

# HUMAN-CENTERED CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS IN PRABOWO SUBIANTO'S INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMATIC SPEECHES: A CRITICAL METAPHOR ANALYSIS IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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## Abstract

This study examines how recurring human-centered metaphors construct Indonesia's diplomatic identity and represent the country as a political actor in the international speeches of President Prabowo Subianto. Drawing on Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) and the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP), the study analyzes sixteen English-language speeches delivered during the first year of Prabowo's presidency. Metaphorical expressions were identified through systematic linguistic analysis and subsequently interpreted through conceptual mapping and critical explanation. The findings reveal two dominant metaphorical patterns: interpersonal relationship metaphors and human body metaphors. Indonesia and its international partners are frequently represented as "friends," "brothers," and members of a "human family," while global issues and national characteristics are framed through expressions such as "lungs of the earth," "embedded in our DNA," and "welcome with open arms." These metaphors portray Indonesia as cooperative, inclusive, globally engaged, and environmentally responsible. At the ideological level, they function to promote solidarity, legitimacy, and mutual cooperation while simultaneously obscuring strategic interests, power asymmetries, and geopolitical tensions. The study demonstrates that human-centered metaphors serve not only as cognitive and rhetorical devices but also as ideological resources for constructing national identity and shaping international perceptions. By highlighting the role of metaphor in diplomatic communication, this research contributes to the fields of metaphor studies, political discourse analysis, and international political communication.

**Keywords:** *critical metaphor analysis; diplomatic rhetoric; human-centered metaphor; Indonesia; political discourse; Prabowo Subianto*

## 1. Introduction

Political leadership is exercised not only through institutions and policymaking but also through the strategic use of language. As Charteris-Black (2011) argues, political power is closely connected to the embodied presence of leaders whose language persuades and inspires audiences. In contemporary democracies, this persuasive capacity is frequently enacted through political speeches, where leaders do more than just communicate policy agendas. Through such discourse, leaders construct legitimacy, articulate collective identity,

and frame political reality. This symbolic function becomes especially significant in international forums, where speeches operate as diplomatic performances through which states project priorities, values, and strategic positioning before global audiences. Nye (2021) argues that soft power works through attraction and voluntary preference-shaping rather than coercion. In this sense, international speeches can function as soft-power instruments, helping states seek recognition and trust while legitimizing their position within the global order.

Within political discourse, rhetorical strategies play an important role in shaping how audiences interpret events, actors, and policies. Among these strategies, metaphor is especially influential, enabling leaders to communicate abstract political issues through familiar experiences. Charteris-Black (2013) notes that metaphor enhances both comprehension and persuasion by translating complex realities into accessible conceptual terms. Metaphors frame cooperation as friendship, development as construction, crisis as conflict, or national progress as a journey. Such framing is politically significant because rather than merely simplify political reality, metaphor guides evaluation by making certain interpretations appear natural and morally convincing. Human-centered metaphors are particularly significant because they naturalize political relationships through embodied and affective experiences, thereby making geopolitical positioning appear morally intuitive and socially legitimate.

Previous research has demonstrated the prominent role of metaphor in diverse political contexts. In Indonesia, metaphor has been shown to function as a resource for emotional appeal and public evaluation. Citraresmana et al. (2018), for example, show how metaphorical framing in Indonesian political discourse constructs relational meanings through domains such as journey and containment. Suganda et al. (2025) further show how citizens use evaluative metaphors in digital discourse to express political judgments, showing that metaphor extends beyond elite discourse into audience participation, where ordinary citizens commenting on Indonesian news frequently rely on evaluative metaphors and negation to articulate criticism. International research further underscores metaphor's significance in political discourse. This recognition has prompted extensive research into its use across diverse political contexts, including political persuasion (Brugman et al., 2019), identity construction and policy framing (Musolff, 2016), conflict discourse (Al-Minawi, 2024), diplomatic communication (Batulaya & Roselani, 2025), and party manifestos (Nkrumah, 2025). These studies collectively demonstrate metaphor's explanatory and strategic role in persuasion, identity construction, conflict discourse, and diplomatic communication.

Despite this growing body of scholarship, comparatively limited attention has been given to the use of metaphor in the English-language international speeches of Indonesian political leaders. Existing metaphor studies in Indonesian political discourse have predominantly examined domestic rhetoric, electoral communication, or isolated metaphorical expressions, while relatively little attention has been devoted to how metaphor systematically functions in international diplomatic discourse to construct national identity and geopolitical legitimacy. This gap is significant since international speeches are key sites for states to communicate policy, perform legitimacy, and negotiate their place in the global order.

President Prabowo Subianto offers a pertinent case for such analysis. As Indonesia's newly elected president, his first-year speeches in international forums offer early representations of how the new administration seeks to project Indonesia globally. Recent

studies (Ambarwati & Zifana (2025) suggest that Prabowo's metaphors concretize geopolitical issues while promoting narratives of cooperation, stability, and development. A notable tendency within this broader pattern is the prominence of human-centered metaphors, which frame international relations through familiar human experiences and suggest a more personalized, affective mode of political communication. Embodiment matters in diplomacy because bodily and relational images translate abstract interstate relations into experiences of closeness, vulnerability, care, solidarity, and shared humanity. Such imagery allows diplomacy to appear as morally meaningful relationships among human communities, rather than merely as strategic arrangements among states. Examining these patterns provides insight into Indonesia's symbolic construction of international identity during political transition.

Building on this context, this study employs Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) (Charteris-Black, 2004) to examine human-centered metaphors in President Prabowo Subianto's international speeches during his first year in office. The study pursues two objectives: (1) to interpret human-centered metaphors through their underlying conceptual structures, and (2) to explain how these metaphors function as rhetorical resources conveying ideological meanings and constructing Indonesia's political identity in international contexts. In this way, the study is situated within global metaphor research and foregrounds its originality in analyzing Indonesian presidential rhetoric in international forums.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Critical Metaphor Analysis

As previously mentioned, this study adopts Charteris-Black's (2004) Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) as its theoretical and analytical framework. CMA is particularly suitable for the present study because political speeches in international forums are strategic discourses rather than neutral informational texts. Rather, they are strategic forms of public discourse through which leaders articulate policy priorities, project national identity, negotiate international relationships, and cultivate legitimacy before multiple audiences. A framework capable of connecting linguistic form, conceptual structure, and ideological function is therefore especially relevant. This orientation also places CMA in conversation with critical discourse scholarship, particularly Fairclough's view of discourse as a social practice and van Dijk's account of ideology as socially shared cognition (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 1998)

CMA builds on insights from Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) as developed by Lakoff & Johnson (1980). CMT explains metaphor as a cognitive mechanism through which abstract domains are understood through more concrete experiences. Through mappings between source and target domains, political concepts such as development, crisis, cooperation, or national progress can be framed through familiar domains such as journey, health, family, or construction. Expressions such as 'building the future,' 'moving forward,' and 'friend to all' exemplify linguistic manifestations of broader conceptual mappings. Kövecses (2020) further emphasizes that conceptual metaphors are shaped not only by embodied experience but also by cultural and contextual factors, while Semino (2008) shows how metaphor provides a systematic resource for representing experience in discourse.

Although CMT is valuable for identifying source-target correspondences and explaining cognitive structure, it is less attentive to the rhetorical and ideological dimension of metaphor in situated discourse. Political speeches are produced within contexts of

representation, diplomatic signaling, and power negotiation. In such contexts, it is insufficient to identify only how a metaphor structures understanding; it is equally necessary to examine why a particular metaphor is chosen, what interests it serves, and what forms of reality it foregrounds or obscures. For these reasons, the present study employs CMA rather than relying solely on CMT.

Charteris-Black (2013, p. 217) defines CMA as an approach to metaphor analysis that “aims to identify which metaphors are chosen in persuasive genres such as political speeches, party political manifestos or press reports, and attempts to explain why these metaphors are chosen, with reference to the interaction between an orator's purposes and a specific set of speech circumstances.” The framework integrates insights from cognitive semantics, pragmatics, and critical discourse inquiry. Methodologically, CMA proceeds through three interrelated stages: identifying metaphorical expressions, interpreting conceptual patterns, and explaining rhetorical and ideological functions.

To deepen the explanatory stage, the present study also draws on Charteris-Black's (2013) concept of purposeful metaphor. Purposeful metaphor emphasizes that metaphors are frequently selected to achieve strategic communicative goals rather than emerging incidentally. Charteris-Black (2013) identifies seven potentially overlapping purposes of metaphor, including general rhetoric, heuristic, predicative, empathetic, aesthetic, ideological, and mythic, demonstrating how metaphors simplify complex issues, assign evaluations, foster emotional alignment, frame political realities in a preferred way, create mythic or symbolic narratives about political concepts, or strengthen rhetoric and persuasive force in general.

## 2.2 Previous Studies on Metaphor in Political Discourse

Previous research has consistently demonstrated the importance of metaphor in political discourse across diverse contexts. In crisis communication, Sidiq & Darmayanti (2021) show that Shinzo Abe used battle metaphors in his first speech on COVID-19 to construct urgency and legitimize emergency responses. The findings suggest that metaphor was used to construct a sense of emergency and to legitimize urgent policy responses in the early phase of the pandemic. Similarly, Al-Minawi (2024) in the study of Hamas' official discourse during the Aqsa Flood War, found that metaphor in Hamas' wartime discourse intensified ideological polarization, justified resistance, and represented conflict through recurring war narratives. These studies indicate that metaphor can function as a powerful tool for framing crisis, conflict, and political legitimacy.

Other studies emphasize the metaphor's role in broader political persuasion and ideological communication. Nkrumah (2025) offers a closer methodological parallel by demonstrating that metaphors in party manifestos function ideologically, framing legitimacy, solidarity, and authority. This study aligns strongly with the present research because it treats metaphor not merely as a linguistic pattern but as a strategic means of constructing political meaning. Even so, the object of analysis is a party manifesto rather than spoken political discourse, and the context is electoral competition rather than international speech-making. Likewise, Wiredu (2023) shows that metaphor served as a persuasive resource in Kwame Nkrumah's anti-colonial and Pan-African discourse. These findings highlight metaphor's role in ideological narrative construction, although mainly in electoral, manifesto-based, or anti-colonial contexts.

From a cognitive perspective, Lingga et al. (2025) analyze Donald Trump's speeches using CMT and find that Trump's metaphors project resilience, pride, and assertive

leadership through structural, ontological, and orientational mappings. They further argue that these metaphor types collectively project a worldview marked by resilience, national pride, and assertive leadership. Batulaya & Roselani (2025) identifying 28 conceptual metaphors in Arab leaders' speeches, showing their persuasive and cultural functions in supporting Palestine. Collectively, these studies show that metaphor structures understanding, shapes identity, and positions political actors.

Despite this growing literature, few studies examine Indonesian leaders' English-language international speeches, particularly through CMA. Existing studies tend to focus on crisis rhetoric, conflict discourse, election manifestos, or domestic communication, while fewer studies examine how recurring metaphorical patterns construct national image and diplomatic identity before global audiences. Human-centered metaphors, derived from interpersonal relations and the human body, remain underexplored despite their effectiveness in humanizing geopolitical issues, fostering empathy, and naturalizing political relationships.

This gap is significant because international speeches function as key sites where political leaders simultaneously communicate policy, perform identity, and engage with global audiences. This study therefore employs CMA and purposeful metaphor to analyze how human-centered metaphors in President Prabowo Subianto's speeches function as strategic resources in Indonesia's international political communication.

### 3. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative design using Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA), which systematically examines linguistic expression, conceptual structure, and socio-political function.

#### 3.1 Data

Data consisted of sixteen official English-language speeches delivered by President Prabowo Subianto in international forums between October 2024 and October 2025, capturing the first year of his presidency. This period was selected because the early phase of a new administration is typically a strategic moment for articulating governmental priorities, projecting leadership, and positioning the state within the international order. Although the corpus is relatively limited in quantity, the speeches were selected purposively based on their rhetorical density, diplomatic significance, and representativeness of Indonesia's international political communication during the early phase of Prabowo's presidency.

English-language speeches were selected because they targeted international audiences and formed part of Indonesia's diplomatic communication. The corpus included speeches delivered in multilateral forums, bilateral meetings, investment gatherings, and international conferences involving themes such as diplomacy, economic development, security, sustainability, and global cooperation.

Speech transcripts were collected from the official website of the President of the Republic of Indonesia ([www.presidentri.go.id](http://www.presidentri.go.id)), which functions as the principal repository of presidential public communication. Where necessary, transcripts were cross-checked against official video recordings released by the Presidential Secretariat (<https://www.youtube.com/@SekretariatPresiden>) to ensure textual accuracy. Speeches were purposively selected if they met four criteria: (1) delivered by President Prabowo

Subianto; (2) presented in an international forum; (3) primarily in English; and (4) contained substantive rhetorical content relevant to international political communication. Contextual information, including date, venue, audience, and forum agenda, was also documented to support the explanatory stage of analysis.

### **3.2 Analytical Procedure**

The analysis followed the three-stage procedure proposed in Critical Metaphor Analysis: identification, interpretation, and explanation (Charteris-Black, 2004).

#### **3.2.1 Metaphor Identification**

Metaphors were identified using the Pragglejaz Group's Metaphor Identification Procedure (2007), which compares contextual and basic meanings to determine metaphorical use. Basic meanings were verified using the Oxford English Dictionary. To enhance analytical reliability, metaphor identification and categorization were conducted through repeated close reading and iterative comparison between contextual and basic meanings to ensure consistency in conceptual mapping. A lexical item was categorized as metaphorical when a semantic contrast existed between its contextual and basic meanings, while the contextual meaning remained intelligible through comparison with the basic sense.

#### **3.2.2 Metaphor Interpretation**

The second stage involved interpreting identified expressions through CMT (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Metaphors were grouped into semantic fields, mapped through source and target domains, and synthesized into conceptual metaphors expressed in propositional form (e.g., A IS B). Higher-level conceptual metaphors were then synthesized into conceptual keys, following Charteris-Black (2004), to reveal rhetorical coherence across the discourse.

#### **3.2.3 Metaphor Explanation**

The final stage focused on communicative purpose and political context. Explanation applied Charteris-Black's (2013) concept of purposeful metaphor to analyze the rhetorical effects and ideological implications of metaphorical expressions, conceptual metaphors, and conceptual keys. At the level of metaphorical expressions, the analysis examined lexical choices, evaluative meanings, emotional associations, and immediate rhetorical effects. At the level of conceptual metaphors, it examined how source-domain mappings shaped political understanding and transferred familiar evaluations to political targets. For instance, the metaphor 'friend to all' projects positive values of friendship onto international relations. At the level of conceptual keys, the analysis explored how related metaphors sustained broader ideological narratives and representations of Indonesia's role in world affairs. Contextual factors, including audience, venue, geopolitical circumstances, and thematic agenda, were incorporated to interpret metaphorical purpose.

This methodological design ensured systematic identification, interpretation, and explanation of metaphors while aligning linguistic analysis with socio-political context. However, since CMA is interpretative in nature, the analysis recognizes the possibility of interpretive subjectivity, which was minimized through repeated close reading and consistent application of the analytical framework.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Results

#### 4.1.1 Overview of Identified Metaphors

Analysis of sixteen speeches identified twenty-eight metaphorical expressions, grouped into interpersonal relationship and human body metaphors. These categories indicate a recurring tendency to represent international relations, national identity, development, and global responsibility through familiar forms of human experience. The expressions used are organized into a thematic overview, as shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.**

*Human-Centered Metaphors in President Prabowo Subianto's International Speeches*

No	Thematic Category	Expressions	Conceptual Key	Speech Context	Rhetorical Purpose
1.	Interpersonal Relationship	'one thousand friends too few, one enemy too many'; 'we gather together as one human family'; 'our brothers are being destroyed.'	INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS ARE HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS	St. Petersburg International Economic Forum; General Debate of 80 <sup>th</sup> UNGA; 11 <sup>th</sup> D-8 Summit	Frames diplomacy through friendship, unity, and kinship solidarity
2.	Human Body	'lungs of the earth'; 'with a heavy heart'; 'in our DNA'; 'we welcome with open arms.'	SOCIOPOLITICAL REALITY IS A HUMAN BODY	G20 Summit; High-Level Conference on the Question of Palestine; JAPINDA and JJC State Luncheon	Frames ecology, identity, diplomacy, and humanitarian concern through embodied experience

At the level of distribution, rather than appearing randomly, these metaphors vary according to communicative context. Interpersonal relationship metaphors dominate diplomatic and security context, while human body metaphors appear more in economic and development-oriented speeches. This distribution suggests that metaphor selection is closely aligned with rhetorical purpose, reflecting the speaker's sensitivity to audience and context.

#### 4.1.2 Interpersonal Relationship Metaphors

Interpersonal relationship metaphors in the corpus conceptualize international affairs through a set of relational models drawn from everyday human interaction. Friendship, family, and brotherhood metaphors collectively frame diplomacy as relational solidarity, although each operates at a different relational scale: open diplomatic engagement, universal human unity, and bounded communal identification.

One recurring expression is the metaphor of friendship. The word 'friend' conceptualizes Indonesia as a social actor engaged in voluntary and positive relationships with others. In remarks delivered at a state luncheon with the Japan Indonesia Association (JAPINDA) and Japan Jakarta Club (JJC) delegations, President Prabowo Subianto states:

Text 1

"The global situation is full of uncertainty, and that's why Indonesia wants to be a friend to all. We by tradition are non-aligned. We are *friends to all*."  
(State Luncheon with JAPINDA and JJC Delegation, December 2024)

Looking at the speech context, Indonesia is personified as an actor capable of friendship. The mapping transfers qualities associated with human friendship, such as trust, goodwill, reciprocity, and positive engagement, onto the state as a political entity. The phrase 'to all' expands the relational scope beyond bilateral partnership and projects an image of open engagement with multiple states. This metaphor is reinforced by the reference to 'non-alignment', which aligns with the interpersonal notion of a friend who maintains balanced and non-exclusive relations. The surrounding reference to 'a global situation full of uncertainty' situates this mapping within a context where friendship functions as a stabilizing form of engagement. The same orientation appears at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum 2025:

Text 2

"Our foreign policy is very simple, one phrase. *"One thousand friends, too few. One enemy, too many."* We want *to be friends with everybody*." (St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, June 2025)

The formulation shown in Text 2 intensifies the friendship metaphor by presenting international relations as the accumulation of positive ties rather than antagonistic divisions. The contrast between 'friends' and 'enemy' frames diplomacy through moralized interpersonal categories, where friendship is desirable and hostility is undesirable.

A different relational scale emerges in the metaphor of 'human family', which organizes diversity into a shared collective identity. In an address to the United Nations General Assembly, President Prabowo Subianto states:

Text 3

"We differ in race, religion, and nationality, yet we gather together today as *one human family*." (General Debate of the 80<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly, September 2025)

The metaphor 'one human family' integrates diversity into unity, framing global solidarity through familial bonds. Differences of race, religion, and nationality are acknowledged but symbolically integrated within a common relational structure. The modifier 'one' consolidates plurality into unity, while the act of 'gathering together' reflects the physical and symbolic assembly of states within the United Nations. References to 'fellow human beings' and shared rights in the same speech further stabilize this mapping by aligning political actors with a common human identity. In the context of the United Nations General Assembly, the metaphor gains force because representatives of many nations are present, allowing the relational model of family to be grounded in the physical and symbolic assembly of states. As Marks (2025) notes, the notion of 'human family' has long been used

in international discourse to conceptualize the world as a unified social entity structured around shared belonging.

A narrower and more bounded form of solidarity appears in the metaphor of brotherhood. In the D-8 Summit, President Prabowo Subianto states:

Text 4

“We have vast resources, but we cannot unite, we quarrel among ourselves. And then when *our brothers* are being destroyed, then we give some declaration of support, and we send humanitarian aid.” (Special Session of 11<sup>th</sup> Developing Eight (D-8) Summit, December 2024)

The metaphor of brotherhood constructs solidarity among Muslim-majority states, while also acknowledging internal discord. The expression ‘our brothers’ constructs a specific in-group defined by shared religious or political affinity. Articulated in the D-8 Summit, where the audience consists of leaders and government officials from Muslim-majority and Global South countries, the possessive ‘our’ positions the speaker and audience within the same relational community while distinguishing that group from external actors. The surrounding reference to internal quarrel, as seen in the statement “we quarrel among ourselves,” frames geopolitical fragmentation as conflict within a shared family structure. The depiction of external harm, particularly in relation to Palestine, intensifies relational proximity by framing it as harm inflicted upon close kin. This dual structure, combining solidarity with internal tension, reflects what Goetze (2024) identifies as a key feature of kinship metaphors: their capacity to construct imagined connectivity while simultaneously revealing fractures within the group.

The metaphorical patterns found indicate that interpersonal relationship metaphors systematically conceptualize international affairs through familiar human bonds. Expressions such as ‘friend’, ‘human family’, and ‘brother’ each reflect the conceptual metaphors “INTERNATIONAL RELATION IS FRIENDSHIP”, “HUMANITY IS A FAMILY”, and “COMMUNITY IS KINSHIP”. Although each expression foregrounds a different relational scale, they share the same underlying logic of interpreting political actors and global communities through social relationships. These mappings converge into the conceptual key “INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS ARE HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS”. With this coherent metaphorical framework, international politics is represented less as an arena of impersonal strategic interaction than as a network of friendship, belonging, and solidarity.

#### 4.1.3 Human Body Metaphors

Body metaphors concretize abstract realities by mapping ecological, cultural, diplomatic, and humanitarian issues onto embodied experience. Alongside interpersonal relationship metaphors, they provide resources for understanding political and global phenomena through bodily functions, inherited traits, gestures, and emotional states. One prominent example appears in President Prabowo Subianto’s remarks at the G20 Summit on sustainable development and energy transition, as shown in Text 5.

Text 5

“Indonesia I think has the largest tropical forest. Maybe only Brazil and some African countries have more forest than us. We have contributed for many, many years to cooling the world. We are considered *the lungs of the Earth*.” (Third Session of G20 Summit, November 2024)

Indonesia's forests are framed as 'the lungs of the Earth', emphasizing ecological indispensability and global responsibility. The mapping projects the life-sustaining function of lungs onto forests as ecological systems that regulate climate and sustain planetary balance. Through this metaphor, Indonesia's environmental role is presented as vital, continuous, and deserving of global recognition.

A different bodily configuration appears in the state luncheon with JAPINDA and JJC delegations, as shown in Text 6.

Text 6

"Indonesia for many, many years, even before there was an Indonesia, the tradition here is to welcome guests and to welcome foreigners. That is our tradition, that is our age-old custom. Maybe that is *in our DNA*." (State Luncheon with Japan Indonesia Association and Japan Jakarta Club Delegation, December 2024)

Hospitality is framed as intrinsic to Indonesian identity through the metaphor "in our DNA." By projecting the concept of biological inheritance onto cultural identity, the metaphor presents openness to guests and foreigners as natural, enduring, and historically continuous rather than merely situational or policy-driven. The same diplomatic setting also includes the expression as shown in Text 7.

Text 7

"We are a friend to all. Our philosophy is 1,000 friends are too few, one enemy is too many. So, we *welcome with open arms*." (State Luncheon with Japan Indonesia Association and Japan Jakarta Club Delegation, December 2024)

The gesture of 'open arms' symbolizes diplomatic openness and readiness for cooperation. The bodily image of opening one's arms, conventionally associated with welcome and embrace, is mapped onto Indonesia's willingness to engage with foreign partners, particularly Japanese investors and institutions.

Human body imagery is also used to express moral and emotional responses in contexts of humanitarian crisis. In remarks delivered at the High-Level International Conference on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, President Prabowo Subianto states:

Text 8

"It is with *a heavy heart* that we recall the ongoing unbearable tragedy in Gaza: thousands of innocent lives—many of them women and children—have been killed, famine looms, human catastrophe is unfolding before our eyes." (High-Level International Conference on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, September 2025)

The metaphor 'with a heavy heart' conveys embodied sorrow, framing humanitarian concern as moral responsibility. References to loss of life, famine, and suffering shape the interpretation, where the 'heaviness' signals not generic sadness but a response to large-scale human tragedy. The relevant correspondence lies in the idea of something difficult to carry, where physical burden parallels the strain of ethical awareness and empathy. In this case, the heart as the locus of that burden grounds an abstract moral stance in embodied

sensation. Thus, the expression frames political response not as detached diplomacy, but as emotionally grounded ethical engagement.

Human body imagery systematically structures sociopolitical realities through familiar bodily functions, conditions, and actions. The expressions ‘lungs of the Earth,’ ‘in our DNA,’ ‘with open arms,’ and ‘with a heavy heart’ reflect the conceptual metaphors “THE EARTH IS A HUMAN BODY,” “CULTURE IS BIOLOGY,” “SOCIAL RELATIONS ARE PHYSICAL INTERACTIONS,” and “EMOTIONAL CONCERN IS PHYSICAL BURDEN”. Although each expression foregrounds a different dimension of embodiment, they share the same underlying logic of understanding abstract collective phenomena through the human body. These metaphors converge into the conceptual key “SOCIOPOLITICAL REALITY IS A HUMAN BODY,” through which environmental systems, national identity, diplomatic relations, and humanitarian concern are rendered more intelligible and experientially accessible.

## 4.2 Discussion

### 4.2.1 Metaphor as Framing Device

The findings indicate that human-centered metaphors function as framing devices that shape how complex realities are understood and evaluated. Metaphors simplify complex realities through their heuristic function and attach normative evaluations through their predicative function. This dual function is especially visible in the conceptual key “INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS ARE HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS”, reflected in expressions such as ‘friend to all’, ‘one thousand friends too few, one enemy too many’, and ‘one human family’. These metaphors reduce the complexity of foreign policy by recasting diplomacy through the interpersonal logic of friendship and kinship. Strategic relations between states are therefore rendered more intelligible through concepts associated with everyday social life. At the same time, these metaphors are evaluative. Friendship conventionally evokes trust, reciprocity, goodwill, and peaceful coexistence. By describing Indonesia’s foreign policy through the language of friendship, the discourse presents non-alignment not merely as a strategic doctrine but as an ethically desirable orientation. Similarly, the metaphor of a human family frames cooperation as morally preferable to rivalry and fragmentation.

From a critical perspective, however, such framing is not ideologically neutral. The metaphor ‘friend to all’ foregrounds goodwill while obscuring strategic calculations of non-alignment. A recent study suggests that Indonesia’s contemporary non-aligned posture can also be understood as an effort to preserve strategic autonomy amid intensifying rivalry between major powers, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region (Anwar, 2023). In this sense, the friendship metaphor may function as a form of geopolitical masking: it presents strategic hedging and non-alignment as morally neutral cooperation rather than pragmatic maneuvering within an increasingly competitive regional order. This masking effect is consistent with recent research showing that metaphorical discourse can depoliticize contested policy issues by presenting interested positions as balanced, reasonable, or legitimate (van Schalkwyk et al., 2024).

A similar pattern can be observed in bilateral economic settings. In speeches addressed to Japanese business audiences, friendship and hospitality metaphors present Indonesia–Japan relations as warm and cooperative. Yet these metaphors may downplay structural asymmetries in the partnership, particularly in access to capital, advanced technology, and regulatory influence, as Japan remains an important source of investment,

technological support, and infrastructure finance for Indonesia (Handayani & Yuliatiningtyas, 2025).

#### **4.2.2 Empathetic Force of Metaphor**

Empathetic metaphors humanize politics by framing states as kin and crises as embodied sorrow, thereby fostering moral engagement. By representing states as friends, global communities as family members, and diplomacy as bodily openness, the discourse brings distant and abstract political issues closer to everyday human experience. This aligns with Charteris-Black's (2013) notion of the empathetic purpose of metaphor, in which metaphor is used to evoke emotional identification and relational closeness. Expressions such as 'our brothers' and 'with a heavy heart' encourage audiences to interpret world politics through norms of care, solidarity, hospitality, and shared responsibility. Rather than depicting international affairs as impersonal systems of competition, these metaphors recast them as relationships among recognizable human actors.

However, from a critical perspective, empathetic framing risks oversimplifying conflicts by privileging emotional solidarity over structural analysis. A study of Indonesia's foreign policy toward Palestine suggests that although Indonesia expresses strong moral and symbolic support for Palestine, its ability to shape outcomes remains limited given its position as a middle power operating within wider geopolitical structures (Prabandari & Darmawan, 2026).

At a broader level, these patterns suggest a recurring tendency to frame world politics as a sphere of interpersonal connection rather than a field structured by power asymmetries, institutional limits, and strategic competition. The persuasive power of empathetic metaphor lies in its ability to recast distant political crises as immediate human experiences, thereby inviting moral engagement while leaving their wider structural constraints less visible.

#### **4.2.3 Legitimizing National Image through Human-Centered Metaphor**

Human-centered metaphors function as soft power tools, legitimizing Indonesia's image as cooperative, environmentally responsible, and welcoming. Political speeches in global forums are communicative acts as well as representational performances through which states narrate who they are and how they wish to be perceived. More specifically, they contribute to strategic narratives through which states communicate identity, values, and legitimacy to international audiences. Recent public diplomacy scholarship emphasizes that strategic narratives are central to persuasive communication because they help political actors organize identity claims and make them credible within global public discourse (Hedling, 2025). Hence, metaphor functions as a strategic resource of image management and soft power. As Nye (2021) argues, soft power refers to the ability to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction rather than coercion. Recent scholarship further emphasizes that soft power operates through credibility, legitimacy, public diplomacy, policy reputation, and the relational reception of national image by international audiences (Brannagan & Giulianotti, 2023; Chitty et al., 2023). This view is supported by recent work on foreign government public relations, which shows that strategic narratives help governments communicate the value of their national brand and policies to foreign publics and stakeholders (Arceneaux, 2024).

Interpersonal metaphors expressed through phrases such as 'friend to all' and 'one human family' position Indonesia as cooperative, peaceful, inclusive, and globally engaged.

This rhetorical framing also aligns with Indonesia's longstanding '*bebas aktif*' (independent and active) foreign policy tradition, which, as Yadav (2025) notes, continues to inform the current administration's diplomatic orientation.

Human body metaphors contribute a complementary dimension. The expression 'lungs of the Earth' presents Indonesia as environmentally significant and valuable through its tropical forests. In an era of climate politics, such imagery allows ecological resources to function as diplomatic assets. Meanwhile, the expression 'in our DNA' frames hospitality and openness to cooperation as intrinsic national traits rather than contingent policy choices. Similarly, the phrase 'with open arms' reinforces an image of Indonesia as welcoming, partnership-oriented, and receptive to international collaboration.

From a CMA perspective, these representations are ideological because they organize political meaning around socially desirable beliefs about cooperation, responsibility, and moral legitimacy. Through the metaphor of friendship, family, openness, and embodied care, Indonesia is represented both as a state actor and as a humane and trustworthy member of the international community. As Mio (1997) notes, metaphors can resonate with latent symbolic representations operating below the level of conscious awareness, which helps explain why such imagery often carries persuasive force. Human-centered metaphors therefore legitimize Indonesia's global role by normalizing values of cooperation, responsibility, and moral legitimacy.

## 5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that human-centered metaphors significantly shape representations of international politics, humanitarian concerns, environmental responsibility, national development, and identity in Prabowo Subianto's speeches. By employing metaphors of interpersonal relationships and the human body, complex geopolitical realities are translated into familiar domains of friendship, family, embodiment, and emotion. These patterns confirm that metaphor systematically organizes political meaning.

Two dominant tendencies emerge: international relations are framed as human relationships, while sociopolitical realities are understood through bodily functions and gestures. These patterns make abstract issues, diplomacy, environmental responsibility, humanitarian concern, and national identity, more concrete and accessible. The study contributes to political metaphor scholarship by showing how human-centered metaphors function as cognitive, rhetorical, and ideological resources in diplomatic discourse, while also demonstrating the usefulness of Critical Metaphor Analysis in linking linguistic patterns with political meaning.

Critically, these metaphors foreground cooperation, solidarity, openness, and legitimacy while obscuring strategic competition and structural asymmetries. They foreground cooperation, solidarity, openness, and moral legitimacy, while backgrounding strategic competition, structural asymmetries, and political contestation. Thus, the speeches construct Indonesia as cooperative, peace-oriented, globally engaged, and morally legitimate.

This study is limited to English-language speeches delivered during the first year of Prabowo Subianto's presidency. Future research should compare metaphors use across leaders, contexts, and languages to examine cultural variation and geopolitical framing.

Longitudinal studies could trace how metaphors evolved with shifting domestic priorities and international circumstances.

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