about Them will be described only vaguely and very broadly (van Dijk 2006, 126). The necessity or possibility of an action performed by Us or Them can be expressed through modality. If undertaking particular action is presented as a necessity, it can help to legitimize it (van Dijk 2003, 51). While looking for evidentiality I was looking for evidence the speaker supports his propositions with (Aikhenvald 2018, 1).

In terms of lexicon, positive terms for Us and negative terms for them are selected with the help of previously analyzed emotive words, to show hoe Biden supports his statements with appeal to emotions.

The second level of Ideological Square analysis is the analysis of the form of the text, which means that repetition, meanings as comparisons, metaphors, metonymies were looked for in the corpus (van Dijk 2006, 126).

The third level represents acts of speech, communication, and interaction. Speech acts such as promises, accusations, etc., that Biden used to presuppose Our/Their Good/Bad things where examined and described on particular examples.

The fourth step was to analyze the legitimation strategies used by Biden. The analysis of legitimation is based on four major forms of Critical Discourse Analysis of legitimation described by Van Leeuwen (2008), which was later modified and expanded by Antonio Reyes (2011):

- 1) Legitimation through emotions
- 2) Legitimation through hypothetical future
- 3) Legitimation through rationality
- 4) Legitimation through Voice of expertise – showing the audience that the speaker’s proposal is backed by an expert in that field or by “exact numbers”
- 5) Legitimation through Altruism – speaker tries to present his ideas in a manner that suggests his actions are serving his voters rather than his own personal interest

Van Leeuwen (2008) says that each of these forms might be used on its own or in combination with other(s). These forms can be established with the objective not only to legitimize but also to delegitimize (Van Leeuwen 2008, 106).

II. ANALYSIS

3 BIDEN: ELEMENTS OF PERSUASION IN TWEETS

The aim of the following analysis is to describe persuasive strategies that Joe Biden uses in his most-liked tweets of the first quarter of 2020.

3.1 Metaphors

Biden's use of metaphors through his twitter messages is extensive, in 50 tweets he used 76 metaphors altogether. However, since this thesis aims to analyze mainly persuasive discourse, only metaphors used for the purpose of propaganda will be elaborated on in this section.

3.1.1 Metaphor analysis

Biden's political metaphors found in the corpus were grouped based on their source domains. The total number of metaphors that can be regarded as persuasive is 63. The metaphoric expressions are used to address such issues as political rivalry, coronavirus crisis, leadership, elections, and others. Table 1 shows common source domains that appeared in the corpus of 50 tweets.

Table 1. Source Domains of Joe Biden's Metaphors

Source domain	Number of metaphors
WAR	14
PERSON	12
CONTAINER	11
JOURNEY	6
MONEY	5
COMMODITY	3
BUILDING	3
BODY	2
MOVEMENT	2
LEADERSHIP	2
FIRE	2
GAMBLING	2
NATURE	1
POISON	1
TOTAL	66

The most used metaphors in Joe Biden's tweets were WAR metaphors; Biden used 14 of those throughout the examined corpus. The target domains for WAR metaphors were such abstract concepts as POLITICS or ARGUMENTS. The persuasive potential lies in the description of such concepts in terms of war, which makes the audience grasp the gravity of the situation and thus makes it more serious and persuasive, for example:

- (1) **We are in the battle** for the soul of our nation [...] (JB 15)

The battle in this example represents the competition between Biden (and other candidates) and Trump in the U.S. Presidential Election 2020. Same as if it was a war, Biden's objective is to win this competition and become the head of the United States of America.

- (2) **Attacks like this** against a man who could be the first Jewish President [...] (JB 13)

In this example, Biden mentioned *attacks* against Sanders. The *attacks* represent arguments against Bernie Sanders regarding why he is not suitable as a U.S. President.

- (3) [...] This disease could impact every nation and any person on the planet – and we need a **plan to combat it**. (JB 25)

Combating a disease is again reference to a war. The literal definition of the word *combat* is “active fighting in war” (Merriam-Webster 2020). It is usual to say that a disease or illness is being fought with in terms of healing from the disease. In this case, Coronavirus is the disease and the plan to combat it means to heal the sick ones and make the virus stop spreading.

The second most preferred group of metaphors are personifications. Those are used to describe an object as if it had human motivations, characteristics, or actions (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 33). Personifications are persuasive because they allow us to understand abstract concepts in terms of human experiences and thus clarify those abstract images (Melion and Ramakers 2014, 14). Biden used 12 personifications that referred to the target domain of all kinds of inanimate concepts, such as nation, work, moment, and so on. For example, he used an epithet “tireless” to praise Mike Bloomberg in a tweet from March 4, 2020:

- (4) @MikeBloomberg, I can't thank you enough for your support – and for **your tireless work** on everything [...] (JB 11)

He uses the expression *tireless work* to employ Bloomberg's dedication to working. In this way, Biden legitimizes Bloomberg's actions and shows his support.

Here is another example of personification:

- (5) The American people are rising to **meet this moment**. We need our president to do the same (JB 44)

This tweet is a reaction to Donald Trump's actions during the coronavirus crisis. *People are rising to meet this moment* suggests that people in America are realizing the severity of the coronavirus crisis. I would argue that *this moment*, therefore, personifies an obstacle that must be concurred.

CONTAINER metaphors usually refer to events, activities, states, etc. (Kövecses 2010, 39). Those have been used 11 times. The concept of container metaphor can be perceived as a bounding surface, from which it is possible to get in and out (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 29-30). These metaphors are mostly used when Biden needs to demonstrate some kind of activity.

- (6) [...] **pulling out** of the Iran deal [...] (JB 3)

In this case, *Iran deal* represents a container and *pulling out* of the container means the activity of leaving the container. This metaphor on its own is not persuasive, however in the context of the tweet, Biden used this metaphor as a tool to delegitimize Trump.

- (7) [...] get Trump **out of** the White House (JB 12, 22)

As in the example (6), the White House is in this case, container and Biden aims to make Trump leave this container. This metaphor is used to enhance the persuasive strategy of Us against Them. In this case Trump is the antagonist who must be removed from the White House.

JOURNEY metaphors are used in political discourse to motivate the audience. Politicians usually utilize such metaphors when they present the current situation as bad and hopeless, but the metaphor of a journey is the process, which will result in a better future (Peclová and Lu 2018, 74). Journey metaphor was used 6 times, for instance:

- (8) [...] **keep** our country **running**. [...] (JB 39)

In this tweet, Biden praised all of the people who were helping during the coronavirus crisis, and he thanked them for *keeping America running*, which refers to the process of the journey of being able to get out of the crisis.

- (9) We will **overcome** this — together. (JB 49)

Overcoming the crisis is a journey with a promise of a better future.

Metaphors in which target domain was treated as MONEY was used 5 times. The persuasive powers of MONEY metaphors are based on personal experience with money. Everybody needs money to survive in today's society. I would suggest that the persuasive power stems mainly from the experience, that people usually must work hard to earn a lot of money.

(10) [...] I will do everything I can to **earn** your vote. (JB 9)

The vote is treated as a reward for the job done. In this case, persuasion is created by the dedication to work hard, to get the votes from his audience.

(11) We **owe a debt** of gratitude [...]. (JB 39)

In this example, gratitude is treated as a means of payment for a job done well. The persuasion done by praising Bloomberg amongst the audience and one again in the context of the tweet, the concept of ideological square Us – Biden and Bloomberg against Them – Trump can be noticed.

Other metaphors were rarer in the corpus (see Table 1). This might be due to the fact that political concepts are more persuasive when explained in the terms of metaphors that are more likely to be connected with emotions such as WAR or a JOURNEY, than in terms of, for example, BODY. However, I would like to elaborate at least on few particular examples the source domains of which might not be used that often throughout the corpus but are persuasive as well. For example,

(12) [...] there is a **home** for you **in our campaign** [...]. (JB 30)

This particular example has a BUILDING source domain. This tweet was posted after three other candidates resigned. Biden was addressing those voters who were supporting one of the three resigned candidates. This metaphor was persuasive because Biden tried to create a connection between him and his potential voters by using the reference to *home* in his campaign rather than asking explicitly for support. BUILDING metaphor was used overall 3 times.

Another example has a FIRE source domain, which can be found in the corpus two times. Anger is usually expressed in terms of heat. It is due to the correlation of body heat connected with this negative emotion (Kövecses 2010, 81). The persuasion in this example stands in its expressivity and intensity of the expression.

(13) [...] Fanned **the flames** of hate [...]. (JB 9)

Last source domain to be elaborated is GAMBLING domain. This domain was used throughout the corpus two times. For example,

(14) [...] Lives are **at stake**. [...] (JB 50)

Gambling is dangerous, and by referring to gambling, Biden tried to point out how important it is to take an action to protect people from spreading coronavirus. At the same time, by this metaphor, he managed to suggest that Trump is a gambler in order to discredit his credibility. As the last metaphor I would like to elaborate the one with POISON source domain. It was used to make a comparison to Donald Trump:

(15) [...] Donald Trump **is poison** to our soul. [...] (JB 14)

This kind of comparison between two purposely different entities gives negative characteristics to the opponent. This metaphor is persuasive because it is highly evaluative and thus is capable of evoking strong emotions (Partington 2018, 135).

As can be seen, metaphors are a huge part of Biden's rhetoric. The concentration of metaphors might be so high due to their expressivity which leads to easier persuasion or simply because metaphors are used in everyday life to help us understand concepts difficult for a human mind. However, most likely it is the combination of the expressivity and the usage in everyday life.

3.2 Emotive Vocabulary

The aim of analyzing emotive vocabulary within the corpus is to determine its polarity with regard to emotiveness. Pathos or, in other words, evoking emotions in an audience is one of the three basic modes of Aristotle's persuasion. The whole corpus we created had a total of 1632 words. Using the SentiNetWord dictionary, 146 emotive words have been singled out, from which 76 carry positive connotations and 70 negative connotations. That means that every 11th word in Biden's tweets is loaded with emotional connotation. In cases where a negation (words such as *no*, *not*, *don't*, etc.) was found in a sentence, the process of conversion from negative to positive or positive to negative was performed by assigning the word opposite connotation than it would carry without the negation, because negation in a sentence naturally changes the meaning of the word to the exact opposite. For example:

(16) [...] nothing to worry about [...]. (JB 37)

The word *worry* in (16) is negatively connotated, however, it was influenced by the conversion pronoun *nothing* and thus its connotation was converted to a positive one (Kolchyna et al. 2015, 7).

Almost the same number of positive connotations and negative connotations make the corpus seemingly emotively balanced.

Words carrying positive or negative connotations can be divided into four main categories according to the part of speech they belong to. Connotative parts of speech are nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs. The further examination of connotative meaning for each part of speech is captured in Table 2.

Table 2. Connotations of Parts of Speech in Joe Biden's Corpus

	Positive	Negative	Total
Nouns	19	43	62
Adjectives	30	8	38
Adverbs	4	1	5
Verbs	23	18	41

Nouns were the biggest carrier of negative connotative meaning. The most used noun loaded with a negative meaning was the word *crisis* and it was used in 5 different tweets (JB 3, 22, 35, 37, 38). Some other nouns that were used are *hope, unity, truth, health-care*, etc. which are connotated positively and *fear, fiction, outbreak, sick leave*, etc. which were connotated negatively.

Adjectives, on the other hand, were the biggest carriers of positive connotative meaning. The most used adjective with a positive meaning was the word *better* and it was used on 7 occasions (JB 3, 7, 8, 13, 24). Other tweets included positively connotated adjectives such as *available, honest, clear, brave*, etc. and negatively connotated adjectives as *xenophobic, erratic, incompetent, inept*, and others.

The verbs in the corpus which are positively connotated are for instance *to hope, to believe, to beat*, and *to spend (time)*. And negatively connotated for example *to lose, to fail, to worry*, and *to hold off*.

The adverbs used with positive connotations are *totally, easily, wholly* and *fundamentally*. The only negative connotated adverb is the word *never*.

This signifies what emotional impact Biden tries to have on his audience. With regards to the fact that it is mostly nouns that carry connotations, it can be said that Biden usually talks about topics that are chosen in a way to stir emotions and leave an impact on the reader. From this analysis, it is obvious that he rather handles negative topics which are mostly connected to Donald Trump or Coronavirus crisis. On the other hand, while he talks about himself, the Democratic Party and their actions, words he uses are mostly positively

connotated and that is why so many adjectives and verbs are positively connotated. It can be concluded that Biden uses emotive words as a persuasive tool to talk about negative topics with the implication of him being able to change the situation.

3.3 Ideological Square

I also tracked the corpus for traces of positive self-presentation of Us and negative presentation of Them. This allowed defining who belongs to the In-group and who belongs to the Out-group, according to Biden. At first, it appears as Joe Biden and his voters belong to the In-group and Donald Trump and his voters into the Out-group; however, after a more thorough analysis, it can be said that the In-group is represented by the whole Democratic Party and its voters.

3.3.1 Positive Self-presentation

Tweets that have helped to establish the view on the In-group as being composed of the whole Democratic Party were usually targeting individual members of the Democratic Party. Biden presented them as kind, caring people who are trying to help those in need. He usually speaks about Democrats in a manner which shows that they are selfless people who are trying to make an impact on the country in a way that will be beneficial for all the people living there. To emphasize this, Biden uses tactics such as emphasis through implied comparison, emphasis through metaphor use, emphasis through promises, emphasis through repetition, and appeal to logos, pathos, and ethos.

To describe how emphasis through implied comparison works I suggest it would be appropriate to examine it directly using the example (17) in which the emphasis through implied comparison is made by Biden mentioning that “*we will be better a country for his continued service*”. Here he implies that Trump’s country is worse. By this formulation and implied comparison, he creates a model of the ideological square where he indirectly suggests that Trump as a member of Out-group is incapable of running the country, and therefore labeled as bad, but the In-group is doing an amazing job to make the country better and therefore labeled as good.

- (17) @PeteButtigieg ran a historic, trail-blazing campaign based on courage, compassion, and honesty. We will be a better country for his continued service. [...] (JB8)

The fact that Pete Buttigieg belongs to the In-group is based on the fact that in 2012 he was in the office as a mayor in South Bend, Indiana for the Democratic Party (Biography 2020).

Biden described his campaign as *trail-blazing; based on courage, compassion, and honesty*. He foregrounded the positive things about Buttigieg’s campaign without mentioning the negative ones: for example, all the reasons why the campaign was not successful and the reason Buttigieg dropped out of the race.

In the following example (18) Biden once again uses the same strategy he used in the example (17). The comparison “*we are better than you*” to label the In-group as good and by implied comparison to label the Out-group as bad. Biden usually uses his words repetitively. Repetition is another feature of van Dijk’s Ideological Square (2006) and will be discussed later on.

- (18) You lost tonight, @realDonaldTrump. Democrats around the country are fired up. We are decent, brave, and resilient people. We are better than you [...] (JB 13)

The strategy of Evidentiality is used by the candidate. The statement “*You lost tonight*” acts as a supportive feature (evidentiality) for the claim “*We are decent, brave and resilient people*”. How does Biden know that? Because they were able to defeat Trump. Also, this tweet covers the strategies of using pronoun We/Us; and a detailed description of the positive presentation by marking Democrats as *decent, brave, and resilient people*. However, I would argue that statement falsely concluded, because simply being a supporter of the Democratic Party does not make a person necessarily brilliant.

In another example (19), Biden uses the same tactic of positive talk about a member of the Democratic Party as in the example (17). However, this time he directly, without implications, says that the aim is to *defeat* Trump. To emphasize the importance of defeating the In-group, he uses COMPETITION metaphor “*This race is bigger than candidates and bigger than politics.*” By that, the tweet opposes Bloomberg as one of the candidates in the elections, saying that it is not important who is elected if it is Democrat. At the same time, it says that Trump, indirectly labeled as the enemy, cannot be elected.

- (19) @MikeBloomberg, I can’t thank you enough for your support – and for your tireless work on everything from gun safety reform to climate change.

This race is bigger than candidates and bigger than politics. It’s about defeating Donald Trump, and with your help, we’re gonna [sic] do it. (JB 11)

Nevertheless, Mike Bloomberg is a representative of the Democratic Party and the mentioned *support* can imply inclusion in the In-group. This claim is further strengthened by the usage of metaphor *tireless work*, which is a positive presentation of Bloomberg. The negative presentation of Donald Trump helps to legitimize Bloomberg.

- (20) Senator @EWarren is the fiercest of fighters for the middle-class families. Her work in Washington, in Massachusetts, and on the campaign trail has made a real difference on people's lives. We need her voice in this race, and we need her continued work in the Senate. (JB 14)

Ellen Warren is another representative of the Democratic Party, whose actions were praised by Biden. He again used a WAR metaphor stating that Warren is the *fiercest of fighters*. Her work made a real difference is another positive presentation of her actions. Statement *We need her voice* includes We/Us pronoun as well as metonymy, which is part of the Format strategy. The same strategy can be seen in the tweet (21):

- (21) Kamala – You've spent your whole career fighting for folks who've been written off and left behind. [...] (JB 18)

Kamala Harrison is a Democratic Party representative as well, and her actions are positively described as a contribution to society. To emphasize this positiveness, WAR metaphor is used. Though wars are not typically positive, those who come out as brilliantly outstanding warriors are adored and worshiped. Those warriors are called heroes. To present someone as a hero might have an enormous impact on the audience because that kind of presentation keeps the audiences focused on their admirable achievements and noble qualities (Merriam-Webster 2020) and therefore it will affect them to perceive people pictured as heroes more. Speech acts are important contributors to the Ideological Square, especially those that include promises. Promises are a declaration that one will do or will not do something (Merriam-Webster 2020). Their persuasive power is built upon the credibility of the speaker. If the pathos of the speaker is well established, promises can be very persuasive due to their believability that they will be carried out (Kuhnke 2012, 109-110). Throughout the corpus Biden used a promise as in the example:

- (22) No president can promise to prevent future outbreaks, but I can promise you this: When I'm president, we will be better prepared, respond better, and recover better. We'll lead with science and listen to the experts. And I will always, always tell you the truth. (JB 24)

Biden makes promises in two more tweets JB 41 and JB 45. But if we look once more at (22), by stating “*No president can promise to prevent future outbreaks*” he appeals to logos. He is presenting a logical statement. To that Biden adds persuasion by Modality in a form of necessity. Biden suggests that America needs a president who will be better prepared to prevent future outbreaks. By that sentence he creates implied comparison that Trump as a president was not prepared enough for the situation. Then he proceeds and uses shift from singular pronoun *I* to plural pronoun *We*. Biden implies “*When I’m president, we will be better in every way*”. To emphasize the cogency of his statement he repeats the word *better* three times. That is persuasive because in the minds of his audience whether the country is prepared for the future outbreaks is dependent on the fact whether Biden elected or not as a president. Another appeal to logos is performed by expressing that his leadership and decision making will be backed up by science. In his last sentence, he uses appeal to pathos. He is trying to establish his credibility by saying that he *will tell the truth*, which is even more emphasized by the repetition of the word *always*.

The tweets presented as promises repeat the key ideas of Biden’s campaign. Those are the important claims for Biden’s rhetoric in order to succeed in the elections. Such repetition is persuasive because of the increased attention an audience is paying to a particular topic or statement. Therefore, there exists a possibility that the audience will store this topic and other statements in their mind in the way intended by the speaker (van Dijk 1998, 273). For example:

- (23) It's hard to believe this has to be said, but if I'm elected president, I will always lead the way with science. I will listen to the experts and heed their advice. I will do the opposite of what we're seeing Donald Trump do every day.” (JB 45)
- (24) As president, I will always choose hope over fear, unity over division, truth over lies, and science over fiction. (JB 48)

In (23) and (24) Biden emphasizes his own good qualities by presenting that he cherishes the right values and morals. In (23) there is a direct statement that he is the opposite of Trump, and therefore he is trying to decrease the credibility of Trump. He mentions himself as *a president* which is also repeated 3 times in the corpus. Biden in 5 instances uses expressions as *lead with science*, *listen to experts*, *science over fiction*, *truth over lies*, and so on. Repetition appears to be one of the most frequent features in the corpus because if an idea is repeated enough times, it is more likely to be taken as the truth (Bernays 1928, 23).

Repetition is also found in tweets where Biden uses comparison with Trump for emphasis of his / his team's good qualities. For example, a phrase *we are better than you/Trump* was used in JB 7 and JB 13, while the repeated phrase *beat Donald Trump* appeared in JB 2, JB 19, JB 13. Such phrases imply: "Because we are better than Trump, we are going to beat him". Once again WAR metaphor is an important persuasive feature creating the notion of unity and victory, that We together will win against Them, strengthen even more by its constant repetition in the corpus.

3.3.2 Negative Them-presentation

Defining Out-group was not as obvious as defining In-group. In the corpus, Biden builds his negative them-presentation mainly with reference to Trump, whose name he uses 20 times throughout the corpus. Only in one occasion he names Mike Pence, who, as well as Trump, is the representative of the Republican Party. Biden mentions him in JB 1 in the corpus, where he points out to the illegitimate actions. Other than that, there are no more direct indications of the Out-group. However, if we look at the political system in the US, it is known that two major parties are running against each other. Both differ in their beliefs about life, what is right and what is wrong, what the legislation should be like. More specifically they are dealing with such questions as the view on the death penalty, healthcare policy, stance on immigration, gay marriage, abortion and so on (Diffen 2020). With this in mind and also the fact that Biden's In-group is composed of the Democratic Party and its voters, I would suggest that Out-group is represented by Republican Party as a whole, even though its highest representative Donald Trump is mainly targeted in the examined corpus. The employed strategies of negative them-presentation included emphasis through implied comparison, emphasis through metaphor use, emphasis through accusations, emphasis through repetition, and appeal to logos and pathos.

Biden's concentrated attention on Donald Trump might be a result of the popularity of this topic among his audience. As can be seen in the corpus and as has already been mentioned, more than 25 tweets out of fifty were targeting Trump and the corpus is composed of the most liked tweets from December to March. One example of those tweets is:

- (25) We are in the battle for the soul of our nation – and Donald Trump is poison to our soul. We have to get him out of the White House." (JB 20)

In this example (25), WAR metaphor is combined with personification in the sentence "*We are in the battle for the soul of our nation*". In the following sentence, simile is used when Trump is compared to *poison*, which is a negatively connotated word, and thus

Biden might aim to appeal to ethos. All of these figures of speech are used to emphasize the modality of the next sentence where the necessity of getting Trump out of the White House is expressed.

In the following example (26) Trump is targeted again. The whole tweet is formed as an accusation. This time Biden appeals to discredit Trump's pathos, by accusing the latter of lying: *that was a flat-out lie*. *Disgrace* is another negatively connotated word, that is used to appeal to ethos. Biden might have been exploiting the fear of coronavirus as a persuasive strategy. As Reyes (2011) says, "Fear is perhaps the most effective emotion to trigger a response from the interlocutors" (790). In this case, the action that is needed from Biden's audience is to vote for him. To strengthen the persuasive power of fear, Biden implements once more the modality of necessity, which is expressed with the use of the word *need* in the expression "*We need to ensure*". It could simultaneously be understood that he, if elected, would try to ensure free tests for coronavirus for everyone who needs one.

- (26) On March 6th, Donald Trump claimed: "Anybody that wants a test can get a test." That was a flat-out lie then, and it's still not true today. It's disgrace. We need to ensure everyone who needs a test can get one free of charge. Period." March 22, 2020 (JB 40)

As it has been mentioned in the Section on Positive Self-presentation, Biden very often uses the persuasive power of repetition. That concerns a repetition across the entire corpus in a form of repeating topics, which can be seen in example (26) and example (27) – a repetition of an issue dealing with expensive coronavirus tests, or a repetition of words and phrases within one particular tweet as is shown in examples (27) and (28) – repetition of the phrase "*won't stop the virus*".

In example (27), Biden repeats the word *free* three times within three sentences, to express the importance. That is supported by his appeal to ethos with the use of a negatively connotated word *crisis*. In that sentence pronoun *We* is used to include in the problem even those people who have not been directly affected by the virus.

- (27) The coronavirus test should be made widely available and free. The coronavirus vaccine, when ready, should be made widely available and free. Treatment for coronavirus should be free, too. We're in a crisis. No one should have to pay for their coronavirus health care costs. (JB 38)

To address the coronavirus crisis, Biden wrote the following tweet, in which he also included the issue of immigration by mentioning *the wall*, or the border between Mexico and the United States to prevent the US from illegal immigration. The same tweet also addresses racism and white supremacy of which Trump is usually accused by the media. By mentioning that “*Racism won’t stop a virus*” Biden implicitly labels Trump as racist.

(28) “A wall won’t stop a virus.
Racism won’t stop a virus
Do your job.” (JB 21)

The problem is emphasized through repetition. However, the tweet also implies that Trump is not capable of taking care of his presidential responsibilities. By that implication, Biden is trying to diminish Trump’s credibility. The sentence “*Do your job*” is also repeated in the example (29). As I have mentioned earlier, if something is repeated over and over again, it becomes true in our minds (Bernays 1928, 23). In this case, Biden’s truth is that Trump is unable to do his job.

(29) Stop the xenophobic fear-mongering. Be honest. Take responsibility. Do your job. (JB 33)

Biden discredits Trump’s pathos by speech act of accusation, not only by accusing him of *xenophobic fear-mongering* but also by implying that Trump is lying and therefore indirectly labeling him as a liar.

The topic raised in the example (30) deals with one of the biggest issues about working conditions in the US. Since the topic of no paid sick leave is still relevant, I would argue it can be seen as an accusation: those in power, the Republicans, were not able to deal with this problem. Biden talks about this problem in his campaign program (JoeBiden 2020); however, he is not offering any solutions either. Nevertheless, this tweet suggests that the Out-group is bad because they do not do anything about it. Biden once again employs the negatively connotated word *disgrace*, to evoke emotions, and since it is not the first time Biden uses the phrase *it is disgrace*, a repetition is exploited.

(30) “It is a national disgrace that millions of Americans do not have a single day of paid sick leave.” (JB 34)

To sum it up, at least 26 instances in which Biden tries to discredit Trump can be found in the corpus. In 20 of those, Biden directly mentions Trump’s name. Biden uses fewer

metaphors to talk negatively about the Out-group than he uses to talk positively about the In-group; however, he does use a simile to compare Trump to poison. To emphasize the negative things, he includes repetition and appeals to ethos by using emotive words as *crisis*, *disgrace*, etc. and with the use of the emotive words, he is trying to evoke the emotion of fear. Except for mentioning Trump, Biden sometimes talks about topics disputed among the Democratic and Republican Party, for example, the issue of paid sick-leave as in the example (30).

3.4 Legitimation

To set the model of (de)legitimation in Biden's tweets, it is necessary to define Biden's actions he aims to legitimize, as well as the threat incurred if his actions are not executed. The object of legitimation is the action of defeating Donald Trump in the U.S. Presidential Election 2020 – whether it means defeating Trump personally or as a member of the Democratic Party. At the same time, he aims to delegitimize Donald Trump and his status as the U.S. President in a way in which Trump himself or his actions are presented as a threat.

3.4.1 (De)Legitimation through Emotions

The appeal to the emotions is used in order to evoke mental and behavioral responses such as sympathy, understanding, etc. In politics, emotions tend to be evoked in a way to support politicians' actions and thus help them with the legitimization of their actions (Reyes 2011, 788).

For example, in the following tweet, Biden's delegitimation of Trump is based on discrediting Trump's status as a President of the U.S. and thus questioning his status of the commander in chief by the strategy of evoking emotions. Describing Biden's use of emotive vocabulary earlier, I looked at the words carrying negative connotations and thus evoking negative emotions. For the purpose of delegitimation, Biden uses those words in concentration with reference to the consequences of Trump's actions, which he deliberately views as problematic. The strategy of labeling is used by calling Trump erratic and incompetent, and it helps Biden to evoke the desired emotions and actions in his audience – rejection of Trump. According to Molek-Kozakowska (2010, 6-7), people tend to reject negatively labeled people without further consideration of their real value and merits.

- (31) This is a **crisis** of Donald Trump's own making. He claimed pulling out of the Iran deal would deter Iranian aggression and result in a better deal. He **has failed** on both counts. He is **the most erratic and incompetent** commander in chief we've ever had. (JB 3)

The same is true about evoking positive emotions with regard to the In-group. This is done for the Democratic Party by labeling them as *decent, brave and resilient people*, which helps to elicit positive emotion towards the party in the example:

- (32) You lost tonight, @realDonaldTrump. Democrats around the country are fired up. We are **decent, brave, and resilient** people. We are **better** than you. Come November, we are going to beat you. (JB 13)

The answer to the unspoken question which recognizes legitimation "Why should we do this?" (van Leeuwen 2008, 105), in the context of this tweet "Why should be beat Donald Trump", is because „*We are decent, brave and resilient people*” and “*we are better than you*”. Both of these sentences are legitimized by evoking emotions through the words *decent, brave, and better* which carry positive connotations.

To summarize, this type of legitimation is based on labeling In-groups with words triggering positive emotions, such as *decent, brave, etc.* and Out-groups labeling with words evoking negative emotions, such as *erratic, incompetent, etc.*

3.4.2 Legitimation through Hypothetical Future

Legitimation through hypothetical future connects past, present and future. The model of this strategy is built upon something that happened in the past, is problem in the present and now it requires an immediate action to be taken in order to avoid the catastrophic consequences in the future (Reyes 2011, 793). Biden usually uses this strategy to point out how catastrophically resulted electing Trump as a president in 2016 and if the past will be repeated the consequences will be even worse and therefore, he must take an action and defeat him in the U.S. Elections 2020.

Example (33) is legitimation through hypothetical future, presented as the only option how to prevent a disaster. The aim of the message is to describe how necessary it is to *get Trump out of the White House* because he represents threat. If he is *reelected*, that will change the country so much, that it will not be recognizable. The message at the same time implies that if the action of getting Trump out of the White House is successful, the country will not be changed in such an unpleasant way.

- (33) [...] This nation will be able to overcome four years of Donald Trump. But if this man is reelected, we won't recognize this country in a few years. We have to get Trump out of the White House. (JB 12)

In the following excerpt (34) the legitimation through hypothetical future is suggested by the conditional sentences like “*If he is elected, he is going to ...*”. It is based on the fact that Trump in the past made some executive orders, with which Biden does not agree, and some are in opposition to his beliefs and campaign points. In this case Biden does not believe Social Security should be reduced, and he presents it as a potential threat in the future if Trump is re-elected. Of course, this can be prevented if Biden is elected as the U.S. President.

- (34) The only person who's **going to cut Social Security if he's elected** is Donald Trump. (JB 15)

As can be seen from the examples, it is true what Reyes (2011) suggests about legitimation through hypothetical future. It has a linguistic structure of conditional sentences: If + present, will + infinitive (797). In Biden's case he mostly uses real present conditionals to talk about possible unpleasant things in the future.

3.4.3 Legitimation through Rationality

Legitimation through rationality is a model in which the actions that need to be legitimized are very thoroughly thought out and evaluated. The choice of undertaking the actions is presented as rational. Those rational decisions are usually built upon values and morals that are recognizable within the community (Reyes 2011, 797-798). Biden appeals to trust and truthfulness, hope, honesty, lawful behavior, justice. He also raises more comprehensive topics as helping those in need, banning racism and xenophobic behavior, bigotry, etc.

In example (35), Biden rationally legitimizes himself and his office with the words *lawful order* and *legitimate*, which imply that he cherishes the rule of law. At the same time with the word *unlike* he aims to delegitimize actions of Trump and Pence, who are by implication labeled as the outlaws.

- (35) I have always **compiled with a lawful order** and in my eight years as VP, my office – **unlike** Donald Trump and Mike Pence – **cooperated with legitimate congressional oversight requests**. (JB 1)

In the following tweet (36), Biden uses indirect implication of himself representing *hope*, *unity*, *truth*, and *science* – all the values with which he tries to legitimize himself and his cause of being elected as well as his implication that Trump represents *fear*, *division*, and *fiction* which aims to delegitimize Trump. The structure here is to choose the “right” values and morals and thus support Biden in the U.S. Elections.

(36) This moment demands that we choose:

Hope over fear

Unity over division

Truth over fear

Science over fiction (JB 32)

Biden throughout the corpus uses legitimation through rationality with a comparison of his and the Democratic Party’s good values, morals, and rationality with Trump’s actions and the way he leads the country based on wrong values and morals. In this way, Biden tries to give his audience the impression that his actions are well thought out and thoroughly evaluated.

3.4.4 Legitimation through Altruism

Altruism strategy exploits the alleged selflessness of the speaker, who tries to persuade the audience that the actions taken are for them and not for himself (Reyes 2011, 802). In this case, Biden tries to show his audience that he wants to be the next President of the U.S. and thus, defeat Trump in the Elections because of Biden’s good will to help people, especially those, who need it and not for his own satisfaction and benefits.

(37) The least we can do for every grocery and retail worker working around the clock during this crisis is to provide a \$15 minimum wage, paid sick leave, and strong workplace protections. (JB 35)

Biden creates a presupposition that if he was the U.S. President, he would provide such things as minimum wage, paid sick leave, and so on. It can be assumed that he implies that. Presuppositions are based on assumptions. However, those assumptions are not recognizable on a conscious level; yet, our subconscious recognizes them. Because they are perceived only on subconscious levels, those assumptions are viewed as true (Batko 2011, 78). Those in need in (37) are represented by *grocery and retail workers*.

The same model can be found in the following tweet (38).

- (38) In times of crisis, the American **people deserve a president who tells them the truth and takes responsibility**. Donald Trump has not been that president. (JB 37)

In this particular tweet, it is not explicitly stated that Biden will be the president who will tell the truth to people. Yet, apart from building presuppositions, he also makes claims building on Trump's accusations of dishonesty. For example:

- (39) [...] And I will always, always tell you the truth. (JB 24)

I would suggest that tweets (38) and (39) exemplify the pattern traced across the corpus. Biden composes the tweets that would complement each other. On March 12 he *says he will always tell the truth* and on March 20 he makes a statement that people of America *deserve a president who will tell them the truth*. If we apply this to the model of legitimation through altruism, the answer to the question "Why should Biden beat Trump in the U.S. Elections?" the obvious answer is because people *deserve a* truthful president and Biden will be one. Legitimation through altruism is constructed upon the alleged desire of helping people who need that, which usually includes innocent, poor, or unprotected ones. Shared values make their explicator more likely to be approved and accepted by their audience (Reyes 2011, 803). Biden as a politician is no exception and uses this strategy to be liked by his potential voters.

CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to reveal and describe persuasive strategies used by American political figures in their twitter accounts. Joe Biden was selected for further examination as he is one of the candidates for US Presidential Election 2020. The analysis was performed on 50 tweets collected from December to March 2020. Those messages were selected according to their number of likes received, which means that only tweets that received the most likes were incorporated. The most liked tweet earned 234.8K likes, whereas the lowest number of likes in the selected corpus was 51.5K.

To identify what made those tweets so popular amongst Biden's potential voters, a thorough analysis was done. The analysis focused on the identification of metaphors and emotive vocabulary, characterization of the Ideological Square, and description of its strategies exploited by Biden and determining how Biden legitimized his actions or delegitimized the actions of his competitor Donald Trump.

Firstly, I performed a metaphor analysis according to the cognitive semantic approach. Since metaphors are tools that help us better understand the world, they are heavily exploited during political communication. The analysis showed that Biden used metaphors as a part of his persuasive strategy. Among the metaphors, which had the potential of being used in a persuasive manner, 66 persuasive metaphors were identified. Those metaphoric expressions were used to address different political issues, such as political rivalry, coronavirus crisis, leadership, elections, and others. Having applied cognitive metaphor analysis, 16 source domains were detected, including those of WAR, PERSON, CONTAINER, JOURNEY, MONEY, COMMODITY, and others. The most utilized source domain was mapping the concepts of WAR onto concepts of POLITICS or ARGUMENTS to enhance their persuasive potential by emphasizing the importance of the situation in which WAR metaphors were used. WAR metaphor was used 14 times to refer to political rivalry or to coronavirus, mainly to express the necessity of *beating* Trump or *combating* coronavirus. The second most exploited metaphor with the source domain of PERSON, also known as personification, was used 12 times. It is presumed that personifications were incorporated in such a high concentration due to their persuasive power which rests upon understanding abstract concepts in terms of human experiences.

The next step of the analysis was an examination of Joe Biden's use of emotive vocabulary. The aim was to determine how often Biden incorporates emotively loaded words in his tweets. Sentiment Analysis was applied to the corpus. An emotive dictionary SentiNetWord

was used to determine if a word is loaded with neutral, positive, or negative emotional connotation. This dictionary works on the basis of pre-calculated polarity. Thanks to that, it was possible to select the emotively loaded words and assign them positive or negative connotations. From 1632 words in the corpus, 146 emotive words have been singled out, from which 76 were positively connotated and 70 negatively connotated. Almost the same number of words with positive and negative connotations make the corpus seemingly emotively balanced.

Those emotively loaded words were categorized according to the part of speech they belong to. Connotative parts of speech are nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs. The most negatively connotated words represented the category of nouns, overall 62 loaded nouns were found and 43 of them were connotated negatively. Positively connotated nouns were found in 19 cases. The fact that nouns are the most negatively connotated category might be explained by the fact that Biden mostly presents Donald Trump or the Coronavirus crisis as negatively connoted.

On the other hand, the most positively connotated words were adjectives; 30 adjectives of 38 had a positive connotation. Such a trend is connected with the persuasive power of positive self-presentation of Biden and his In-group.

The two remaining categories were adverbs and verbs. Adverbs are a category which carried the smallest number of loaded words, while the verbs were quite emotionally charged. 23 verbs had positive connotation and 18 – negative connotation. Positively connotated verbs were implemented mainly when Biden discussed actions related to the In-group and negatively connotated ones were associated mainly with Trump's actions.

The third step of the analysis was the construction of Ideological Square based on the socio-cognitive approach. Using the information from the corpus, it was possible to determine the model of In- and Out-group. The In-group was represented by Joe Biden and the Democratic Party and the Out-group was associated with Donald Trump and the Republican Party.

Analysis of the meaning of the message, form of presentation, and type of speech act allowed to trace how positive Self-presentation was carried out via emphasis through implied comparison, metaphor use, promises, repetition, evidentiality, modality, and appeal to logos, pathos, and ethos. Strategies exploited for negative Other-presentation in Biden's tweets were very similar. They included emphasis through implied comparison, metaphor use, accusations, repetition, and appeal to discredit Trump's pathos.

The fourth step was to identify the legitimation strategies used by Biden. The analysis was based on Van Dijk's legitimation analysis procedure, which was modified to suit the analysis of political speeches. Four types of legitimation were found in the corpus:

(1) legitimation through emotions which is based on labeling In-groups with positively connotated emotive words and Out-groups labeling with negatively connotated emotive words;

(2) legitimation through a hypothetical future which is rendered through a linguistic structure of conditional sentences. The structure has the form of If + present, will + infinitive. Biden uses real present conditionals to talk about possible unpleasant things in the future;

(3) legitimation through rationality is founded on Biden's and the Democratic Party's better values, morals, and rationality in the comparison with Trump's actions and the way he leads the country based on wrong values and morals. Comparisons like that are used to persuade his audience that Biden's actions, unlike Trump's, are well thought out and thoroughly evaluated;

(4) legitimation through altruism is employed to legitimize the action of defeating Trump in the Elections through Biden's good will to help people, especially those, who need it, and not for his own satisfaction and benefits. This strategy is persuasive because shared values make Biden more likely to be approved and accepted by the audience and thus potentially acquire more voters.

To summarize, the persuasive strategies used by Joe Biden in his twitter account are effective. It was found that the most liked tweets were written in a manner that should appeal to and affect not only the regular readers but also potential voters in the US Presidential Election 2020. The focal points of Biden's tweets were social issues, his vision for America, and the coronavirus crisis. More than half of those tweets were attacks on Donald Trump through labeling him as an incompetent President. Amongst the most popular strategies that Biden used to persuade his audience about these issues are extensive use of metaphors, employment of emotive vocabulary, the perpetuation of the ideological square, and legitimation of his own actions.

The prospects of future analysis might be a comparison of strategies used during the Presidential Election 2020 by Biden vs Trump. The study of how much tweeter messages influence the voting preference is also needed. The understanding of the types of persuasive strategies candidates exploit most and which strategies appear to be the most effective in

terms of acquiring new voters can help to construct an effective model of persuasive techniques for future candidates.

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APENDIX: CORPUS OF JOE BIDEN'S TWEETS

1. "I want to clarify something I said yesterday. In my 40 years in public life, I have always compiled with a lawful order and in my eight years as VP, my office – unlike Donald Trump and Mike Pence – cooperated with legitimate congressional oversight requests." December 28, 2019
2. "As we move into the New Year, there's one thing I know: in 2020 we're going to beat Donald Trump and take back this country." January 1, 2020
3. "This is a crisis of Donald Trump's own making. He claimed pulling out of the Iran deal would deter Iranian aggression and result in a better deal. He has failed on both counts.
He is the most erratic and incompetent commander in chief we've ever had."
January 5, 2020
4. "I'm going to hold off on commenting on the news tonight until we know more, but there is one thing I will say: Jill and I are keeping our troops and Americans overseas in our prayers. We hope you can keep them in yours." January 8, 2020
5. "I've lost a lot in my life, but I'll be damned if I'm going to stand by and lose my country too." February 10, 2020
6. "No one needs an AR-15. Period. We have to get these weapons of war out of our communities" February 15, 2020
7. "We are so much better than Donald Trump." February 17, 2020
8. "@PeteButtigieg ran a historic, trail-blazing campaign based on courage, compassion, and honesty. We will be a better country for his continued service. This is just the beginning of his time on the national stage." March 2, 2020
9. "Whether you supported Pete, Amy, Beto, or any other candidate in this race – know that there is a home for you in our campaign. I will do everything I can to earn your vote." March 3, 2020
10. "Let's unite.
Let's beat Donald trump.
And let's take back this country!" March 4, 2020

11. “@MikeBloomberg, I can’t thank you enough for your support – and for your tireless work on everything from gun safety reform to climate change. This race is bigger than candidates and bigger than politics. It’s about defeating Donald Trump, and with your help, we’re gonna do it.” March 4, 2020
12. “I have said it many times in this campaign. This nation will be able to overcome four years of Donald Trump. But if this man is reelected, we won’t recognize this country in a few years.
We have to get Trump out of the White House.” March 4, 2020
13. “You lost tonight, @realDonaldTrump. Democrats around the country are fired up. We are decent, brave, and resilient people. We are better than you. Come November, we are going to beat you.” March 4, 2020
14. “Senator @EWarren is the fiercest of fighters for the middle class families. Her work in Washington, in Massachusetts, and on the campaign trail has made a real difference on people’s lives. We need her voice in this race, and we need her continued work in the Senate.” March 5, 2020
15. “Get real, Bernie. The only person who’s going to cut Social Security if he’s elected is Donald Trump. Maybe you should spend your time attacking him.” March 6, 2020
16. “We need president who will choose unity over division.” March 6, 2020
17. “I don’t care who you’re supporting, attacks like this against a man who could be the first Jewish President are disgusting and beyond the pale. Hatred and bigotry have no place in America – and it’s up to all of us to root out these evils wherever they’re found. March 6, 2020
18. “Kamala – You’ve spent your whole career fighting for folks who’ve been written off and left behind – and no small part of that alongside Beau. From our family: thank you.” March 8, 2020
19. “If we give Donald Trump for more years in the White House, our planet may never recover.” March 8, 2020
20. “We are in the battle for the soul of our nation – and Donald Trump is poison to our soul. We have to get him out of the White House.” March 9, 2020

21. “A wall won’t stop a virus.
Racism won’t stop a virus
Do your job.” March 10, 2020
22. “Once we get Donald Trump out of the White House, we have an enormous opportunity to build the future this nation deserves. A future where every American has access to affordable health care, where we end our gun violence epidemic, and where we tackle this climate crisis head-on.” March 11, 2020
23. “We need to ensure that every person who needs a coronavirus test can get one – and that test is for free. Period.” March 12, 2020
24. “No president can promise to prevent future outbreaks, but I can promise you this: When I’m president, we will be better prepared, respond better, and recover better. We’ll lead with science and listen to the experts. And I will always, always tell you the truth.” March 12, 2020
25. “A wall will not stop the coronavirus.
Banning all travel from Europe – or any other part of the world – will not stop the virus. This disease could impact every nation and any person on the planet – and we need a plan to combat it.” March 13, 2020
26. I believe this nation can overcome four years of Donald Trump. But if he’s given eight years in the White House, he will forever and fundamentally alter the character of this nation.
We can’t let that happen. We have to defeat Donald Trump.” March 13, 2020
27. “When we have a coronavirus vaccine ready to go, it should be made widely available, free of charge. Period.” March 15, 2020
28. “If Senator @BernieSanders is the nominee, I will throw my full weight behind his campaign and do everything I can to get him elected. If I am the nominee, I hope he will do the same. Nothing can keep us from being united in the fight to defeat Trump. #DemDebate” March 16, 2020
29. “My running mate will be a woman. #DemDebate” March 16, 2020

30. “We are in a battle for the soul of our nation. Donald Trump threatens everything we stand for, he has:
- Fanned the flames of hate
 - Embraced white supremacists
 - Separated families at the border
 - Threatened our democracy
- We have to get him out of the White House.” March 16, 2020
31. “We need a president who will always choose science over fiction.” March 16, 2020
32. “This moment demands that we choose:
- Hope over fear
 - Unity over division
 - Truth over fear
 - Science over fiction” March 17, 2020
33. “Stop the xenophobic fear-mongering. Be honest. Take responsibility. Do your job.” March 18, 2020
34. “It is a national disgrace that millions of Americans do not have a single day of paid sick leave.” March 19, 2020
35. “The least we can do for every grocery and retail worker working around the clock during this crisis is to provide a \$15 minimum wage, paid sick leave, and strong workplace protections.” March 20, 2020
36. “I am calling on every CEO in America to publicly commit now not to buying back their company’s stock over the course of the next year. As workers face the physical and economic consequences of the coronavirus, our corporate leaders cannot cede responsibility for their employees.” March 20, 2020
37. “In times of crisis, the American people deserve a president who tells them the truth and takes responsibility. Donald Trump has not been that president. For months, he falsely told us we had nothing to worry about while praising China’s response for managing the coronavirus.” March 20, 2020

38. “The coronavirus test should be made widely available and free.
The coronavirus vaccine, when ready, should be made widely available and free.
Treatment for coronavirus should be free, too.
We’re in a crisis. No one should have to pay for their coronavirus health care costs.” March 21, 2020
39. “We owe a debt of gratitude to the first responders, health care providers, grocery and retail workers, transportation workers, public safety officers, and everyone working around the clock to keep our country running. Thank you, thank you, thank you for all you’re doing.” March 22, 2020
40. “On March 6th, Donald Trump claimed: “Anybody that wants a test can get a test.”
That was a flat-out lie then, and it’s still not true today. It’s disgrace.
We need to ensure everyone who needs a test can get one free of charge. Period.” March 22, 2020
41. “In January, Donald Trump claimed he the coronavirus was “totally under control.”
In February, he said it would disappear.
Now, he’s saying it “could’ve been stopped pretty easily if we had known.”
Donald Trump knew. He failed to act. And now we’re paying the price.” March 24, 2020
42. “The stakes in this election couldn’t be higher. Donald Trump is wholly unfit to lead this nation — and that has become even clearer in the last few weeks. We have to vote him out of the White House.” March 24, 2020
43. “Let me be very clear: No one is expendable. No matter your age, race, gender, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disability. No life is worth losing to add one more point to the Dow.” March 25, 2020
44. “The American people are rising to meet this moment. We need our president to do the same.” March 25, 2020

45. “It's hard to believe this has to be said, but if I'm elected president, I will always lead the way with science. I will listen to the experts and heed their advice. I will do the opposite of what we're seeing Donald Trump do every day.” March 26, 2020
46. “The coronavirus is not Donald Trump's fault, but his inept response is. He ignored the warnings for months, downplayed the threat it posed, and failed to take the action needed to combat the outbreak. It's one of the greatest failures of presidential leadership in our history.” March 27, 2020
47. “Let me be clear: No one should have to pay for coronavirus testing or treatment.” March 28, 2020
48. “As president, I will always choose hope over fear, unity over division, truth over lies, and science over fiction.” March 30, 2020
49. “We will overcome this — together.” March 30, 2020
50. “I am issuing this challenge to the President: in the next 48 hours, direct the production and distribution of respirator masks, gloves, protective face shields and gowns to fill every supply request made by a governor to the federal government. Lives are at stake.” March 30, 2020

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

U.S. United States

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