# FROM GLOBAL VISION TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY: CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS IN VIETNAM'S POLICY DISCOURSE AT UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

## TỪ TẦM NHÌN TOÀN CẦU ĐẾN KIẾN TẠO BẢN SẮC QUỐC GIA: ẨN DỤ Ý NIỆM TRONG DIỄN NGÔN CHÍNH SÁCH CỦA VIỆT NAM TẠI ĐẠI HỌC OXFORD

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**Abstract -** This research examines how conceptual metaphors in the official English translation of General Secretary Tô Lâm's policy address at Oxford University construct a modern sense of nationhood within world affairs. Rather than using traditional description alone, it integrates Conceptual Metaphor Theory with Critical Discourse Analysis to examine the full English-language transcript of the speech. The MIP identification procedure helped detect figurative expressions, revealing 112 instances categorized into different dominant conceptual frames. These metaphorical mappings appear most frequently when articulating national strategy and the Vietnam-UK partnership, indicating they function as cognitive and persuasive mechanisms rather than stylistic decoration. The findings demonstrate a discursive shift from war-memory identity toward a future-oriented, innovation-driven, and co-creative international persona, showing metaphor to be central in shaping Vietnam's global diplomatic visibility and agency.

**Key words -** Conceptual metaphors; National identity; Diplomatic discourse; Vietnam-UK cooperation; Critical discourse analysis

**Tóm tắt -** Nghiên cứu này khảo sát cách thức các ẩn dụ ý niệm trong bài phát biểu chính sách tại Đại học Oxford của Tổng Bí thư Tô Lâm kiến tạo diễn ngôn về bản sắc quốc gia trong bối cảnh quan hệ quốc tế đương đại. Nghiên cứu kết hợp Lý thuyết Ẩn dụ Khái niệm với Phân tích Diễn ngôn Phê phán để phân tích văn bản tiếng Anh của bài phát biểu. Quy trình nhận diện theo phương pháp MIP nhằm phát hiện các biểu thức ẩn dụ, qua đó ghi nhận 112 trường hợp được phân loại vào các khung ẩn dụ chi phối khác nhau. Các phép ánh xạ này xuất hiện với tần suất cao nhất trong các đoạn trình bày chiến lược quốc gia và quan hệ Việt Nam-Vương quốc Anh, cho thấy ẩn dụ hoạt động như cơ chế nhận thức và thuyết phục trọng tâm. Kết quả cho thấy một sự chuyển đổi mang tính diễn ngôn từ bản sắc dựa trên ký ức chiến tranh sang bản sắc hướng tới tương lai, lấy đổi mới và đồng kiến tạo làm nền tảng, khẳng định vai trò then chốt của ẩn dụ trong việc gia tăng tính hiện diện và năng lực tác động ngoại giao của Việt Nam trên chính trường quốc tế.

**Từ khóa -** Ẩn dụ ý niệm; Bản sắc quốc gia; Diễn ngôn ngoại giao; Hợp tác Việt Nam-Vương quốc Anh; Phân tích diễn ngôn phê phán

## 1. Introduction

In today's interconnected world, top officials can significantly enhance their country's international presence by delivering speeches at international diplomatic events, regardless of whether they speak in their native language or in English. These addresses do not just state policies - they perform national identity through strategic linguistic choices, using deliberate word selections to shape how nations are perceived internationally. Among these choices, conceptual metaphors act as cognitive framing devices that guide listeners' understanding of what a nation stands for and aims to achieve within global geopolitical discourse [1], [2].

Research has looked closely at how metaphors shape political messages, showing they can support certain beliefs and affect how people see government goals [3]. Still, most studies center on leaders from Western countries or settings where English is common; less attention goes to emerging states employing English-medium diplomatic communication [instead of "speaking diplomatically in English" [2], [4]. Work on Vietnam does explore persuasive strategies in domestic political discourse, yet it seldom examines English-language translations of speeches or English speeches delivered in international epistemic venues aimed at reaching global policymakers and scholars [5].

This gap matters more when looking at the policy address given by Vietnam's Communist Party leader, General Secretary Tô Lâm, at University of Oxford, a place often seen as a symbolic hub of global knowledge diplomacy and intellectual authority. His appearance there reflects Hanoi's aim to show Vietnam not just as a country built through past hardships, but also as a forward-looking actor contributing to peace, innovation, and shared development in the international system [6].

To tackle this gap in research, the paper examines metaphor use as a discursive strategy, showing how Vietnam reshapes its national identity - shifting from a global-vision identity to a cooperative leadership stance. Using Conceptual Metaphor Theory along with Critical Discourse Analysis, it reveals the cognitive mechanisms that help an emerging country assert diplomatic agency, construct legitimacy, and negotiate its international positioning amid evolving power dynamics.

The analysis is guided by three research questions (RQs):

RQ1: What dominant conceptual metaphors construct Vietnam's national identity in this speech?

RQ2: How do these metaphors align with contemporary diplomatic narratives?

RQ3: In what ways do they mark a rhetorical shift toward a future-oriented global identity?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Conceptual Metaphor Theory in Political and Diplomatic Discourse

Conceptual Metaphor Theory suggests metaphors act as cognitive instruments, helping people grasp complex political ideas - like national identity or foreign policy - by associating them with familiar conceptual schemas such as journey, construction, or family [7], [8]. In political rhetoric, these mappings enable leaders to encode ideological meanings implicitly while influencing emotional and cognitive responses among audiences [5]. Rather than simply reflecting reality, metaphors strategically construct perceptions of power, cooperation, and international positioning [9]. In addition, studying metaphor, using methods such as MIP or MIPVU to ensure systematic and replicable detection of metaphors in discourse, can help emphasise that some figurative patterns can contribute to the organisation of interpretation and stance in context, rather than just to style [5], [10]. However, most research focuses on English-dominant discourse, offering a limited understanding of how emerging states use metaphor in English-medium diplomatic communication, where linguistic performance and geopolitical identity are negotiated simultaneously [11].

### 2.2. Metaphors and the Construction of National Identity

Research into political discourse shows that metaphors help construct and negotiate national identity, particularly during shifts from war-related memory toward future-oriented narratives [12]. By metaphorically reframing historical experience, governments redirect focus from collective trauma to global contribution, presenting themselves as proactive actors addressing shared human challenges [13]. Although such transitions are documented across geopolitical contexts, studies often center on established powers with long-solidified identities. How a nation re-conceptualizes its identity within a single high-profile diplomatic performance remains underexamined - an especially relevant issue in Southeast Asia, where identity is continuously evolving.

### 2.3. English-Medium Diplomatic Speeches in Emerging Contexts

In non-Anglophone nations, English-medium diplomatic speeches serve as direct channels of influence toward international policy-makers and academic communities [14]. Unlike domestic communication, these speeches address heterogeneous ideological audiences and must achieve epistemic credibility to be persuasive [15], [16]. Previous studies indicate metaphors significantly enhance diplomatic legitimacy, enabling states to project influence and shape international understanding of their strategic intentions [17]. Yet, scholarship still lacks detailed examinations of Vietnamese diplomatic discourse in English, both translated versions of Vietnamese-language speeches and original English-language addresses delivered abroad, where national identity must be articulated through globally intelligible cognitive frameworks.

### 2.4. Political Discourse Studies in Vietnam: Current Status and Gap

Vietnamese scholarship has begun addressing metaphors in political discourse; however, this work predominantly focuses on Vietnamese-language media and domestic ideological messaging [18], [19]. No existing study systematically analyzes English diplomatic speeches by Vietnamese officials directed at international expert audiences, particularly those delivered within symbolic epistemic institutions like University of Oxford. Given that such settings require a sophisticated linguistic performance of national identity aligned with the global norms of cooperation, innovation, and shared development, this gap is significant.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Research Design

This study uses a qualitative approach combining Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) alongside Conceptual Metaphor Analysis (CMA). While CDA helps uncover how ideology shapes language use, it also shows how these linguistic patterns influence Vietnam's portrayal in world affairs as discourse and society are mediated directly through social cognition [20], [21], [22]. In contrast, CMA - based on Conceptual Metaphor Theory - detects hidden analogies that express complex political ideas via everyday experiences [8], thus exposing how narratives are reshaped for foreign listeners. Together, they support both structured metaphor detection or nuanced analysis of persuasive discourse within diplomatic communication. Therefore, by using CMA as a tool to identify and map metaphorical tokens before adopting CDA frameworks for in-depth interpretation of the lexicons used, this study informs how this speech functions as a means of establishing a global-vision identity among an international audience.

### 3.2. Data Source and Metaphor Identification Procedure

The corpus consists of the official English translation of a policy speech originally delivered in Vietnamese at University of Oxford in October 2025, officially published by the Government of Vietnam. The speech, comprising approximately 3,500 words, was selected for its symbolic role in global knowledge diplomacy and its explicit communicative intent to persuade an elite international audience.

Metaphors were found by applying the MIP method developed by the Pragglejaz Group [23], which involves four steps: first, going through the full text to grasp the context; next, spotting terms that might carry metaphorical sense; then, comparing their literal definition with how they're used in context; finally, labeling them as metaphoric if the usage differs yet connects via underlying idea. Each detected metaphor was labeled by hand while double-checking across two review cycles - this improved consistency. Using the protocols introduced in MIPVU to provide further operational guidance, the marking of metaphor-related lexes in discourse becomes more systematic [10].

This process produced 112 metaphor examples, showing steady use of metaphors across the speech. For accuracy, every item was labeled by hand; checks followed in two review stages. Any mismatches were talked through until a consensus emerged. Then each metaphor went into

an organized table, sorted into one of three themes tied to the study's aims: (i) global strategy setting, (ii) country growth identity, (iii) Vietnam-UK cooperation outlook.

### 3.3. Coding, Categorization, and Interpretation

Following Lakoff and Johnson's categorization, metaphors were classified into major types - structural, ontological, and orientational - based on the nature of their conceptual mappings and cognitive functions. Additionally, the metaphors were grouped into thematic identity framings relevant to the speech's narrative structure: (i) memory framing, (ii) cooperation framing, and (iii) vision framing.

The analysis was further guided by CDA principles, examining how metaphor clusters function discursively to legitimize national strategies, express geopolitical autonomy, and reposition Vietnam's identity from a resilient post-war nation toward a proactive contributor in global governance. The interpretive focus centers on how these metaphoric constructions shape cognitive and emotional resonance with international academic and policy-making communities, particularly within the influential platform of Oxford University.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

### 4.1. Overall Distribution of Conceptual Metaphors

A total of 112 metaphor uses were found in the roughly 3,500-word Oxford address, resulting in about 32 metaphors per 1,000 words. This frequency suggests metaphor is used as a sustained discursive strategy, not merely as a sporadic stylistic embellishment. As shown in Table 1, metaphors are spread across the four rhetorical segments of the speech. Although present throughout, most occur in the core argumentative sections where the speaker delineates Vietnam's developmental identity and articulates the strategic vision for the UK-Vietnam relationship.

Metaphors appear rarely in the ceremonial introduction (0.9%). However, their use rises to 20.5% in Section 1, where the global strategic landscape is problematized. Density further escalates in Section 2 (41.1%) and Section 3 (37.5%), which together constitute 78.6% of all identified tokens. Such concentration indicates that metaphors are deliberately mobilized during ideologically consequential junctures, where identity and bilateral cooperation are constructed, negotiated, and legitimized for a high-prestige international audience. Rather than occurring evenly, metaphor usage demonstrates discursive salience, marking points in the speech where persuasive force is most essential - highlighting how linguistic framing and cognitive appeal are strategically employed at critical argumentative turning points.

*Table 1. Distribution of conceptual metaphors by rhetorical segment*

| Segment | Tokens | (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Introduction | 1 | 0.9 |
| Issue 1 - Global strategic context | 23 | 20.5 |
| Issue 2 - National development identity | 46 | 41.1 |
| Issue 3 - Vietnam-UK partnership vision | 42 | 37.5 |
| Total | 112 | 100 |

Beyond frequency patterns, the nature of metaphors deployed further supports their strategic function. As shown in Table 2, structural metaphors constitute the majority (53.6%), followed by ontological metaphors (38.4%), while orientational and event-based metaphors appear only marginally. This prevalence of structural and ontological mappings indicates that abstract diplomatic constructs - such as modernization trajectories, strategic autonomy, and future cooperation - are consistently rendered through concrete conceptual domains like travel, construction, and machinery, thereby enhancing cognitive accessibility and argumentative coherence. Rather than relying on affective exaggeration or spatial contrast, metaphor use reflects a logic-driven approach to constituting political meaning and signaling directionality in Vietnam's future-oriented diplomacy.

*Table 2. Distribution of metaphor types*

| Metaphor Type | Tokens | (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Structural | 60 | 53.6 |
| Ontological | 43 | 38.4 |
| Orientational | 5 | 4.5 |
| Event-structural | 2 | 1.8 |
| Event-ontological | 1 | 0.9 |
| Spatial | 1 | 0.9 |
| Total | 112 | 100 |

Taken together, the frequency and discursive concentration of metaphors offer robust empirical grounding for addressing RQ1. While showing patterned distribution, the results indicate metaphor acts as a core rhetorical and cognitive mechanism shaping Vietnam's diplomatic repositioning - particularly in articulating its emerging global presence. These findings justify the organization of the subsequent analytical sections, where dominant metaphor clusters are examined to reveal how they reconfigure national identity from historical endurance toward proactive, innovation-driven international engagement.

From a critical discourse perspective, this pattern shows how metaphor tends to appear where ideological work is most intensified - especially when rearticulating Vietnam's development trajectory or reframing its strategic partnership with the UK. Rather than merely adding stylistic flair, metaphors in these segments constitute the argumentative logic itself by providing coherent cognitive frames that construct Vietnam as innovative, peace-oriented, and collaboratively engaged on the world stage. According to Musolff's notion of metaphor scenarios, recurrent mappings operate as narrative-like inferential structures guiding assumptions about agency, responsibility, and international legitimacy, thereby pre-shaping how the audience interprets Vietnam's global role.

### 4.2. Dominant Conceptual Metaphors Constructing National Identity

The analysis reveals four dominant metaphorical frames through which Vietnam's national identity is strategically constructed in the policy speech. These mappings translate abstract geopolitical orientations into embodied experiential structures, thereby enabling cognitive accessibility and strengthening the persuasive legitimacy of Vietnam's international positioning [7].

#### (1) Development is a journey

National growth is conceptualized as a purposeful forward movement, guided by strategic direction and

driven by collective aspiration.

*Table 3. Journey metaphors in the speech*

| Expression (Token) | Literal Gloss | Conceptual Metaphor | Mapping (Source → Target) |
|---|---|---|---|
| "the path of peace" | a physical road | Development is a journey | Movement → Development progress; Destination → Peaceful prosperity |
| "go far, fast, stable" | Velocity of a traveler | National progress is motion | Speed → Reform intensity; Distance → Strategic advancement |
| "stand firmly" | Physical balance | Autonomy is stability | Physical grounding → Diplomatic independence |

These metaphors portray Vietnam as a self-navigating agent, signaling a shift from historical vulnerability to proactive agency. Discursively, they enact autonomy as a core identity trait and align with contemporary diplomatic rhetoric in emerging economies, emphasizing self-determined trajectories [3]. Thus, journey metaphors directly address RQ1 by reaffirming Vietnam's modern strategic direction.

#### (2) Innovation/economy is an engine or driver

Economic modernization is framed through mechanistic propulsion, naturalizing innovation as the essential force of national survival.

*Table 4. Engine/driver metaphors*

| Expression (Token) | Literal Gloss | Conceptual Metaphor | Mapping (Source → Target) |
|---|---|---|---|
| "key growth drivers" | machine components that power motion | The economy is an engine | Engine power → Innovation capacity; Motor parts → Strategic sectors |
| "accelerate develop-ment" | increase vehicle speed | Development is an accelerated motion | Speeding up → Reform enhancement |
| "driving force" | Mechanical propulsion | Innovation is driving power | Propulsion → Develop-ment momentum |

Through CDA interpretation, this metaphorical frame justifies techno-economic reform as inevitable, embedding ideological legitimacy into the national identity narrative [19]. It responds to RQ2 by demonstrating how innovation becomes a constitutive feature of Vietnam's self-representation rather than merely a policy choice.

#### (3) The nation is a person

Vietnam is anthropomorphized as a moral, emotionally grounded actor, emphasizing trust, benevolence, and responsible cooperation.

*Table 5. Personification metaphors*

| Expression (Token) | Literal Gloss | Conceptual Metaphor | Mapping (Source → Target) |
|---|---|---|---|
| "trusted partner" | a reliable individual | The nation is a person | Human trustworthi-ness → Diplomatic credibility |
| "warm inside and peaceful outside" | Emotion-al state | Domestic stability is emotional warmth | Inner warmth → Social cohesion; Outer peace → Foreign harmony |
| "humane country" | moral quality of a human | The state is a moral being | Human ethics → Policy principles |

This framing enhances soft-power legitimacy, allowing Vietnam to claim geopolitical agency through empathy rather than coercion. It significantly contributes to RQ3, showing identity anchored in ethical leadership rather than post-war resilience.

#### (4) Partnership is a building/architecture

The Vietnam-UK bilateral relationship is conceptualized as a shared structural construct requiring design, investment, and longevity.

*Table 6. Architecture metaphors*

| Expression (Token) | Literal Gloss | Conceptual Metaphor | Mapping (Source → Target) |
|---|---|---|---|
| "model of cooperation" | blueprint of a structure | Partnership is a building | Design → Strategic plan; Blueprint → Policy framework |
| "a comprehen-sive partnership framework" | Architectural skeleton | Cooperation is structural architecture | Framework → Institutional capacity |
| "build the future together" | construct a structure | Co-creation is construction | Foundation → Shared interests; Construc-tion → Joint develop-ment |

This comparison shifts the power asymmetry between a developed and a developing nation, positioning Vietnam as an active co-designer of emerging global governance [16]. Rather than simply participating, it foregrounds reciprocal agency and mutual gains, core discursive mechanisms directly addressing RQ3 regarding future-oriented identity performance.

The four metaphor types operate synergistically, with each contributing distinct cognitive and rhetorical functions to the construction of national identity in the speech. The journey schema underscores self-determination and strategic directionality; the engine-of-innovation mapping legitimizes technological capability as developmental propulsion; personification foregrounds ethical legitimacy and soft-power responsibility; and architectural framing emphasizes co-production and institutional durability in international cooperation. Collectively, these metaphor scenarios cohere into a unified identity narrative in which Vietnam emerges as an autonomous geopolitical actor, innovation-driven, value-centred, and collaboratively engaged in shaping shared futures.

This metaphorical clustering reflects a cognitive realignment that shifts emphasis away from historical struggle toward a forward-looking, globally engaged self-concept. Crucially, these mappings occur with highest salience precisely where Vietnam's long-term international role and the Vietnam-UK partnership are articulated, indicating that metaphor is not ornamental but constitutive of the speech's diplomatic argumentation.

### 4.3. Vietnam-UK Partnership Vision: Co-construction of Future-Oriented Cooperation

A significant proportion of metaphor tokens (32/112; 28.6%) is dedicated to framing the Vietnam-UK bilateral relationship as a collaborative endeavor oriented toward shared future development. Rather than portraying cooperation as a diplomatic formality, the metaphors conceptualize partnership as a structured, dynamic, and co-

created entity. Table 7 illustrates representative examples from the corpus, showing how literal meanings are systematically mapped onto cooperation constructs.

*Table 7. Examples of metaphors constructing the Vietnam-UK partnership*

| Expression (Token) | Literal Gloss | Conceptual Metaphor | Mapping (Source→Target) |
|---|---|---|---|
| "build the future together" | construct a physical structure | co-design long-term strategic development | coopera-tion → co-creation |
| "a comprehensive partnership framework" | Archi-tectural skeleton | institutional design for bilateral governance | partnership → architec-ture |
| "a living resource" | biological organism | an evolving platform generating shared benefits | partnership → living system |
| "a network … spanning Hanoi to London" | connected infra-structure | transnational knowledge and technology exchange | partnership → connecti-vity network |

These images together suggest that the partnership is a co-constructed transnational infrastructure built through ongoing strategic investment from both sides. The architectural schema underscores institutional durability and long-term strategic alignment, indicating that cooperation extends beyond short-term diplomatic alignment toward sustained geopolitical collaboration. Meanwhile, ontological personification (e.g., "a living resource") foregrounds discursive vitality and knowledge productivity, portraying collaboration as a dynamic generator of innovation rather than a static bilateral arrangement. The network metaphor highlights cross-border connectivity and interdependence, positioning Vietnam not as a passive recipient but as an active knowledge-producing actor integrated into high-level global exchange systems.

From a critical discourse perspective, this metaphorical pattern performs identity recalibration [24]: Vietnam is framed not as a nation merely joining pre-established international architectures, but as a co-designer of emerging global governance norms in partnership with a technologically advanced counterpart. By anchoring these metaphors in the Oxford venue - a globally recognized epistemic centre associated with policy authority - the speech strategically leverages setting prestige to enhance legitimation of Vietnam's expanding geopolitical role. Such discursive positioning challenges traditional Global North-South hierarchies, replacing dependency narratives with imagery of reciprocal agency and joint authorship of innovation standards.

Importantly, these metaphors appear with the highest rhetorical salience in the final argumentative segment, where concrete cooperation directions are proposed. Their concentration at decision-making junctures indicates that metaphor operates as a constitutive persuasive mechanism, not as a stylistic embellishment. By mobilizing shared construction, co-creation, and networked development in articulating the Vietnam-UK relationship, the address enacts a discursive shift from war-memory identity to global-vision identity, thereby providing a direct response to RQ3 concerning future-oriented diplomatic identity performance.

## 4.4. Synthesis: Metaphor as a Discursive Mechanism of Identity Repositioning

In the three analysis areas, results show metaphor acts as a central cognitive and persuasive resource in the Oxford speech, reflecting how Vietnam's global identity is being strategically repositioned. Where national aims and joint efforts are discussed - 78.6% of metaphor uses occur there - the patterns reveal deliberate rhetorical concentration instead of random stylistic appearance. These clusters highlight that figurative language is not ornamental but structurally constitutive, forming essential parts of the argumentation architecture. Such positioning addresses RQ1 by showing metaphors perform identity construction at high-stakes discursive junctures.

What is analytically salient is not merely pattern recognition among metaphors, but the way they form a linked sequence across three levels: ADYN, ideological framework, and projected national status. Found within imagery choices, repeated symbolic groupings shape an understanding of Vietnam's diplomatic presence - self-direction implied by travel or balance, growth through invention suggested by machinery or thrust, moral trust built via human traits given to institutions, shared building echoed in structural or web-like terms - all helping select foreign observers mentally place the nation's role. Underlying such images lies a quiet reinforcement of legitimacy drawn from progress, collaboration framed around duty instead of need, and emphasis on acting within systems without challenging them outright. Positioning shifts occur further still; discourse moves the country beyond past labels tied to conflict recovery toward active participation in shaping rules alongside established powers, particularly through expertise-based engagement. Such layered function reveals more than aspiration - it shows deliberate metaphor use to assert informed judgment, principled reliability, and joint design influence, even when operating under real-world constraints.

Next, the key metaphors - development as a journey, innovation as an engine, nation as a moral actor, and partnership as institutional architecture - operate jointly to construct a coherent identity narrative. These mappings frame Vietnam as self-directed and future-oriented, knowledge-powered, ethically legitimate, and collaboratively engaged in shaping global development. By using such conceptualizations, the nation discursively shifts from a resilience-based identity tied to historical struggle toward a capability-driven and contribution-focused international persona. This rhetorical recalibration aligns with contemporary trends of innovation-led diplomatic legitimacy, thereby responding to RQ2.

Third, metaphors framing the UK-Vietnam relationship highlight reciprocal agency, institutional durability, and co-authorship of innovation, challenging asymmetric North-South power imaginaries. Cooperation is conceptualized as a jointly designed infrastructure rather than a unilateral support mechanism, which positions Vietnam as an active participant in global knowledge governance. Such framing embeds Vietnam into transnational decision-making ecosystems, emphasizing its ambition to shape rather than

merely adapt to international norms. These discursive strategies directly address RQ3, marking a shift from dependency narratives to global-vision identity.

Taken together, the findings enable Vietnam to recontextualize developmental history and reconfigure international perception among an elite global audience. The speech, therefore, demonstrates how emerging nations strategically mobilize the use of English translations of their diplomatic discourse to claim visibility, negotiate geopolitical agency, and legitimate aspirational futures. In this sense, metaphor operates not as linguistic decoration, but as a performative enactment of national identity within global knowledge diplomacy.

## 5. Conclusion

This research examined how conceptual metaphors in Tô Lâm's policy speech at Oxford University discursively construct a renewed national identity through global knowledge diplomacy. By using such discursive imagery, Vietnam appears as a confident, sovereign actor - engaged in principled diplomacy while participating in the formation of emerging global norms. Instead of just a passive beneficiary of external support, it is positioned as a co-architect within transnational development frameworks; take the UK relationship, framed as an evolving collaboration shaping future-oriented governance. Rather than staying on the sidelines, Hanoi is symbolically involved in designing global progress. This shift mirrors wider changes in how Vietnam performs diplomatic legitimacy: less about traditional resilience narratives, more focused on shared innovation and collective agency amid shifting world dynamics.

Future studies might include a broader corpus of overseas diplomatic speeches by Vietnam's leaders - enabling cross-contextual comparison based on venue, interlocutor, or historical moment. Multimodal discourse analysis integrating visual symbolism and performative cues could further deepen understanding of identity construction in contemporary diplomacy. Both of these can be achieved by expanding the frameworks used to interpret discourse-based metaphor beyond CMT and by adopting more explicit protocol-driven identification methods and reporting practices [25], [26]. Overall, the results show metaphor is not merely stylistic; instead, it functions as a strategic discourse mechanism through which emerging countries claim international visibility, negotiate geopolitical agency, and define aspirational roles on the world stage.

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