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METAPHOR IN PRABOWO'S SPEECHES

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ABSTRACT

This research analyzes ontological metaphors in Prabowo Subianto's international speeches. It aims to identify the types of ontological metaphors, determine the dominant type, and explain the conceptual meanings conveyed through these metaphors. The data were taken from the English transcripts of three speeches: the G20 Summit in Brazil in 2024, the World Governments Summit in the United Arab Emirates in 2025, and the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in Russia in 2025. This research used a descriptive qualitative method. The data were collected through documentation by reading the transcripts and checking them against the official video recordings. The analysis was based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), with a focus on ontological metaphor. The analysis identified 11 ontological metaphor expressions. Nine expressions (81.8%) were classified as entity and substance metaphors, one (9.1%) as a container metaphor, and one (9.1%) as personification. Entity and substance metaphors were therefore the dominant type. These expressions present abstract political, social, and environmental ideas as things, substances, bounded spaces, or human-like entities. This helps make ideas such as commitment, political action, historical conditions, public benefit, and environmental importance more concrete for the audience. The findings show how ontological metaphors help communicate abstract concepts in Prabowo's selected international speeches.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language is an important means of communication through which people express thoughts, ideas, attitudes, and views. In political contexts, language plays a central role because political leaders use it to communicate policies, political positions, national interests, and responses to political issues. One important form of political communication is political speech. Through political speeches, leaders communicate with audiences and present political issues in particular ways. Therefore, political speech provides important linguistic data for examining how political leaders construct and communicate meaning.

One important linguistic phenomenon in political speech is metaphor. Lakoff & Johnson (1980) explain that metaphor is not merely a decorative feature of language; it is also a way of understanding and organizing human experience. Metaphor enables

speakers to understand and express abstract concepts through more concrete or familiar experiences. In political communication, this process can make complex political issues easier to conceptualize and discuss. For example, when a speaker states that "peace must be built," peace is represented as something that can be constructed. This expression shows that metaphor can give an abstract political concept a more concrete form. Therefore, metaphor is not only a stylistic feature but also a means of conceptualizing political ideas.

Political speeches frequently address abstract concepts such as peace, cooperation, development, security, economic growth, national interests, and global challenges. Although these concepts are important in political communication, they are not always easily understood through direct language. Political leaders may therefore use metaphorical expressions to present such concepts through more concrete and familiar experiences. However, the conceptualization underlying a metaphorical expression is not always directly visible from the words used in a speech. For this reason, metaphor analysis is needed to identify how abstract political concepts are represented and understood through language.

Three speeches were selected because they represent President Prabowo Subianto's diplomatic communication in three different international settings. The G20 Brazil Summit 2024 speech addresses global economic cooperation, sustainable development, climate change, and health cooperation. The World Governments Summit 2025 speech discusses global stability, peace, national development, and Indonesia's international role. The St. Petersburg International Economic Forum 2025 speech focuses on economic cooperation, investment, natural-resource governance, clean government, and Indonesia's openness to international partnership. These three speeches were chosen because they contain recurring references to abstract political concepts, such as commitment, stability, development, independence, trust, corruption, and cooperation, which can be examined through ontological metaphors.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory, proposed by Lakoff & Johnson (1980) explains the relationship between metaphor and human conceptualization. According to this theory, people understand one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain. The more concrete or familiar domain is referred to as the source domain, whereas the concept being understood is referred to as the target domain. The conceptual relationship between the source domain and the target domain is called mapping. Lakoff & Johnson (1980) classify conceptual metaphors into three major types structural metaphors, orientational metaphors, and ontological metaphors.

Among these types, ontological metaphor is the focus of the present study. Ontological metaphor enables abstract experiences, conditions, events, and concepts to be understood as entities, substances, containers, or persons. According to Lakoff & Johnson (1980) this type of metaphor allows abstract concepts to be treated as identifiable objects, bounded spaces, or human-like beings. Ontological metaphor is particularly relevant to political speech because political leaders often discuss abstract political concepts such as peace, cooperation, development, security, and national interests. Through ontological metaphor, these concepts can be presented as concrete

entities or conditions that can be described, protected, developed, entered, faced, or acted upon.

The use of metaphor is relevant to the speeches of Prabowo Subianto as President of the Republic of Indonesia. His international speeches address issues such as international cooperation, peace, economic development, global challenges, national interests, and relations among countries. These issues involve abstract political concepts that may require concrete conceptualizations in order to be communicated clearly to international audiences. Since international political speeches are delivered to audiences from different countries and backgrounds, the use of metaphor may help speakers present complex political ideas in more understandable ways.

Previous studies have shown that conceptual metaphor is frequently used in political discourse. Abdel-Qader & Al-Khanji (2022) found that conceptual metaphors were used to represent abstract issues in Joe Biden's COVID-19 speeches. Amaireh & Rababah (2024) examined recurring conceptual metaphors in the political discourse of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris. Ezeilo & Ezeifeka (2024) also demonstrated that Conceptual Metaphor Theory can be used to examine how political ideas and positions are communicated through speech. These studies indicate that conceptual metaphor is relevant to the analysis of political discourse because it helps reveal how political actors represent abstract issues through language.

Studies on Prabowo Subianto's international speeches also show the relevance of metaphor analysis. Ezeilo & Ezeifeka (2024)examined conceptual metaphors in Prabowo Subianto's speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue 2024 and identified structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors. The study also found the ontological metaphor "strategies are tools." In addition, Ambarwati et al (2025) examined conceptual metaphors in Prabowo's speech at the ASEAN Summit 2025 and reported that ontological metaphor was the most frequent type found in the speech. Bachryj (2024) further explains that Conceptual Metaphor Theory can contribute to the interpretation of political discourse by showing how political issues are conceptually represented through language.

Although previous studies have examined conceptual metaphors in political discourse, including speeches delivered by Prabowo Subianto, several aspects still require further attention. First, many previous studies examine structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors together rather than concentrating specifically on ontological metaphors. Second, studies on Prabowo's speeches generally focus on one speech or one international event. Third, limited attention has been given to the comparison of ontological metaphors across several international speeches, particularly in relation to their subtypes, frequency, and conceptual meanings. Therefore, the present study focuses specifically on ontological metaphors in three international speeches delivered by Prabowo Subianto.

2. METHOD

This research employs a descriptive qualitative research design. Creswell (2014) explains that qualitative research is used to explore and understand the meanings that individuals or groups assign to a social or human problem. Similarly, Napitupulu et al. (2019) explain that qualitative research emphasizes description, meaning, and interpretation rather than statistical measurement. This research is qualitative because the primary data consist of official English speech transcripts, and the analysis focuses on identifying, classifying, and interpreting ontological metaphors in Prabowo Subianto's international speeches. The research is descriptive because it systematically describes the metaphorical expressions found in the speeches and classifies them into entity and substance metaphors, container metaphors, and personification based on Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Although this research is qualitative, frequency counts are used descriptively to identify the dominant subtype of ontological metaphor. The frequency is obtained by counting the number of identified expressions in each subtype. The counts are not used for statistical testing or generalization; they are used only to indicate which subtype occurs most frequently in the three selected speeches. Therefore, the main analysis remains qualitative, while frequency counts provide descriptive support for answering the second research question.

The data in this research are analysed qualitatively by using the interactive model of data analysis proposed by Miles & Huberman (1994) The model consists of three interconnected stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. These stages are conducted interactively and repeatedly throughout the analysis process. Conceptual Metaphor Theory and the classification of ontological metaphor proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) are used as the theoretical foundations for identifying, classifying, and interpreting the data. The interpretation of conceptual meaning also considers the immediate utterance and relevant speech context in accordance with Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data in this research are ontological metaphors found in the English transcripts of three international speeches delivered by Prabowo Subianto: the G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro on 19 November 2024, the World Governments Summit (WGS) in Dubai on 13 February 2025, and the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) on 20 June 2025. The official video recordings were used to check the wording and context of the transcripts. The data may appear as words, phrases, or clauses whose meaning in context differs from their direct, literal meaning.

The analysis began by assigning a code to each expression. The code identifies the speech, paragraph, and sentence unit. For example, G20-P02-S02 refers to the second sentence unit identified in paragraph 2 of the G20 Brazil Summit speech, WGS-P08-S02 refers to the second sentence unit in paragraph 8 of the World Govermant Summit speech. SPIEF-P13-S03 refers to the third sentence unit in paragraph 13 of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum speech. G20, WGS, and SPIEF identify the three speech sources. P means paragraph and S means sentence unit. Coding helps the researcher locate each expression, connect it to its full sentence, and check the analysis against the source.

After coding, the transcripts were read sentence by sentence to identify metaphorical expressions. The researcher considered the whole sentence and its context, not only an isolated word. An expression was treated as literal when the word was used in its direct, ordinary sense. It was treated as metaphorical when a concept from one area of experience was used to describe another. For example, "strong" is literal when it describes physical strength, but in "strong commitments" it describes an abstract commitment as if it could have physical strength.

The identified expressions were then examined using Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory of ontological metaphor. The researcher checked whether an abstract experience, idea, event, or action was understood as an entity or substance, a container, or a person. Each expression was classified according to the meaning supported by its full sentence and context. The screening process used retain and exclude: retain means the expression showed a clear ontological mapping and was kept for detailed analysis exclude means the expression did not show a sufficiently clear ontological mapping for this study. From the 41 expressions reviewed, 11 were retained, and 30 were excluded from the final ontological-metaphor data display.

The analysis followed the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification described by Miles and Huberman (1994). Data reduction was used to screen the 41 expressions. Data display organised the 11 retained expressions in a table. For verification, the researcher checked each expression's source domain, target domain, and conceptual mapping against the complete sentence and speech context. The source domain is the more concrete concept used to describe something, the target domain is the concept being described, and the mapping explains the relationship between them.

Table 1 presents the 11 expressions retained as ontological metaphors. For each expression, the table records its code, complete sentence, metaphorical expression, source domain, target domain, conceptual mapping, and conceptual meaning. The mapping shows how an idea, action, event, or experience is understood through a more concrete domain, while the conceptual meaning explains the message conveyed by the expression in its speech context.

Tabel 1. Data of Ontological Metaphor

Code	Sentence	Metaphorical Expression	Source Domain	Target Domain	mapping	Conceptual Meaning
G20-P02-S02	We all have strong commitments to address the issues.	strong commitments	Physical strength	Political commitments	political commitments are entities that can have physical strength.	Indonesia and the other G20 members are presented as having firm and serious promises to deal with shared problems.
G20-P02-S04	The G20 must generate tangible actions to	generate tangible actions	Physical objects or products that	Political actions to support the SDGs	political actions are tangible entities that	The expression stresses that commitments should lead to

Code	Sentence	Metaphorical Expression	Source Domain	Target Domain	mapping	Conceptual Meaning
	help achieve SDGs.		can be produced		can be produced.	clear, practical actions rather than remain only as words or plans.
G20-P03-S01	We, in Indonesia, continue to strengthen our commitment.	strengthen our commitment	A physical object that can be made stronger	Indonesia's commitment	commitment is an entity that can be made stronger.	Indonesia's promise is presented as something that can gain strength, showing continued resolve to carry out its responsibilities.
G20-P12-S05	We are considered the lungs of the Earth.	The lungs of the Earth	A living body and its lungs	The Earth and the ecological role of tropical forests	The Earth is a living body; tropical forests are its lungs.	Tropical forests are presented as vital to the Earth's life because they help maintain ecological balance, as lungs support a living body.
WGS-P03-S02	We are at a delicate moment in history.	a delicate moment in history	A fragile object that needs careful handling	A moment in world history	A historical moment is a fragile object.	The current period is presented as fragile and sensitive, so decisions made during it require care.
WGS-P08-S02	The crises in Ukraine, Gaza, East Congo, and other parts of Africa reflect a broader erosion of global stability.	erosion of global stability	A physical surface or material gradually worn away	Global stability	Global stability is a physical surface or material that can be eroded.	Global stability is described as something that can gradually weaken because of conflict and crisis.
WGS-P11-S06	Ensuring that every citizen has the opportunity to strive, our mission is to create an	create an environment where	A space in which people or activities can exist	Social and institutional conditions that support citizens	Social conditions are a space that can contain or enable activities.	The government's role is presented as creating conditions in which citizens

Code	Sentence	Metaphorical Expression	Source Domain	Target Domain	mapping	Conceptual Meaning
	environment where every Indonesian citizen can access quality education, health care, and economic opportunities.					can pursue education, health care, and economic opportunities.
SPIEF-P06-S02	But these vast economic resources, if not wisely managed, actually can be a curse to our people.	can be a curse	A harmful force or condition	The harmful consequences of poorly managed economic resources	Poorly managed resource wealth can become a harmful force.	Economic resources are not always a benefit; without wise management, they may bring hardship to the people.
SPIEF-P12-S04	In the end, the collusion between these two groups does not result in the alleviation of poverty and the widening of the middle class.	widening of the middle class	A physical area or entity that can become wider	The growth of the middle class	the middle class is an entity that can expand in size or reach.	The phrase presents the middle class as a group that can grow, and the sentence says collusion does not help that growth or reduce poverty.
SPIEF-P13-S02	Our government must work to bring the greatest good to the greatest many.	bring the greatest good to the greatest many	An object or benefit that can be brought to recipients	Public good or social welfare	Public good is an entity that can be brought to people.	Public welfare is presented as a benefit that the government should deliver to as many people as possible.
SPIEF-P13-S03	And, in this case, we have to have a clean government, free of corruption.	A clean government, free of corruption	Physical cleanliness and the absence of dirt or contamination	Government integrity and the absence of corruption	Institutional integrity is cleanliness; corruption is contamination.	A government without corruption is described as clean, linking honest public service with physical cleanliness.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The analysis identified 11 expressions classified as ontological metaphors in the three selected speeches. Following Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) framework, the

expressions were grouped into three subtypes: Entity and Substance Metaphor, Container Metaphor, and Personification. Table 2 presents the number and percentage of expressions in each subtype and identifies the dominant subtype.

Tabel 2. Distribution of Ontological Metaphor Subtypes

No.	Subtype of Ontological Metaphor	Number of Data	Percentage
1	Entity and Substance Metaphor	9	81.8%
2	Container Metaphor	1	9.1%
3	Personification	1	9.1%
	Total	11	100%

Table 2 shows that Entity and Substance Metaphor is the most dominant subtype, with 9 of the 11 data, or 81.8%. Container Metaphor and Personification each appear once, representing 9.1% of the data. The result suggests that, in the selected speeches, abstract political ideas are most often presented as entities or substances that can have qualities, be changed, or be affected. For example, commitments are described as "strong" or something that can be "strengthened," actions are described as "tangible," and global stability is described through the process of "erosion." These expressions help the audience understand abstract political matters through familiar physical experiences. The figures show the distribution within this selected set of data; they do not mean that the same pattern must appear in every speech by Prabowo.

The second table summarizes the conceptual meaning conveyed by each expression. Rather than repeating the full analysis, it presents the central idea that can be understood from the expression in its speech context. The meanings are interpreted from the relationship between the concrete image used in the source domain and the abstract political or social idea in the target domain.

Tabel 3. Conceptual Meanings of the Identified Ontological Metaphors

No.	Metaphorical Expression	Subtype	Conceptual Meaning
1	"Strong commitments"	Entity and Substance	Political commitments should be firm, reliable, and able to remain in place when challenges arise.
2	"Tangible actions"	Entity and Substance	International promises should lead to practical actions and visible results, not remain only words.
3	"Strengthen our commitment"	Entity and Substance	Indonesia intends to make its political commitment firmer and more dependable over time.
4	"a delicate moment in history"	Entity and Substance	The current historical situation is sensitive and requires careful decisions because careless actions may make it worse.
5	"Erosion of global stability"	Entity and Substance	Conflicts and crises can gradually weaken peace,

No.	Metaphorical Expression	Subtype	Conceptual Meaning
			security, and the conditions that support international order.
6	"Can be a curse"	Entity and Substance	Economic resources may become a burden and harm the public if they are not managed wisely.
7	"Widening of the middle class"	Entity and Substance	Social and economic progress should allow more people to improve their living conditions and join the middle class.
8	"Bring the greatest good to the greatest many"	Entity and Substance	Government policies should deliver real benefits to as many people as possible, rather than serve only a small group.
9	"a clean government, free of corruption"	Entity and Substance	A good government should act honestly, protect public resources, and remain free from corrupt practices.
10	"Create an environment where"	Container Metaphor	The government should build social conditions that allow citizens to access education, health care, and economic opportunities.
11	"The lungs of the Earth"	Personification	Forests and the natural environment have a vital role in supporting life and should be protected.

As summarized in Table 3, the expressions communicate ideas about responsibility, effective political action, careful leadership, public welfare, honest government, and environmental protection. The first three expressions present commitment and action as things with physical qualities, making political promises seem more concrete and dependable. "A delicate moment in history" and "erosion of global stability" highlight the fragile nature of the international situation and the gradual weakening of peace. The expression "can be a curse" warns that resources do not automatically bring prosperity, while "widening of the middle class" focuses on broader social improvement. The phrase "bring the greatest good to the greatest many" presents public benefit as something that should reach people, and "a clean government" connects physical cleanliness with integrity. Finally, "create an environment where" presents supportive social conditions as a space for citizens to develop, while "the lungs of the Earth" uses a living-body image to emphasize the importance of nature. Together, these meanings show how the expressions make abstract political and social ideas easier to imagine through familiar experiences.

This interpretation follows Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) view that ontological metaphors allow people to understand abstract experiences by treating them as entities, substances, containers, or living beings.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that ontological metaphors help present abstract political, social, and environmental ideas through more familiar experiences. Of the 11 expressions retained for analysis, nine belong to Entity and Substance Metaphor, one belongs to Container Metaphor, and one is classified as Personification. Entity and Substance Metaphor is therefore the dominant subtype in this dataset. This result should be understood in relation to the three speeches selected for this research, rather than as a claim about all of Prabowo's speeches.

This pattern can be explained through Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) account of ontological metaphor. They explain that people often understand abstract experiences by treating them as entities or substances that can be described, affected, or given qualities. In the present data, "strong commitments" and "strengthen our commitment" use physical strength to describe the firmness of political commitments. "Tangible actions" presents political action as something concrete and noticeable, while "erosion of global stability" presents stability as something that can gradually wear away. These examples show how physical qualities and processes make abstract political matters easier to discuss. The expressions do not prove that the promises have been fulfilled; they show how the speaker represents these ideas through language.

The result is broadly in line with previous studies that apply Conceptual Metaphor Theory to political speech. Abdel-Qader and Al-Khanji (2022), in their study of Joe Biden's COVID-19 speeches, showed that metaphor can present complex and unfamiliar issues through more concrete conceptualisations. This is similar to the present finding that political commitments, public action, and global stability are described through familiar physical qualities and processes. However, their study examined several conceptual metaphor domains in speeches about a public health crisis, while the present study focuses only on ontological metaphors in three international speeches by Prabowo Subianto.

The findings also relate to Amaireh and Rababah's (2024) study of Joe Biden's and Kamala Harris's political discourse. Their research examined recurring conceptual metaphors used to communicate political ideas and positions. Like that research, the present research shows that metaphor is one way political speakers frame abstract ideas for an audience. The difference is that the present research does not attempt to describe all conceptual metaphor types or compare two political figures. Instead, it identifies the subtypes of ontological metaphor and explains the conceptual meanings of the expressions found in Prabowo's selected international speeches.

The present findings are also relevant to Ezeilo and Ezeifeka's (2024) analysis of Governor Soludo's 2023 Independence Day speech. Their research demonstrates the use of Conceptual Metaphor Theory to examine how political ideas and positions are expressed in a speech. This provides a related example of how political language can be studied by examining the relationship between the concept used to describe an issue and the issue being described. In the present research, this relationship is explained through source

domain, target domain, and conceptual mapping, while the classification is limited to the ontological metaphor framework of Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

The two less frequent subtypes also add detail to the findings. The phrase "create an environment where" presents social and economic conditions as a surrounding space in which people can access education, health care, and economic opportunities. This fits the container pattern described by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), because a situation is understood as a space that supports or limits activity. The phrase "the lungs of the Earth" describes the natural environment through a body organ that supports life. It is classified as personification because a non-human part of the natural world is understood through a living body. These examples show that, although they occur less often in this dataset, container metaphor and personification can still express important ideas about public welfare and environmental protection.

Overall, the present research supports the view that conceptual metaphor is useful for examining political language, as shown in the previous studies. Its specific contribution is its focus on ontological metaphor in three international speeches by Prabowo Subianto and its description of the conceptual meanings of the retained expressions. The findings also extend the discussion by showing which ontological subtype occurs most often in this particular dataset. Since the previous studies reviewed here examine broader conceptual metaphor patterns or different political speakers and contexts, their results cannot be compared directly with the subtype percentages in this study. The comparison is therefore thematic rather than numerical. Throughout the discussion, the interpretation remains grounded in Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory and in the wording and context of the selected speeches.

4. Conclusion

The analysis identified 11 expressions classified as ontological metaphors in the three selected international speeches by Prabowo Subianto. Based on Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) theory, the expressions were grouped into Entity and Substance Metaphor, Container Metaphor, and Personification. This answers the first research question and shows how abstract political, social, and environmental ideas are represented through more familiar forms of experience.

Entity and Substance Metaphor was the dominant subtype, with nine expressions (81.8%). Container Metaphor and Personification each appeared once (9.1%). This answers the second research question. Within the selected data, abstract ideas such as political commitment, action, stability, and public welfare are often presented as things that can have qualities or undergo change.

The conceptual meanings of the expressions relate to the main issues discussed in the speeches. Expressions such as "strong commitments," "tangible actions," and "strengthen our commitment" present political commitment and action through ideas of strength and concreteness. "A delicate moment in history" and "erosion of global stability" present historical conditions and global stability as things that can be sensitive or gradually weakened. "Create an environment where" presents social conditions as a space that can support people's access to opportunities, while "the lungs of the Earth" presents

nature through a body organ that supports life. Taken together, the expressions help make abstract ideas easier to understand, discuss, and connect with human experience, as explained by Lakoff and Johnson (1980).

In conclusion, ontological metaphors in the selected speeches provide a way to express abstract political and social ideas in more concrete terms. The main contribution of this study is its description of the types, dominant subtype, and conceptual meanings of the 11 identified expressions within the selected international speeches.

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