

Conceptual Metaphor and Force Image Scheme in the Reporting of Caesar Act on Al Jazeera Media: Cognitive Semantic Analysis

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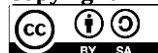
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Abstract

This research investigates the use of force image schema in the news discourse concerning the Caesar Act sanctions and the weakening of Bashar al Assad's regime on the Al Jazeera Net Arabic website. The use of metaphorical language in political news serves not merely as a stylistic device but as a cognitive mechanism to construct public perception regarding complex geopolitical pressures. This study aims to uncover how the abstract concepts of political sanctions and regime collapse are conceptualized through the concrete experience of physical force. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method with a cognitive semantic approach. Data were collected from Al Jazeera news articles using the observation and note-taking technique, then analyzed using Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Cruse and Croft's Image Schema Theory. The results reveal 11 metaphorical data categorized into structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors. The analysis highlights the dominance of force image schemas, specifically compulsion, restraint, blockage, and counterforce. These schemas conceptually frame the Caesar Act not as a mere legal instrument, but as an external physical force that actively chokes, pressures, and immobilizes the regime. The study concludes that Al Jazeera utilizes force-based metaphors to construct a narrative where the regime's collapse is depicted as an inevitable outcome of lethal external pressure rather than a voluntary diplomatic transition.

Keywords: Force Image Schema, Cognitive Semantics, Conceptual Metaphor, Al Jazeera, Caesar Act

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INTRODUCTION

Language and humans are two things that are inextricably linked and cannot be separated. This is because language is always used by humans to communicate. Language is inseparable from human life, whether in written or spoken forms (Haula & Nur, 2019). This is in line with the opinion of Chaer & Agustina (2010), who stated that language is a communication tool or interaction tool unique to humans. Without language, humans would struggle to communicate with others. Language is not merely a tool for everyday interaction, but also a means of expressing ideas, enriching insight, shaping culture, and influencing one's perspectives and actions (Fitri et al., 2025).

Language and cognition are two deeply interconnected entities, where language is understood as a crucial tool inseparable from human thought processes and conceptions (Salis & Siagian, 2023). In the social research tradition, this view is reinforced by the constructionist perspective. This view rejects the idea that language is merely a passive reflection or neutral "label" for existing realities. Conversely, language plays an active role

in shaping and organizing meaning, which then shapes what we understand as social reality (Karman, 2015). Through the process of social interaction influenced by language, a collective understanding of the world is constructed and negotiated.

This constructive role of language is clearly visible in the life of the mass media. News presented by the media, often perceived by the public as objective reporting of facts, is essentially a product of construction (Muzakkir, 2018). The mass media not only transmit information but also act as agents of reality construction. Through a process known as framing, the media actively selects, presents, and constructs narratives of events. Thus, the reality that reaches the audience is secondhand, having been filtered and shaped by media institutions.

In the context of political reporting and international conflict, this framing process is crucial and rarely neutral. The relationship between media and politics demonstrates that word choice or diction in news reporting is fraught with ideological and vested interests (Kurniawan et al., 2024). The word choice, emphasis in headlines, and narrative structure chosen by a news agency, in this case Al Jazeera, are not merely technical journalistic choices, but rather political acts designed to influence the public's perspective. Thus, the language used by the media becomes a strategic platform for the struggle for meaning, determining who is friend or foe, what is considered an act of aggression or liberation, and what policies are considered legitimate or illegitimate.

To uncover the layers of cognitive meaning hidden behind the construction of media reality, this study utilizes the theoretical framework of Cognitive Linguistics. Cuyckens and Geeraets explain that cognitive linguistics is the study of how people think about what is expressed through language (Nurfitri Aulia & Nur, 2020). Cognitive linguistics is the relationship between language and a person's cognitive functions. The science that studies concepts or meanings related to cognition is called cognitive semantics. Cognitive semantics addresses the forms of metaphor. The use of metaphor is a part of human cognitive processes (Evans & Green, 2006). In everyday interactions, humans are inextricably linked to the use of metaphors. This is in line with the view of Lakoff & Johnson, who stated that metaphors are present in everyday life and are realized based on what the speaker experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

Conceptual metaphor, introduced by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their famous book, "Metaphors We Live By," is a key concept in cognitive linguistics that demonstrates how humans use metaphors not only as a tool for language but also as a way of thinking and understanding the world around them (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). This approach reveals that conceptual metaphors map structures from a source domain to a target domain, for example, "time is money" or "life is a journey," which form the basis of everyday thinking and influence social behavior.

According to Lakoff and Johnson (2003), metaphors are divided into three categories: structural metaphors, orientational metaphors, and ontological metaphors. A structural metaphor is a concept formed metaphorically by utilizing another concept. This structural metaphor is based on two domains: the source domain and the target domain. Structural metaphor is the transfer of concepts based on everyday systematic relationships (Septiani et al., 2022). Orientational metaphor is a metaphor related to spatial orientation, such as up-down, inside-outside, front-back, and so on. Orientational metaphor is related to the orientation of everyday human experience. Orientation in this case refers to reviewing the determination of direction, place, and so on that are believed

to be correct, such as UP and DOWN (Libriananda et al., 2024). Orientational metaphor reflects spatial concepts that vary based on the physical or cultural experiences of the community. Therefore, orientational metaphors differ in each culture, because what is thought, experienced, and done by individuals who grow up in different cultural backgrounds. Ontological metaphor is a metaphor that considers events, emotional activities, and ideas as entities or substances. For example, in the metaphor "THE MIND IS A MACHINE" found in the sentence "My mind just isn't operating today" (today my brain is not working or today I don't want to think). In line with Libriananda's definition of ontological metaphor, it is a metaphor that conceptualizes thoughts, experiences, and processes of abstract things in terms of something with physical characteristics (Libriananda et al., 2024). In other words, an ontological metaphor views abstract nouns as concrete nouns.

In addition to conceptual metaphor, one central concept for understanding basic meaning structuring is the Image Schema. Citraresmana (2011) explains that an image schema is a structure of meaning that emerges from diverse experiences that can aid in understanding abstract concepts and reasoning processes. The experiences in question encompass various aspects, such as basic perceptions, driving programs, emotions, individual history, social environment, and linguistic elements. Mark Turner, in Nur, explains that an image schema is a "cognitive structure derived from sensory and motor experiences that forms the basis of conceptual understanding and language" (Nur, 2025). In the field of philosophy, image schemas are defined as "the basic structures of the human mind, resulting from sensory and motor experiences, and serving as the basis for understanding concepts and other mental representations (Johnson, 1987). Although definitions vary depending on the field, image schemas are seen as a very important framework for thinking in the formation of human understanding..

Lebih lanjut, Cruse & Croft dalam Devita & Nur (2020) merincikan pembagian tujuh skema citra, pada tabel 1 ini

Table 1. Image Schemas According to Cruse & Croft (2004)

Image Schema	Types
Space	Up–Down, Front–Back, Left–Right, Near–Far, Center–Periphery, Contact
Scale	Path
Container	Containment, In–Out, Surface, Full–Empty, Content
Force	Balance, Counterforce, Compulsion, Restraint, Enablement, Blockage, Diversion, Attraction
Unity/Multiplicity	Merging, Collection, Splitting, Iteration, Part–Whole, Mass–Count, Link
Identity	Matching, Superimposition
Existence	Removal, Bounded Space, Cycle, Object, Process

This research focuses on news reports related to Syria's Caesar Civilian Protection Act, known as the "Caesar Act." This is a comprehensive set of economic sanctions imposed by the United States on the Syrian regime led by Bashar al-Assad. The law went into effect in mid-2020, signaling a shift in international strategy from military intervention to coercive diplomacy, aimed at exerting maximum pressure on a regime

weakened by the civil war. Significantly, the Caesar Act functioned as a restraint and blockage designed to cut off the regime's access to the international financial system and hamper its reconstruction efforts. These sanctions not only targeted Syrian citizens but also created a counterforce against external parties attempting to support the regime. Thus, the Caesar Act was not merely an economic policy but also an expression of political power that forced behavioral change or even the removal of existing power structures—a conflict dynamic crucial for analysis using the Force Image Schema approach.

Several previous studies have used a cognitive semantic approach to analyze how humans perceive through image schemas. For example, Aulia & Nur examined the Unak-Anik Kahirupan column in Mangle magazine and found a comprehensive range of image schemas, including identity, existence, unity, container, space, and force (Nurfitri Aulia & Nur, 2020). In this study, the image schema of power emerged in the form of restraint and counterforce, but its discussion remained very general and comparable to other schemas.

Furthermore, Zakiyah & Nur (2021) analyzed the translation of the Quranic Surah Al-Baqarah in their study, "Metaphorical Expressions of the Sundanese Translation of the Quranic Surah Al-Baqarah: A Cognitive Semantic Analysis," and found five types of image schemas: identity, force, container, existence, and unity. Their results showed that the most dominant image schemas were unity and existence, reflecting the Sundanese people's religious views on the relationship between humans and God. On the other hand, Haula & Nur (2019) in their analysis of Kompas's opinion column found that the most frequently appearing image schema was existence, which depicts abstract socio-political phenomena as physical entities with limited cycles and space.

Despite these studies successfully identifying the existence of the force image schema alongside others, no research has yet made the force image schema the primary focus for analyzing coercive geopolitical discourse. This study seeks to fill this gap by exploring how force dynamics, such as blockage, compulsion, and restraint, in Al Jazeera's coverage of the Caesar Act shape cognitive constructions regarding the fall of a regime.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative method focused on exploring and understanding specific conditions within the research object (Herlambang et al., 2025). The approach used in this study is qualitative. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on data in the form of words, phrases, and sentences in news reports, rather than statistical figures (Ānī et al., 2025).

The descriptive research method aims to identify and analyze available data and the references used by researchers in their research. According to Sudaryanto (2015), the descriptive method suggests that research be conducted solely based on existing facts or phenomena that are empirically present among the speakers, resulting in a true-to-life language experience. Specifically, this study applies cognitive semantic analysis to dissect the conceptual structure behind metaphorical expressions, which connect language to human cognition and experience.

The data in this study consist of linguistic units, including words, phrases, and sentences containing metaphorical expressions that represent the imagery of force. The research data source came from the online news site Al Jazeera Net Arabic, chosen for its topicality and extensive coverage of Middle Eastern issues, with a reputation for providing honest and impartial news (Minardi & Auzan, 2023). The focus of this news item was a news article discussing the Caesar Act after the fall of the Bashar al-Assad regime.

Data were collected using the listening method. This method involves observing language usage (Sudaryanto, 2015). Researchers observed words, phrases, and sentences containing metaphorical meanings in the news text, then used note-taking as a follow-up technique. This technique was used to record all collected data for subsequent classification and analysis. The collected data were then analyzed using Lakoff & Johnson's (2003) conceptual metaphor theory, which classifies them into three types. The data were then analyzed using Cruse & Croft's (2004) image schema theory, which focuses on force image schemas.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data identification process, this study successfully collected 11 metaphor data that have variations in conceptual metaphors based on Lakoff & Johnson's theory and force-type image schemes according to Cruse & Croft's theory. The presentation of the results of this study refers to the classification of metaphor types. First, there are three structural metaphor data with the conceptual meaning of political control is physical constriction, political control is pressure and obstacles are barriers. Second, there is one orientational metaphor data with the conceptual meaning of sanctions is a burden imposed. Third, there are eight ontological metaphor data with the conceptual meaning of the state is a wild animal, sanctions are a physical burden, political demands are a tool to suppress, difficulties are physical pressure, politics is a card game and revolution is fire.

Structural Metaphor

Data 1:

"قَيْصَرُ لِحِمَايَةِ الْمَدَنِيِّينَ السُّورِيِّينَ" حَيْزَ التَّنْفِيزِ بَعْدَ تَوْقِيعِ الرَّئِيسِ السَّابِقِ دُونَالْدِ تِرَامْبِ عَلَيْهِ أَوَاخِرَ عَامِ 2019، لِيَتِمَّ تَضْيِيقُ الْخِنَاقِ عَلَى النِّظَامِ السُّورِيِّ بِشَكْلِ أَكْثَرِ مِنْ كُلِّ الْعُقُوبَاتِ السَّابِقَةِ

"Qayşaru lihimāyati al-madanīyina as-sūrīyina" ḥayya za at-tanfīḍi baʿda tawqīʿi ar-raʾīs as-sābiqi Dūnāld Tirāmb ʿalayhi awāḥira ʿāmi 2019, liyatimma taḍyīqu al-ḥināqi ʿalā an-nizāmi as-sūrīyi biṣaklin ʾaktara min kulli al-ʿuqūbāti as-sābiqati

The "Caesar Act to Protect Syrian Civilians" went into effect after being signed by former President Donald Trump in late 2019, tightening the noose on the regime. Syria more than all previous sanctions.

Pada data di atas, ungkapan metaforis terpusat pada frasa تَضْيِيقُ الْخِنَاقِ *taḍyīqu al-ḥināqi* yang bermakna memperketat jeratan atau mempersempit cekikan. Ungkapan ini diklasifikasikan sebagai metafora struktural karena konsep abstrak 'undang-undang Caesar' distrukturkan menggunakan konsep konkret yakni tindakan fisik menjerat. Dalam struktur kognitif ini, terjadi pemetaan antara dua ranah di mana تَضْيِيقُ الْخِنَاقِ *taḍyīqu al-ḥināqi* 'tindakan menjerat' diposisikan sebagai ranah sumber, sedangkan قَيْصَرُ *qayşaru* 'undang-undang Caesar Act' diposisikan sebagai ranah sasaran.

Viewed from the perspective of image schema, this expression represents the image schema of force with a specific pattern of restraint. Citra تَضْيِيقُ الْخِنَاقِ *taḍyīqu al-ḥināqi* The "tightening noose" describes external pressure pressing inward, forcibly restricting the regime's freedom of movement. The use of this metaphor creates the perception that the regime's downfall was the result of intensive external pressure until the regime reached a critical point..

Data 2:

وَهَدَفَتْ وَاشْتَطُنَتْ إِلَى تَحْقِيقِ هَدَفَيْنِ مِنَ الضَّغْطِ الشَّدِيدِ عَلَى نِظَامِ الْأَسَدِ

Wahadafat Wāšintun ilā taḥqīqi hadafayni min **ad-ḍagṭi aš-šadīdi** ḡalā niḡāmi al-Asadi
Washington aims to achieve two goals by exerting strong pressure on the Assad regime.

In the data above, the metaphorical expressions are centered on the phrase الضَّغْطِ الشَّدِيدِ *ad-ḍagṭi aš-šadīdi* which means 'strong pressure'. This expression is classified as a structural metaphor because the abstract concept of 'the United States' economic action through the Caesar Act' is structured using the concrete concept of the physical act of pressure. In this cognitive structure, a mapping occurs between two domains where الضَّغْطِ الشَّدِيدِ *ad-ḍagṭi aš-šadīdi* "strong physical pressure" is positioned as the source domain, while "enforcement of the Caesar Act" is positioned as the target domain.

Viewed from an image schema perspective, this expression represents the image schema of force with a specific pattern of compulsion.. Citra الضَّغْطِ الشَّدِيدِ *ad-ḍagṭi aš-šadīdi* "Strong pressure" describes the intense and persistent application of external force directed at a target object to force it to change. This metaphor creates the perception that the sanctions act like a chokehold, forcing the Assad regime to the point where it must move or act according to the will of the pressure-giver.

Data 3:

هَلْ يُصْبِحُ "قَانُونُ قَيْصَرَ" عَائِقًا أَمَامَ الْإِنْفِتَاحِ الْأَمِيرَكِيِّ عَلَى سُورِيَا الْجَدِيدَةِ؟

Hal yuṣbiḥu "Qānūnu Qayṣara" *ġāʔiqan* amāma al-infitiāḥi al-Amīrikīyi ḡalā Sūriyā al-jadīdah?

Will the "Caesar Act" be an obstacle to America's renewed openness to Syria?

In the data above, the metaphorical expression is centered on the phrase عَائِقًا *ġāʔiqan* which means 'obstacle' or 'barrier'. This expression is classified as a structural metaphor because the abstract concept قَانُونُ قَيْصَرَ *Qānūnu Qayṣara* 'the impact of Caesar's law regulation' is structured using the concrete concept of عَائِقًا *ġāʔiqan* 'obstacle object'. In this cognitive structure, a mapping occurs between two domains, where عَائِقًا *ġāʔiqan* (physical object blocking the path) is positioned as the source domain, while قَانُونُ قَيْصَرَ *Qānūnu Qayṣara* (Caesar's law) is positioned as the target domain. The conceptual metaphor formed is OBSTACLE IS A PHYSICAL BARRIER.

Viewed from the perspective of image schema, this expression represents the image schema of force with the specific pattern of blockage. The word عَائِقًا *ġāʔiqan* (obstacle) represents a physical object standing in the way, thus stopping forward movement. In this context, what is being "stopped" is the flow of American diplomacy or openness. Thus, this metaphor depicts the Caesar Act not as a mere legal provision, but as a barrier blocking the path, preventing political relations with Syria from proceeding smoothly.

Orientational Metaphor

Data 4:

اسْتَهْدَفَ التَّشْرِيعُ فَرْضَ عُقُوبَاتٍ عَلَى الْحُكُومَاتِ أَوْ الشَّرَكَاتِ أَوْ الْأَفْرَادِ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ بِشَكْلِ مُبَاشِرٍ وَغَيْرِ مُبَاشِرٍ مَعَ نِظَامِ بَشَارِ الْأَسَدِ، سَوَاءً عَسْكَرِيًّا أَوْ اِقْتِصَادِيًّا.

Istahdafa at-tašrīʔu **farḍa ʔuqūbātīn** ḡalā al-ḥukūmāti ʔaw aš-šarikāti ʔaw al-ʔafrādī alladīna yaʔmalūna bi-šaklin mubāširan wa-ġayri mubāširin maʔa niḡāmi baššāri al-ʔasadi, sawāʔun ʔaskariyyan ʔaw iqtṣādīYYan.

This law aims to impose sanctions on governments, companies, or individuals who work directly or indirectly with the Bashar al-Assad regime, either militarily or economically.

In the data above, the metaphorical expression centers on the construction of فَرْضَ عُقُوبَاتٍ *farḍa ʔuqūbātīn* which means 'imposing sanctions'. This expression constructs the

abstract concept of 'sanctions' through concrete experience in the form of 'the act of placing or imposing something on another party'. Therefore, this metaphor is included in the category of orientational metaphors, because its meaning mapping relies on physical orientation, especially the vertical orientation 'from top to bottom' which conceptualizes sanctions as something imposed on the target. Within the cognitive framework, the phrase *فَرَضَ* *farḍa* is positioned as the source domain that maps the physical action scheme of imposing a burden, while *عُقُوبَاتٍ* *ʿuqūbāt* becomes the target domain that represents the abstract concept of sanctions. Viewed from an image schema perspective, this data represents a force image schema with a counterforce pattern because the word *فَرَضَ* *farda* 'sanction' is treated as an entity that imposes pressure or burden on the party subjected to it. The use of this metaphor builds the perception that the enactment of the law works as a repressive force that systematically hinders the stability and economic and military activities of the party subjected to it.

Ontological Metaphor

Data 5:

قَرَرْتُ وَأَشْنُتُنْ أَنْ تُكْشِرَ عَنْ أَنْيَابِهَا بِهَذَا الْقَانُونِ الصَّارِمِ

qarrarat wāšintun ʔan tukššira ʔan ʔanyābihā bihādā al-qānūni aṣ-ṣārim.

Washington shows its teeth through this tough law

In the data above, the metaphorical expression is centered on the phrase *تُكْشِرَ عَنْ أَنْيَابِهَا* *tukaššira ʔan ʔanyābihā*, which means 'showing its fangs'. This expression is classified as an ontological metaphor, where the abstract concept of 'state/government' (Washington) is concretized into a 'living entity', namely a 'wild beast' with fangs. In this cognitive structure, a cross-domain mapping occurs where the behavior of a predatory animal that is threatening as the source domain is transferred to explain the aggressive political stance of the United States as the target domain. The conceptual metaphor formed is STATE IS A BEAST 'The State is a Wild Beast'. Viewed from the perspective of the force image schema, this expression represents the compulsion pattern of 'force'. The word *ʔanyāb* (fang) in human cognition is associated with weapons used to tear or kill. The act of "baring fangs" is not simply a facial expression, but rather a signal of the threat of using force to force the opponent to submit. Through this "tough" law, Washington is portrayed as exerting psychological and physical pressure on the Assad regime. This metaphor builds the perception that the Caesar Act is a coercive instrument used to intimidate and force the Syrian regime to surrender under the threat of destruction, like prey facing a predator.

Data 6:

هَلْ تَرْفَعُ أَمِيرِكَا الْعُقُوبَاتِ عَنْ سُورِيَا مَا بَعْدَ الْأَسَدِ؟ وَمَا مُتَطَلَّبَاتُهَا؟

hal tarfaʔu ʔamīrikā al-ʔuqūbāti ʔan sūryā mā baʿda al-ʔasadi? wa-mā muṭaṭallabātu-hā?

Will the US lift sanctions on Syria post-Assad? And what are the conditions?

In the data above, the metaphorical expression centers on the phrase *تَرْفَعُ* *tarfaʔu*, meaning 'to lift'. This expression is classified as an ontological metaphor, where the abstract concept of *الْعُقُوبَاتِ* *al-ʔuqūbāt* 'sanction/punishment' is concretized into a physical entity, namely a heavy burden pressing down. Within this cognitive structure, a cross-domain mapping occurs where the physical act of moving the burden from a lower position to a higher one, as the source domain, is transferred to explain the political act of revoking regulations, which is the target domain. The conceptual metaphor formed is SANCTIONS ARE PHYSICAL BURDENS 'sanctions are physical burdens'.

Viewed from the perspective of the force image schema, this expression represents a pattern of restraint. The word 'lift' conjures up a heavy object pressing down on something beneath it. The act of "lifting sanctions" here isn't simply about changing legal rules, but rather an attempt to remove the barriers that have been binding. This metaphor fosters the understanding that as long as the burden isn't lifted by the US, Syria will remain stuck and unable to recover or move forward.

Data 7:

وَيَرَى أَنَّ الْمُتَطَلِّبَاتِ الْأَمِيرِكِيَّةَ أَوْرَاقَ ضَغْطٍ لِإِزْغَامِ هَيْئَةِ تَحْرِيرِ الشَّامِ عَلَى سُلُوكِ مَسَارٍ مُعَيَّنٍ فِي قَضَايَا الْأَسْلِحَةِ الْكِيمِيَاءِيَّةِ، وَالْإِرْهَابِ

wa-yarā anna al-muṭaṭallabāti al-ʿamīrikiyyata ʾawrāqu ḍaghtin li-ʾirghāmi hayʾati taḥrīri al-shāmi ʾalā sulūki masārin muṣayyanin fī qaḍāyā al-asliḥati al-kīmiyāʾiyyati, wa-al-ʾirhābi

He argued that the United States' demands were a means of pressure to force Hayat Tahrir al-Sham to follow a certain path on the issues of chemical weapons and terrorism..

In the data above, the metaphorical expression is centered on the phrase *أَوْرَاقُ ضَغْطٍ* *awrāqu ḍaghtin* which means 'pressure card'. This expression is classified as an ontological metaphor, where the abstract concept *الْمُتَطَلِّبَاتِ الْأَمِيرِكِيَّةِ* *al-muṭaṭallabāti al-ʿamīrikiyyata* 'political demands' is concretized into a physical object, namely as a card or tool that has pressure power. In this cognitive structure, a cross-domain mapping occurs where the physical instrument used to apply pressure as the source domain is transferred to explain the strategic function of the United States' demands as the target domain. The conceptual metaphor that emerged was "POLITICAL DEMANDS ARE PRESSURE TOOLS."

Viewed from the perspective of the force image schema, this expression represents a compulsion pattern. The word "pressure" suggests a strong external force compelling someone or something to move in a certain direction. This metaphor fosters the understanding that these demands serve as coercive tools to control the group's behavior and ensure it complies with America's desired rules.

Data 8:

وَيَرَى مَكِّي أَنَّ الشَّرْعَ تَحْتَ ضَغْطٍ شَدِيدٍ بِالْمَرْحَلَةِ الْحَالِيَةِ "مَنْعًا لِإِزْكَابِ أخطاءٍ فَدَّ تُسْتَعْلَقُ لِتَصْنُوعِ التُّوَارِ عَلَى أَنَّهُمْ عُصْرُ تَخْرِيبٍ وَعَدَمِ اسْتِثْقَارٍ"

wa-yarā Makī anna al-sharʿa taḥta ḍaghtin shadīdin bi-al-marḥalati al-ḥāliyyati "manʿan li-irtikābi akḥṭāʾin qad tustaghallu li-taṣwīri al-thuwwāri ʾalā annahum ʿunṣuru takhrībīn wa-ʿadami istiqrārīn."

Maki argues that Shara' is under immense pressure at this stage "to prevent any misrepresentation that could be exploited to portray the rebels as disruptive and destabilizing elements."

In the data above, the metaphorical expression centers on the phrase *ضَغْطٍ شَدِيدٍ* *ḍaghtin shadīdin*, meaning "tremendous pressure." This expression is classified as an ontological metaphor, where the abstract situation of "Shara's political difficulties" is concretized into a physical entity, namely "a heavy burden." In this cognitive structure, a cross-domain mapping occurs, where the physical pressures pressing on the object as the source domain are transferred to explain the precarious political situation experienced by HTS leader, Ahmad al-Shara'a, as the target domain. The resulting conceptual metaphor is DIFFICULTIES ARE PHYSICAL PRESSURES.

Viewed from the perspective of the force image schema, this expression represents a compulsion pattern. The term "heavy pressure" makes us imagine a great physical force

pressing down or overpowering someone. In this context, the political situation faced by Ahmad al-Sharaa is depicted not as a simple problem, but as a physical pressure that forces him to act cautiously. This metaphor builds the understanding that he does not have complete freedom of movement, but is "forced" by circumstances to avoid making mistakes that would harm his group..

Data 9:

وَيَعْتَقِدُ الْبَاحِثُ الْأَوَّلُ بِمَرْكَزِ الْجَزِيرَةِ لِلدِّرَاسَاتِ لِقَاءَ مَكِّي أَنَّ الْوَلَايَاتِ الْمُتَّحِدَةَ تَسْتَعِدُّ لِرَفْعِ الْعُقُوبَاتِ الْمَفْرُوضَةِ عَلَى سُورِيَا
wa-yaftaqidu al-bāḥiṯu al-ḥawwalu bi-markazi al-Jazīrati li-al-dirāsāti Liqāʿu Makkī ʿanna al-wilāyāti al-muttaḥidata tastaʿiddu li-raffī al-ṣuqūbāti al-mafrūḍati ʿalā Sūriyā

Luaq Maki, a senior researcher at the Al Jazeera Center for Studies, believes the United States is preparing to lift sanctions imposed on Syria.

In the data above, the metaphorical expression centers on the phrase "al-ṣuqūbāti al-mafrūḍati," meaning "imposed sanctions." This expression is classified as an ontological metaphor, where the abstract concept of "sanctions regulation" is concretized into a physical entity, namely, a burden placed on a subject. In this cognitive structure, a cross-domain mapping occurs, where the "burdening physical object" as the source domain is transferred to explain the nature of the economic sanctions that oppress the Syrian state as the target domain. The conceptual metaphor formed is SANCTIONS ARE PHYSICAL BURDENS.

Viewed from the perspective of the force image schema, this expression represents a compulsion pattern. The word الْمَفْرُوضَةُ *mafrūḍah* (burdened) creates the image of a pressing force from a heavy burden pressing down on the object beneath it, namely Syria, forcing it to bear the burden. This metaphor builds an understanding that sanctions are not merely abstract rules, but rather a real physical burden that has been weighing down on the country.

Data 10:

وَيَجْرِي بَحْثُ هَذِهِ التَّفَاصِيلِ بَيْنَ وَاشْتِظُنَّ وَهَيْئَةِ تَحْرِيرِ الشَّامِ عِزْرَ وَسَطَاءٍ مِثْلَ تُرْكِيَا وَقَطَرْ، وَفَقَّ مَكِّي، الَّذِي قَالَ إِنَّ الْهَيْئَةَ
 لَدَيْهَا أَوْرَاقُ قُوَّةٍ

wa-yajrī baḥṯu haḍiḥi al-taḥāṣīli bayna Wāṣiṭun wa-ḥayʿati taḥrīri al-Šām ʿabara wusāṭāʿa miṭla Turkīyā wa-Qaṭar, wafqa Makī, alladī qāla inna al-ḥayʿata ladayhā ʿawrāqu quwwatin

These details are being discussed between Washington and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham through intermediaries such as Turkey and Qatar, according to Maki, who claims that Hayat Tahrir al-Sham holds a trump card.

In the data above, the metaphorical expression centers on the phrase "awrāqu quwwatin," which literally means "power card," or in Indonesian, is often equated with "trump card." This expression is classified as an ontological metaphor, in which the abstract concept of "bargaining position" or "strategic advantage" is concretized into a "physical object," namely, a "card" that can be held and played. In this cognitive structure, a cross-domain mapping occurs, where the possession of a high-value card in a game, the source domain, is transferred to explain the possession of valuable political or military assets by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the target domain. The conceptual metaphor formed is "POLITICS ARE A CARD GAME."

From the perspective of the force image schema, this expression represents a pattern of enablement or capability. The term "trump card" conjures the image of someone holding a special tool or resource that gives them the power to act. In this context, HTS is portrayed not as a passive or weak party in negotiations, but as a party

with power or capital that allows them to resist, defend, or push back in talks with the United States. This metaphor fosters the understanding that their assets serve as a catalyst or enabler for HTS to influence the outcome of the discussions in their favor.

Data 11:

وَمَعَ انْدِلَاعِ الثَّوْرَةِ فِي سُورِيَا وَتَصَاعُدِ الْمُوَاجَهَةِ بَيْنَ الْمُحْتَجِّينَ وَنِظَامِ الْأَسَدِ وَاسْتِخْدَامِ الْقَمْعِ
*wa-maʿa ʾindilāʿi al-ṭhawraṭi fī Sūriyā wa-taṣāʿudi al-muwājahati bayna al-muḥtajjīn(a)
wa-niḡāmi al-Asadi wa-istikhdāmi al-qamʿi*

With the outbreak of the revolution in Syria and the escalating confrontation between demonstrators and the Assad regime, as well as the use of repression,

In the data above, the metaphorical expression centers on the phrase "انْدِلَاعِ الثَّوْرَةِ" *indilāʿi al-ṭhawraṭi*, meaning "the eruption of the revolution." This expression is classified as an ontological metaphor, in which the abstract social phenomenon "الثَّوْرَةِ" *al-ṭhawraṭi*, is concretized into a natural physical entity: fire or an erupting explosion. In this cognitive structure, a cross-domain mapping occurs, where the characteristics of fire or an explosion, which suddenly appear as the source domain, are transferred to explain revolution as the target domain. The resulting conceptual metaphor is "REVOLUTION IS FIRE."

Viewed from the perspective of the force image schema, this expression represents a pattern of compulsion. The word *انْدِلَاعِ* *indilāʿ* (to erupt), associated with fire, describes a natural force that possesses great energy, spreads rapidly, and is difficult to control. In this context, the revolution is depicted not as a calm movement, but as a powerful force that forces radical change in everything it touches, just as fire consumes objects around it. This metaphor builds the understanding that the revolution is present as an inevitable force, forcing the Assad regime to face direct confrontation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the Caesar Act news discourse in Al Jazeera, this study concludes that the construction of meaning regarding political pressure and the downfall of the Bashar al-Assad regime was constructed through complex cognitive mechanisms. Eleven conceptual metaphors were identified, divided into three main categories: structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors. The dominance of ontological metaphors such as "sanctions are a physical burden" and "the state is a wild beast" demonstrates the media's tendency to concretize abstract political concepts into concrete, physical entities, so that the impact of the Caesar Act sanctions can be understood as a heavy burden or a tangible physical threat.

Furthermore, the image schema analysis reveals that the narrative of the regime's downfall is heavily influenced by power dynamics. The dominant image schema patterns are compulsion and restraint, depicting the Caesar Act sanctions not simply as a legal instrument but as a source of external pressure that actively strangles, suppresses, and forces the regime to a critical point. This demonstrates that metaphors and image schemas play a strategic role in shaping public perceptions of harsh geopolitical realities.

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