

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Metaphors as Discursive Awareness in English And Uzbek Political Discourse

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## Abstract

This article examines political metaphor as a form of discursive awareness that both reflects and actively shapes how publics interpret power, legitimacy, risk, and collective identity in English- and Uzbek-language political communication. Treating metaphor not as ornament but as a cognitive-ideological instrument, the study integrates Conceptual Metaphor Theory with critical approaches to political discourse, including scenario-oriented analysis of metaphor use in argumentation. A qualitative comparative design is applied to a small, purposefully sampled corpus of contemporary English political speeches and Uzbek official statements and public addresses, supplemented by widely circulated media quotations and policy framings. The analysis focuses on how recurrent metaphor families—JOURNEY, WAR/STRUGGLE, FAMILY, BODY/HEALTH, BUILDING, and NATURE—operate as “discursive awareness cues”: they highlight some causal relations while backgrounding others, normalize certain roles (leader, citizen, state), and provide ready-made moral evaluations. The results indicate that English political discourse frequently activates metaphors of competitive governance and adversarial debate, often producing a rhetorical economy of urgency through WAR, CRISIS, and GAME frames. Uzbek political discourse more consistently foregrounds metaphors of collective cohesion and state stewardship through FAMILY, HOME, GARDEN/CULTIVATION, and BUILDING frames, creating an ethics of social responsibility and continuity. Across both languages, metaphor scenarios stabilize ideological expectations by linking abstract policy fields (security, economy, reform, education) to culturally resonant embodied experiences. The discussion argues that discursive awareness emerges when speakers strategically select metaphors that anticipate audience inferences, manage blame, and authorize policy choices as “common sense.” The article concludes by proposing a cross-linguistic model of metaphor-as-awareness that connects cognitive salience, cultural memory, and institutional goals in political persuasion.

## KEY WORDS

Political metaphor; discursive awareness; Conceptual Metaphor Theory; Critical Discourse Analysis; Uzbek political discourse; English political discourse; framing; ideology.

## INTRODUCTION

Political discourse rarely persuades only by presenting facts. It persuades by arranging attention: what counts as a problem, who is responsible, what solutions appear realistic,

and which emotions are appropriate. Metaphor is one of the most reliable tools for this arrangement, because it links complex political domains to familiar embodied and cultural

experiences. When a reform is described as a “path,” an economy as a “machine,” a state as a “family,” or security as a “battle,” audiences are offered not merely a vivid phrase but an interpretive template. These templates help people reason quickly under uncertainty, turning policy questions into seemingly intuitive scenarios. In this sense, metaphor functions as discursive awareness: a semiotic alert system that directs how listeners should understand what is happening, why it matters, and what must be done.

In English-language political rhetoric, the institutional ecology of parliamentary debate, press confrontation, and electoral competition often rewards metaphors that dramatize conflict, urgency, and measurable performance. In Uzbek-language political communication, where state modernization and social stability are frequently articulated as collective projects, metaphors that emphasize cohesion, stewardship, and continuity become especially prominent. This contrast does not imply that one discourse is “more metaphorical” than the other; rather, each develops its own stable metaphor repertoires that align with cultural values and communicative norms.

The present study aims to describe how metaphors become discursive awareness mechanisms in English and Uzbek political discourse. The central research questions are: how do recurrent metaphor families frame political agency and responsibility; how do metaphor scenarios structure policy arguments; and which cultural and institutional factors encourage particular metaphor choices in each language? By answering these questions, the article contributes to comparative political linguistics and to the growing body of work that treats metaphor as an ideological technology in public communication.

The study uses a qualitative comparative approach with a small, purposefully selected corpus designed for interpretive depth rather than statistical representativeness. The English subcorpus consists of contemporary political speeches and official statements by high-profile political actors, complemented by widely circulated excerpts reproduced in major media outlets and official websites. The Uzbek subcorpus is formed from official addresses, policy statements, and public speeches distributed through state or institutional channels, as well as frequently quoted fragments in Uzbek media. The selection criterion is topical comparability: both corpora include discourse on reforms, economic development, security, social welfare, and national

identity.

The analysis combines three complementary lenses. First, Conceptual Metaphor Theory is used to identify systematic mappings between source domains (journey, war, family, health, building) and political target domains (governance, reform, economy, security). Second, Critical Discourse Analysis is employed to interpret how metaphor selections reproduce or challenge power relations by foregrounding certain actors and causalities while backgrounding others. Third, scenario-based metaphor analysis is applied to explain how single metaphors can expand into mini-narratives with roles, plots, and moral evaluations, thereby guiding inference and legitimizing action.

Metaphor identification follows a standard qualitative routine: political statements are read iteratively; candidate metaphorical expressions are marked; source domains are inferred by checking whether words are used outside their primary physical or everyday meaning; and expressions are grouped into metaphor families. Interpretive reliability is supported through consistent coding rules, repeated passes over the data, and cross-checking whether grouped expressions share a common inferential logic (for instance, whether “path,” “step,” and “direction” collectively imply a JOURNEY scenario of progress and obstacles).

Across both English and Uzbek corpora, metaphor families appear as recurring “awareness cues” that prepare audiences to interpret events through default causal schemas. The JOURNEY family is pervasive: reforms are framed as movement, with milestones, direction, speed, and obstacles. This family supports an awareness style in which politics becomes a managed trajectory; delays become “setbacks,” opposition becomes “blockage,” and leadership becomes “guidance.” In English rhetoric, JOURNEY metaphors frequently compete with SPORT or GAME metaphors that imply winners, losers, strategies, and scoreboard-like evaluation. The combined effect is an awareness environment that makes governance appear measurable and contest-driven.

In the Uzbek corpus, JOURNEY metaphors often co-occur with BUILDING and CULTIVATION metaphors. Reform is not only movement but construction and care: institutions are “built,” foundations are “strengthened,” and social policy “nurtures” human capital. Here, awareness is less about beating an opponent and more about sustaining a shared project. When BUILDING metaphors dominate, governance becomes

engineering: stability is “a strong foundation,” legality is “a framework,” and modernization is “a new stage of construction.” Such metaphors prime audiences to judge political success by durability, order, and continuity.

WAR/STRUGGLE metaphors appear in both languages, but their pragmatic work differs. In English discourse, WAR metaphors often compress time and justify exceptional measures by presenting issues as threats requiring rapid mobilization. They create an awareness atmosphere of emergency, where dissent may be construed as weakening collective resolve. In Uzbek discourse, STRUGGLE metaphors often coexist with moral language about responsibility and social solidarity, framing challenges as shared tests rather than primarily partisan battles. Although both uses can intensify commitment, the English pattern more frequently aligns with adversarial positioning, while the Uzbek pattern more often aligns with collective endurance.

FAMILY metaphors reveal a notable cross-linguistic divergence. English political discourse uses FAMILY frames, yet often in ideologically polarized ways, activating moral narratives about authority, discipline, care, and entitlement. Uzbek political discourse more consistently employs FAMILY and HOME metaphors to construct a collective “we” and to naturalize mutual obligations between state and citizen. In this frame, the state is a caretaker and organizer of the “common home,” while social policies become signs of familial duty. The metaphor thus serves awareness by making abstract governance feel like familiar moral proximity.

BODY/HEALTH metaphors also appear in both corpora, typically in discussions of economic stability, corruption, and social welfare. When governance is framed as diagnosis and treatment, problems become “diseases,” reforms become “therapy,” and institutions become “immune systems.” The awareness effect is powerful because it invites a medical logic: intervention becomes necessary, and resistance may appear irrational. Notably, health metaphors can legitimize both compassionate policy (healing society) and coercive policy (surgical removal of “harmful” elements), depending on how the scenario is developed.

Finally, NATURE metaphors—storms, roots, growth, drought, and renewal—are especially salient in Uzbek political discourse, where cultivation and renewal metaphors resonate strongly with the rhetoric of development and social ethics. Such metaphors create awareness by presenting reforms as organic and seasonal: progress must be cultivated, protected,

and patiently sustained. English discourse uses NATURE metaphors as well, particularly for crises (“storms”) and economic cycles, but the Uzbek pattern more frequently extends these metaphors into long-term narratives of national development.

Beyond individual metaphors, the data show that political speakers routinely build metaphor scenarios that control inference. A JOURNEY scenario is rarely neutral; it assigns roles such as guide, travelers, and those who obstruct the road. When the leader is implicitly the navigator, the audience is positioned as participants whose duty is to follow and persist. When opponents are framed as barriers, disagreement is reinterpreted as sabotage rather than alternative planning. Similarly, BUILDING scenarios assign authority to architects and engineers, implicitly elevating technocratic decision-making and downplaying participatory contestation. WAR scenarios impose a friend–enemy structure and intensify moral urgency, while HEALTH scenarios authorize intervention by claiming expert diagnosis.

The comparison suggests that English political discourse more often shifts rapidly between competing scenarios—competition, war, journey, market—creating a flexible but high-pressure awareness environment in which political legitimacy is repeatedly tested in public confrontation. Uzbek political discourse tends to stabilize a smaller set of high-cohesion scenarios—home, construction, cultivation, development path—producing a steadier awareness environment oriented toward continuity and collective purpose.

Metaphors become ideological when they repeatedly attach moral evaluation to certain policy directions. In both corpora, positive metaphors cluster around progress, strength, cleanliness, and growth, while negative metaphors cluster around decay, disease, chaos, and threat. The ideological work is not simply evaluative; it can determine what policies appear possible. If corruption is “disease,” the audience expects purging and healing. If the economy is “engine,” the audience expects tuning, efficiency, and expert management. If the state is “family,” the audience expects care, obedience, or both. Thus, metaphors do not merely decorate political language; they create awareness by rendering certain political logics emotionally and cognitively plausible.

The findings support an interpretation of metaphor as discursive awareness in three interconnected senses. First, metaphors structure attention. They make some relations

salient and hide others, which is crucial in politics, where persuasion often depends on simplifying complexity without appearing simplistic. Second, metaphors structure inference. Once a source domain is activated, it brings a package of default assumptions: journeys involve destinations, war involves enemies, building involves plans and authority, families involve obligations. Third, metaphors structure evaluation. They carry moral “scripts” that cue what should be admired, feared, or condemned.

The cross-linguistic differences observed here can be understood as outcomes of cultural resonance and institutional communication norms. English political communication, shaped by competitive electoral logics and confrontational media environments, rewards metaphors that dramatize antagonism and performance. Such metaphors produce awareness by making politics feel immediate, contested, and measurable. Uzbek political communication, often framed as national development and modernization with strong emphasis on social cohesion, more frequently selects metaphors that naturalize collective coordination and long-term stewardship. These metaphors produce awareness by making governance feel communal, constructive, and morally continuous.

At the same time, similarities across languages highlight shared cognitive foundations. Both discourses rely on embodied experiences—movement, conflict, health, construction—because these domains provide accessible reasoning under uncertainty. This suggests that while metaphor repertoires are culturally patterned, their persuasive power depends on universal cognitive affordances. The crucial difference lies in which affordances are repeatedly institutionalized and linked to authority.

From a methodological standpoint, the integration of conceptual and critical approaches is essential. Purely cognitive accounts can describe mappings but may understate power. Purely critical accounts can describe ideology but may understate how metaphors become persuasive through embodied reasoning. Treating metaphor as discursive awareness bridges these perspectives by showing how metaphor choice anticipates and manages audience cognition while serving institutional interests.

Metaphors in English and Uzbek political discourse function as discursive awareness mechanisms that guide attention, inference, and evaluation. The comparative analysis shows that English discourse tends to activate more adversarial and

performance-oriented metaphor scenarios, frequently employing WAR, COMPETITION, and rapid-shifting frames that intensify urgency and public testing of legitimacy. Uzbek discourse more consistently foregrounds cohesion-oriented scenarios such as FAMILY/HOME, BUILDING, and CULTIVATION, constructing legitimacy through collective purpose, stewardship, and continuity. Across both languages, metaphor scenarios stabilize ideological expectations by transforming abstract policy into culturally resonant, embodied narratives. Understanding metaphor as discursive awareness therefore provides a productive lens for comparative political discourse studies, enabling researchers to connect linguistic form, cognitive salience, and ideological function within a unified explanatory model.

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