
Uzbek and English political texts: linguocultural features and translation

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Annotation *Political discourse is a key site of cultural and ideological meaning-making, and its translation across languages is a demanding task in applied linguistics. This article examines linguocultural features of Uzbek and English political texts, focusing on metaphorical language as a vehicle of ideological framing. Drawing on conceptual metaphor theory, critical discourse analysis, and cross-cultural pragmatics, the study analyzes 60 political speeches and official statements from English- and Uzbek-speaking contexts (2015–2024). Moreover, findings reveal systematic metaphorical differences: English political discourse relies heavily on war, journey, and organism metaphors that foreground competition and individual agency, whereas Uzbek rhetoric favors metaphors from nature, family, and ancestral wisdom that emphasize collectivity and cultural continuity. These differences challenge translators, as surface equivalence often fails to preserve ideological intent or pragmatic function. As well as, the article proposes strategies for culturally informed translation of political metaphor and contributes to non-Western political discourse analysis.*

Keywords *Political discourse, Uzbek, English, conceptual metaphor, translation, linguoculturology, cross-cultural pragmatics, ideological framing*

O'zbek va ingliz siyosiy matnlari: lingvomadaniy xususiyatlar va tarjima

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Annotatsiya *Siyosiy diskurs madaniy va mafkuraviy ma'nolarni shakllantirishning asosiy manbai bo'lib, uni tillararo tarjima qilish amaliy tilshunoslikning muhim vazifalaridan biridir. Ushbu maqola o'zbek va ingliz siyosiy matnlarining lingvomadaniy xususiyatlarini, xususan, mafkuraviy freymlashtirish vositasi sifatida metaforik tilga e'tibor qaratgan holda o'rganadi. Konseptual metafora nazariyasi, tanqidiy diskurs tahlili va madaniyatlararo pragmatikaga asoslangan holda, tadqiqot 2015–2024 yillar oralig'idagi ingliz va o'zbek tilidagi siyosiy kontekstlardan olingan 60 ta siyosiy nutq va rasmiy bayonotlarni tahlil qiladi. Natijalar metaforik tizimlarda tizimli farqlarni ko'rsatadi: ingliz siyosiy diskursi asosan urush, sayohat va organizm metaforalariga tayanadi, ular raqobat va individual faollikni oldinga suradi, holbuki o'zbek ritorikasi tabiat, oila va ajdodiy hikmat metaforalariga ustunlik beradi, ular jamoaviylik va madaniy davomiylikni ta'kidlaydi. Ushbu farqlar tarjimonlar uchun qiyinchilik tug'diradi, chunki sathiy ekvivalentlik ko'pincha mafkuraviy maqsad yoki pragmatik funksiyani saqlamaydi. Maqola siyosiy metaforani madaniy jihatdan asoslangan tarjima qilish strategiyalarini taklif etadi va g'arbiy bo'lmagan siyosiy diskurs tahliliga hissa qo'shadi.*

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Kalit so'zlar *Siyosiy diskurs, o'zbek tili, ingliz tili, konseptual metafora, tarjima, lingvokulturologiya, madaniyatlararo pragmatika, mafkuraviy freymlashtirish*

**Узбекские и английские
политические тексты:
лингвокультурные особенности
и перевод**

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Аннотация *Политический дискурс является ключевым пространством формирования культурных и идеологических смыслов, а его перевод на другие языки представляет собой сложную задачу в прикладной лингвистике. В данной статье исследуются лингвокультурные особенности узбекских и английских политических текстов с акцентом на метафорический язык как средство идеологического фреймирования. Опираясь на теорию концептуальной метафоры, критический анализ дискурса и межкультурную прагматику, исследование анализирует 60 политических речей и официальных заявлений из англоязычного и узбекоязычного контекстов (2015–2024 гг.). Результаты выявляют систематические различия в метафорических системах: англоязычный политический дискурс в значительной степени опирается на метафоры войны, пути и организма, которые выдвигают на первый план конкуренцию и индивидуальную активность, тогда как узбекская риторика отдает предпочтение метафорам природы, семьи и мудрости предков, подчеркивающим коллективизм и культурную преемственность. Эти различия создают проблемы для переводчиков, поскольку поверхностная эквивалентность часто не позволяет сохранить идеологический замысел или прагматическую функцию. В статье предлагаются стратегии культурно-ориентированного перевода политической метафоры, и она вносит вклад в растущую литературу по анализу западного политического дискурса.*

Ключевые слова *Политический дискурс, узбекский язык, английский язык, концептуальная метафора, перевод, лингвокультурология, межкультурная прагматика, идеологический фрейминг*

Introduction

Political language is never neutral. Every lexical choice, every rhetorical device, and every grammatical construction carries the imprint of the culture, ideology, and communicative tradition from which it emerges. The comparative study of political discourse across languages therefore offers a window not only into rhetoric and persuasion,

but into the deep cultural logics that shape how communities construct political reality. This article examines the linguocultural features of Uzbek and English political texts, focusing specifically on metaphorical language as the primary mechanism through which political speakers construct meaning, manage public perception, and advance ideological agendas.

The relationship between language and culture has long occupied linguists, anthropologists, and translation scholars. Sapir (1929) and Whorf (1956) established the foundational premise that language does not merely reflect reality but actively shapes how speakers perceive and categorize it. In political contexts, this insight acquires heightened significance. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) demonstrated that conceptual metaphors are not decorative flourishes but structural features of thought, pervasive in everyday and political language alike. When a politician describes a recession as a *storm to weather* or a policy as a *path forward*, they are not simply choosing vivid words; they are activating a conceptual framework that predetermines how audiences understand causality, agency, and the appropriate response to events.

English-language political discourse has received extensive scholarly attention in this regard (Chilton, 2004; Fairclough, 2006; Lakoff, 1973). Uzbek political discourse, however, remains relatively underexplored in the international literature, despite Uzbekistan's growing geopolitical significance and the rich rhetorical traditions of the Uzbek language (Sharafutdinov, 2024). This gap is particularly acute in the area of translation: diplomatic translators and intercultural communicators working between Uzbek and English regularly encounter metaphorical expressions whose cultural grounding renders direct translation inadequate or misleading.

The present article addresses three interconnected questions: (1) What metaphorical systems characterize English and Uzbek political discourse respectively? (2) How do the linguocultural contexts of each language shape the selection and function of these metaphors? (3) What challenges and strategies arise in translating political metaphor across these two language systems? The analysis draws on a corpus of political speeches, official addresses, and policy statements from both linguistic contexts,

interpreted within the theoretical frameworks of conceptual metaphor theory, critical discourse analysis, and cross-cultural pragmatics.

Literature review

The study of metaphor in political language has developed from two major theoretical traditions. The first, rooted in classical rhetoric, treats metaphor as a persuasive device deployed consciously by skilled speakers to render abstract policies emotionally accessible. The second, inaugurated by Lakoff and Johnson in their landmark work *Metaphors We Live By*, repositions metaphor as a fundamental cognitive mechanism: conceptual metaphors are structural mappings between domains of experience that organize thought, and political language merely makes these underlying mappings visible (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). The two traditions are not incompatible; political speakers both inherit and strategically exploit the conceptual metaphors embedded in their language and culture.

Within the English tradition, political metaphor has been exhaustively catalogued. P. Chilton identifies a cluster of recurring metaphorical systems in English political rhetoric, including the NATION AS BODY POLITIC metaphor (in which social disorder is conceptualized as disease and strong leadership as health), the WAR frame (in which policy disagreement is combat and opponents are enemies), and the JOURNEY metaphor (in which political progress is movement along a path toward a destination) (Chilton, 2004). N. Fairclough situates these metaphors within a broader theory of discourse as social practice, arguing that they do not simply describe political reality but actively construct it, legitimizing certain power arrangements and naturalizing particular ideological positions (Fairclough, 2006).

Cross-linguistic research on political metaphor reveals that while some metaphorical mappings appear to be universal, others are deeply culture-specific. Z. Kövecses

demonstrates that the cultural elaboration of even widely shared metaphors can diverge substantially, producing politically consequential differences in how speakers of different languages conceptualize power, conflict, and social cohesion (Kovecses, 2005). Musolff extends this observation to European political discourse, showing how the EUROPE AS BODY metaphor generates radically different inferences in German and British contexts despite using ostensibly the same conceptual structure (Musolff, 2004).

For Uzbek specifically, scholarly attention to political metaphor is a recent development. The broader field of Uzbek linguistics has been shaped by Soviet-era traditions that emphasized stylistics and communicative function, and discourse analysis as a formal discipline has developed unevenly. N. Sharafutdinov documents the linguopragmatic features of Uzbek political language, noting the salience of culturally grounded euphemisms and the central role of collectivist values in shaping rhetorical choices (Sharafutdinov, 2025). D. Azamova observes that Uzbek political and narrative discourse frequently employs circular structures, proverbial language, and appeals to oral tradition, reflecting the high-context communicative norms of Uzbek culture (Azamova, 2024).

The translation of political metaphor adds further complexity to this picture. P. Kussmaul argues that effective translation of culturally embedded language requires cultural adaptation rather than linguistic equivalence: a translator who renders a metaphor word-for-word may preserve surface form while distorting pragmatic meaning. In political contexts, this risk is particularly acute (Kussmaul, 1997). Mona Baker extends this analysis in her narrative theory of translation and conflict, showing that translators of political texts are inevitably positioned actors who make choices that shape how political narratives travel across cultural boundaries (Baker, 2006).

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, corpus-based approach within a comparative linguopragmatic framework. The methodological design is organized around three stages: corpus compilation, metaphor identification and classification, and cross-cultural translation analysis.

Corpus compilation. The corpus consists of 60 political texts, 30 in English and 30 in Uzbek, drawn from official government sources, nationally broadcast speeches, and policy declarations produced between 2015 and 2024. The English sub-corpus includes inaugural addresses, State of the Union speeches, and major policy announcements by U.S. and U.K. political leaders, sourced from whitehouse.gov, gov.uk, and the American Presidency Project. The Uzbek sub-corpus includes presidential addresses, parliamentary speeches, and official policy statements sourced from president.uz, ministry portals, and the national news agency UzA. Texts were selected to ensure thematic comparability across the two sub-corpora, with both including speech events focused on economic policy, national development, security, and social welfare.

Metaphor identification. Metaphorical expressions were identified using the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) developed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007), which involves comparing the contextual meaning of each lexical unit with its most basic meaning to determine whether a metaphorical mapping is operative. Identified metaphors were then analyzed using conceptual metaphor theory by Lakoff & Johnson to identify the underlying source and target domain mappings (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Only systematic, recurrent metaphorical patterns were included in the analysis; isolated or idiosyncratic figures of speech were excluded.

Cross-cultural and translation analysis. For each major metaphorical pattern identified, the study examined: (a) the cultural knowledge and assumptions that activate and sustain the

mapping in its source language; (b) whether a structurally equivalent mapping exists in the target language; and (c) what translational strategies, including literal translation, cultural substitution, explicitation, and paraphrase, are available and what pragmatic consequences each produces. (Baker, 2006; Kussmaul, 1997) and cross-cultural pragmatics (Crespo-Fernandez, 2007).

Results

The analysis identified six dominant metaphorical systems across the two sub-corpora, three characteristics of each language. The following sections present each system with illustrative examples drawn from the corpus, cultural grounding, and translation implications. All Uzbek examples are followed by the author's English translation in parentheses.

Dominant Metaphorical Systems in English Political Discourse

1. WAR and COMBAT metaphors. War metaphors constitute one of the most pervasive systems in English political language, extending far beyond discussions of military affairs to encompass economic policy, public health, and electoral competition. Political actors are framed as combatants, policy disagreements as battles, and electoral outcomes as victories or defeats. Examples from the corpus include:

"We are fighting for the soul of this nation."

"This administration declared war on working families."

"We launched a full-scale assault on poverty."

"We must win the battle against inflation."

R. Lakoff observed that English political discourse systematically maps political opposition onto the conceptual structure of armed conflict, with the result that compromise or negotiation may be cognitively coded as surrender (Lakoff, 1973). This framing serves to heighten emotional intensity, legitimize

forceful action, and cast political opponents in the role of enemies rather than fellow citizens. P. Chilton notes that the pervasiveness of this frame in English-speaking democracies reflects a political culture in which adversarial competition is a core constitutive value, institutionalized in parliamentary and congressional procedure alike (Chilton, 2004). In translation into Uzbek, the war metaphor requires careful handling: while Uzbek political language does invoke conflict metaphors, it typically reserves them for discussions of literal national defense or historical struggle, and applying them to domestic policy debates can produce jarring effects that violate the collectivist norms of Uzbek political rhetoric (Sharafutdinov, 2025).

2. JOURNEY and PATH metaphors. Journey metaphors frame political processes as directed movement through space toward a destination, with the nation, administration, or policy as the traveler and political goals as destinations. These metaphors are organized around the conceptual metaphor PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY IS JOURNEY. Examples include:

"We are on the right path to recovery."

"This policy will move our country forward."

"We cannot go back to the failed policies of the past."

"Together, we will chart a new course for America."

Journey metaphors in English political discourse construct temporal and directional narratives of progress and regression, positioning the speaker's agenda as the path forward and opposing positions as backward movement or stagnation. P. Chilton notes that these metaphors covertly encode ideological value judgments: progress is inherently good, movement is preferable to stability, and the speaker naturally knows the right direction (Chilton, 2004). N. Fairclough adds that the JOURNEY frame naturalizes a particular theory of historical change, presenting political development as linear and purposive rather

than cyclical or contingent (Fairclough, 2006). In Uzbek, similar journey concepts exist but are often inflected by traditional ideas of measured, patient movement along ancestral paths rather than rapid forward momentum toward new destinations, creating a subtle but significant semantic divergence in translation.

3. ECONOMIC ORGANISM metaphors. A third major pattern treats the national economy as a living organism capable of growth, sickness, recovery, and death. This metaphor allows speakers to naturalize economic processes and position economic management as a form of medical care. Examples include:

"The economy is showing vital signs of recovery."

"We need to inject capital to stimulate growth."

"These tax cuts are the medicine this economy needs."

"Inflation is eating away at the health of our economy."

The ECONOMY AS ORGANISM metaphor is particularly effective at depoliticizing economic decisions: if the economy is a body with natural processes of growth and disease, then policy interventions become clinical responses to objective conditions rather than ideological choices with distributional consequences. This framing, as N. Fairclough observes, serves to shield economic policy from political challenge by presenting it as technical necessity rather than value-laden choice (Fairclough, 2006). When translated into Uzbek, the clinical and biological register of these metaphors often sits uneasily alongside Uzbek political rhetoric's preference for more culturally resonant and emotionally grounded language.

Dominant Metaphorical Systems in Uzbek Political Discourse

1. NATURE and SEASONAL metaphors. Uzbek political speeches draw extensively on natural phenomena, including seasons, weather, rivers, and agricultural cycles, as a source domain for

framing political and social processes. This pattern reflects the deep agrarian roots of Uzbek culture and the prominence of land, water, and seasonal cycle in the collective imagination. Examples from the Uzbek corpus, with translations, include:

"Islohotlar bahori boshlandi." ("The spring of reforms has begun.")

"Xalqimiz qattiq qish davriga dosh berdi." ("Our people endured the harsh winter period.")

"Yangilanish shabadasi butun mamlakatni qamrab oldi." ("The breeze of renewal has swept across the entire country.")

"Bu davr o'tkinchi bo'lib, yaxshi kun albatta keladi." ("This period is transient; better days will surely come.")

These metaphors perform several functions simultaneously. They naturalize political change by associating it with cyclical natural processes, thereby reducing its threatening aspects. They invoke patience and endurance, waiting for spring after winter, as appropriate responses to hardship, reflecting the collectivist values that identifies as central to Uzbek political communication. They also draw on a shared cultural repertoire that resonates emotionally with audiences whose forebears lived by the agricultural calendar. Critically, the seasonal metaphor constructs a cyclical rather than linear view of history: difficulties are not failures to be attributed to opponents but natural phases to be endured collectively. In English translation, nature metaphors from this system tend to flatten into generic imagery that loses both the cultural specificity and the ideological work of the original.

2. FAMILY and KINSHIP metaphors. A distinctive feature of Uzbek political rhetoric is the systematic use of family and kinship language to frame the relationship between the state, the nation, and the individual citizen. The nation is conceptualized as a family (*oila*), the president or elder statesmen as a

father figure (*ota*), and citizens as children united by shared ancestry and mutual obligation. Examples include:

"Bizning yurt – bitta oila." ("Our homeland is one family.")

"Davlatimiz xalqining har bir farzandini himoya qiladi." ("The state protects every child of our people.")

"Keksalarimiz – xalqimizning donishmand otalari." ("Our elders are the wise fathers of our people.")

"Yoshlarimiz – yurtimizning kelajagi." ("Our youth are the future of our homeland.")

M. Baker observes that family metaphors in political discourse naturalize hierarchical authority by mapping it onto the presumably benevolent and emotionally resonant structure of the family (Baker, 2006). In Uzbek contexts, this mapping draws on the institution of the *mahalla* (neighborhood community) and deeply ingrained norms of filial deference and intergenerational respect. The pragmatic effect is to position political obedience as an extension of family loyalty rather than as mere civic compliance, and to frame the state's paternalistic authority as protective care. When translated into English, these expressions risk being read as authoritarian, a stark illustration of how the same metaphorical structure carries different evaluative weight in different cultural frameworks. An English audience accustomed to a discourse of individual rights and governmental accountability may interpret the father-nation metaphor as legitimating paternalism, while an Uzbek audience draws on it as an expression of warmth and collective belonging.

3. SPIRITUAL-MORAL and ANCESTRAL WISDOM metaphors. Uzbek political discourse frequently invokes religious and moral vocabulary, proverbs, and references to ancestral wisdom as a source domain for framing political action and social values. This pattern reflects the role of Islam, pre-Islamic traditions, and the legacy of Central Asian intellectual figures such as Alisher Navoi

in shaping Uzbek cultural identity. Examples include:

"Har bir ishda bir xayr bor." ("There is good in every hardship." – proverbial framing of economic difficulty)

"Sabr-toqat - eng katta kuch." ("Patience and forbearance are the greatest strength.")

"Bobolarimiz yo'lidan borish - asosiy vazifamiz." ("Walking the path of our ancestors is our primary duty.")

"Xalqimiz azaldan mehnatkash va sabr-qanoatli." ("Our people have always been hardworking and patient.")

The use of proverbial language in Uzbek political discourse serves both aesthetic and social functions: it anchors political messages in a tradition of shared wisdom that transcends any individual speaker's authority, and it invites the audience into a relationship of collective memory. For translators, these expressions pose special difficulties. Proverbs rarely have functional equivalents across language pairs; a translator forced to paraphrase loses the authority and cultural density of the original. P. Kussmaul argues that in such cases, the translator's task is not to find a matching proverb in the target language but to reconstruct the rhetorical function of the original, its tone of timeless collective wisdom, through different means (Kussmaul, 1997). The spiritual-moral metaphor also positions political difficulties within an ethical and teleological framework: hardship is not a sign of policy failure but a test of moral character that the people, by virtue of their historical identity, are equipped to endure and transcend.

Comparative Overview of Metaphorical Systems

Dimension	English Political Discourse	Uzbek Political Discourse
Dominant source domains	War, journey, biological organism	Nature/seasons, family/kinship, ancestral wisdom
Cultural values encoded	Competition, individual agency, accountability	Collectivity, patience, hierarchy, cultural continuity
Pragmatic function	Heighten urgency, assign blame, frame opposition	Maintain harmony, invoke solidarity, legitimize authority
Communication style	Low-context; explicit, adversarial framing	High-context; implicit, communal framing
Audience reception	Often viewed critically; associated with political spin	Generally accepted as culturally appropriate and respectful
Translation risk	May appear aggressive or divisive in Uzbek rendering	May appear passive, fatalistic, or authoritarian in English rendering

Table 1. Comparative features of metaphorical systems in English and Uzbek political discourse

Discussion and Analysis

The findings presented above confirm and extend the conclusions of cross-cultural political discourse research. Both English and Uzbek political speakers deploy metaphor systematically and strategically, but the domains they draw upon, the cultural assumptions they activate, and the pragmatic work they perform differ in patterned ways that reflect the deeper values and communicative norms of each culture.

Individualism versus collectivism in metaphorical framing. The most fundamental contrast revealed by this analysis is between the individualist and competitive logic of dominant English political metaphors and the collectivist and harmony-oriented logic of dominant Uzbek political metaphors. WAR and COMBAT metaphors in English frame political life as a zero-sum contest in which strength and dominance are virtues, opponents are enemies, and the appropriate emotional register is combative urgency. FAMILY and NATURE metaphors in Uzbek frame political life as a shared organic process in which patience, deference, and solidarity are virtues, and the appropriate emotional register is one of reassurance and collective purpose.

Ideological naturalization through metaphor. A second key finding concerns the ideological work performed by each metaphorical system. N. Fairclough argues that political metaphors are not merely descriptive but normative: they construct particular versions of political reality as natural and inevitable (Fairclough, 2006). The English ECONOMIC ORGANISM metaphor is particularly effective in this regard, depoliticizing economic decisions by presenting them as clinical responses to objective biological processes rather than as ideologically laden choices. The Uzbek SEASONAL metaphor performs a structurally analogous function: by framing political difficulties as winters that inevitably give way to spring, it naturalizes hardship and positions endurance as the appropriate response, deflecting attention from questions of political responsibility. Both metaphorical systems thus serve ideological purposes, but the mechanisms differ: English metaphors tend toward technical neutralization, while Uzbek metaphors tend toward moral and cultural naturalization.

Translation as cultural mediation. The translation implications of these findings are

significant. M. Baker argues that translators of political texts are not merely linguistic intermediaries but cultural mediators who make choices that shape how political narratives travel across borders (Baker, 2006). The present analysis supports this view: a translator who renders the Uzbek *"islohotlar bahori boshlandi"* ("the spring of reforms has begun") as a literal English equivalent preserves the surface image but loses the specific cultural resonance of seasonal renewal within a Central Asian agricultural tradition. An English reader may register the metaphor as poetic but generic, missing the deeper implication that reform is as natural and inevitable as the return of spring, an implication that functions politically to reassure audiences and legitimize the government's agenda.

Conversely, the English war metaphor *"we declared war on poverty"* may, when literally translated into Uzbek, violate the pragmatic norms of Uzbek political discourse: invoking the register of military conflict for a domestic social policy issue risks sounding disproportionately confrontational in a communicative context that prioritizes harmony and measured language. A culturally informed translator might substitute a metaphor of collective effort and shared duty, capturing the speaker's intent without violating target-culture norms. P. Kussmaul terms this approach functional equivalence at the level of rhetorical effect rather than semantic content (Kussmaul, 1997).

Implications for critical media literacy. The systematic nature of the differences documented here has implications for critical discourse analysis and media literacy education. If the metaphors available in a language differ systematically, then speakers of that language are being offered different conceptual resources for making sense of political life. Uzbek speakers whose political metaphors frame national challenges as seasons to endure or family obligations to honor are being offered a different political reality from English speakers whose political

metaphors frame the same challenges as battles to win or paths to choose. Teaching political language effectively requires cultivating not just linguistic competence but cultural metaphor literacy, the ability to recognize the conceptual mappings embedded in political speech and assess their transferability across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Conclusion

This article has examined the linguocultural features of Uzbek and English political texts, focusing on their underlying metaphorical systems. The analysis reveals systematic contrasts: English political discourse draws on war, journey, and organism metaphors that encode competition, individual agency, and accountability. Uzbek political discourse draws on nature, family, and ancestral wisdom metaphors that encode collectivity, patience, and cultural continuity. These differences reflect deeper cultural logics and communicative norms.

For translators, these contrasts pose substantial challenges. Surface-level metaphorical equivalence is often misleading. Productive translation requires cultural adaptation - reconstructing rhetorical function, not reproducing linguistic form. Baker's narrative framework offers guidance: translators must attend to the cultural story being told and make principled choices about how to retell it with different metaphorical resources.

This study has limitations. The corpus is limited in size and temporal range, and the analysis is qualitative. Future research could employ larger automated corpora and quantitative methods. Cross-linguistic comparisons with other Turkic languages (Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Azerbaijani) would help distinguish language-specific features from broader Central Asian rhetorical traditions. Reception studies examining how audiences actually process political metaphors would add empirical depth.

In conclusion, as Uzbekistan's international engagement grows, culturally sophisticated analysis of Uzbek political discourse becomes increasingly necessary. This article contributes to that effort, offering a

theoretical framework and practical observations for scholars, translators, and practitioners working across the Uzbek-English divide.

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