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Conceptual and Ideological Framing in the Arab Spring Political Speeches: A Cognitive Discourse Analysis of Mubarak's Speeches: A Contrastive Study

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Abstract

The study adopts a Cognitive Critical Discourse Analysis (CCDA), integrating the frameworks of Lakoff (1987), Lakoff & Johnson (1980) van Dijk (2008), Hart (2014, 2023), and Chilton (2004). It explores how discourse reflects changes in speakers' mental representations, conceptualizations, and ideological positioning. Using a qualitative and contrastive research design, the analysis examines how conceptual metaphors, conceptual framing, mental models, and ideological framing are employed to construct representations of leadership, responsibility, national identity, political change, political legitimacy, and the relationship between the president and the Egyptian people. The findings reveal substantial transformations in Mubarak's discursively constructed political mentality across the two historical contexts. In the inaugural speech, his discourse predominantly reflects a future-oriented and developmental mentality characterized by conceptualizations of leadership as nation-building, collective progress, and institutional reconstruction. By contrast, the Arab Spring speeches exhibit a defensive and preservation-oriented mentality in which leadership is framed primarily as protection, responsibility, and the maintenance of political stability amid perceived national crisis. These shifts are manifested through systematic changes in conceptual metaphors, cognitive frames, and ideological strategies that legitimize political authority under contrasting political circumstances.

1. Introduction

Political discourse constitutes one of the principal domains through which political reality is cognitively represented, ideologically constructed, and socially negotiated. Within contemporary discourse studies, language is no longer viewed as a neutral instrument for describing political events; rather, it is understood as a constitutive social practice that shapes public perceptions, constructs social identities, legitimizes political authority, and influences collective action (Gee, 2014; Fairclough, 1995; Tannen et al., 2015). Political discourse therefore performs not only a communicative function but also a cognitive and ideological one, enabling political actors to organize experience, define social problems, allocate responsibility, justify policy decisions, and promote particular systems of beliefs and values.

From a Cognitive Critical Discourse Analysis (CCDA) perspective, political discourse reflects the interaction between linguistic choices, cognitive processes, and socio-political structures. It is

viewed as the linguistic manifestation of underlying mental models, conceptual metaphors, cognitive frames, and image schemas through which political actors interpret, categorize, and communicate political reality (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 2004; Hart, 2014; van Dijk, 2008). These conceptual structures guide both discourse production and interpretation by activating shared knowledge, shaping public reasoning, and influencing the audience's understanding of political events. Consequently, political discourse functions as a powerful cognitive mechanism through which political leaders construct particular representations of themselves, their opponents, the nation, and social reality.

Moreover, political discourse is inherently ideological because cognitive representations are selectively organized to privilege particular interpretations while marginalizing alternative perspectives. Through strategic framing, metaphorical conceptualization, evaluative language, and legitimization strategies, political actors seek to naturalize specific ideological



positions, reinforce political legitimacy, and shape public cognition in ways that support their political objectives (van Dijk, 1998; Hart, 2014). Accordingly, the analysis of political discourse extends beyond the examination of linguistic forms to investigate how discourse encodes cognitive representations that both reflect and reproduce relations of power, authority, and ideology within specific historical and political contexts.

2. Cognitive Critical Discourse Analysis

Cognitive Critical Discourse Analysis (CCDA) emerged from the integration of Cognitive Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis. While traditional CDA primarily examines how discourse reproduces ideology and power relations (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998), CCDA incorporates cognitive theories to explain how these ideological representations are mentally structured and processed (Hart, 2014).

CCDA assumes that discourse is mediated by cognitive structures that organize human understanding of political reality. Rather than treating language as an isolated linguistic system, it examines how conceptual metaphors, frames, image schemas, and mental models shape both the production and interpretation of discourse.

Hart (2023) argues that discourse reflects underlying conceptual structures that organize speakers' perceptions of social and political reality. Accordingly, the present study adopts CCDA because it provides an appropriate framework for investigating how Hosni Mubarak's political discourse constructs cognitive representations of leadership, responsibility, national identity, political change, and political legitimacy across different historical contexts.

3. Mental Models

One of the central concepts in CCDA is mental models, developed by van Dijk (1998, 2008). Mental models are subjective cognitive representations through which individuals interpret events and organize knowledge about the social world. They mediate between discourse and society by shaping both discourse production and discourse comprehension.

Political leaders produce discourse on the basis of their mental representations of political reality. These representations determine how political actors conceptualize themselves, their audiences, political opponents, and national events. Consequently, discourse analysis enables researchers to reconstruct the underlying mental models reflected in linguistic choices.

In the present study, Mubarak's speeches are analyzed to identify the mental models that underlie his representations of leadership, political responsibility, national identity, citizens, and political change during two distinct historical periods.

Chilton (2004) argues that political language reflects how speakers mentally organize concepts such as Self vs. Other, Threat vs. Safety, and Past vs. Future. This framework aligns particularly well with Mubarak's speeches, where his mentality is revealed through repeated contrasts between order and chaos, patriotism and threat, constitutional legitimacy and revolutionary change, and personal sacrifice and public demands. An integrated analysis of conceptual

metaphors, cognitive frames, and discourse space would provide a strong and more original account of Mubarak's political cognition during his inaugural speech and Arab Spring speeches.

4. Research Statement

Political discourse plays a pivotal role in shaping public cognition, constructing ideological meanings, and legitimizing political authority. During periods of political stability and crisis, political leaders strategically employ linguistic and cognitive resources to influence how citizens interpret social and political realities. Among these resources, conceptual metaphors, cognitive frames, and mental models constitute fundamental mechanisms through which political actors represent themselves, the nation, and political events. Despite the growing body of research on political discourse, relatively few studies have examined how these cognitive mechanisms evolve across different stages of a political leader's career, particularly within the context of the Arab world.

This study investigates the cognitive and ideological construction of Hosni Mubarak's political discourse through a contrastive analysis of his inaugural speech (14 October 1981) and his Arab Spring speeches (28 January, 1 February, and 10 February 2011). Adopting a Cognitive Critical Discourse Analysis (CCDA) framework, the study examines how conceptual metaphors, conceptual framing, mental models, and ideological framing are employed to construct representations of leadership, political responsibility, national identity, political change, and state legitimacy. By comparing speeches delivered in two markedly different political contexts, the research explores the continuity and transformation of Mubarak's discursively constructed political mentality over three decades.

The study argues that Mubarak's discourse demonstrates a significant cognitive shift from a developmental and future-oriented mentality in his inaugural speech to a defensive and preservation-oriented mentality during the Arab Spring. While his early discourse conceptualizes leadership as nation-building, collective progress, and institutional development, his later speeches increasingly frame leadership as protection, responsibility, and the preservation of political stability. This transformation is reflected in systematic changes in conceptual metaphors, cognitive frames, and ideological strategies that seek to legitimize political authority under changing historical circumstances.

By integrating Cognitive Linguistics with Critical Discourse Analysis, this research contributes to the growing field of Cognitive Critical Discourse Analysis by demonstrating how cognitive representations interact with ideological processes in political discourse. It further contributes to political discourse studies by providing a comprehensive account of the relationship between conceptualization, mentality, and political legitimization in the discourse of one of the Arab world's longest-serving political leaders. To sum, the study offers new insights into the cognitive mechanisms through which political leaders construct, maintain, and defend authority across contrasting socio-political contexts.

5. Methodology

This study adopts a **qualitative, descriptive, and contrastive research design** within the framework of **Cognitive Critical Discourse Analysis (CCDA)**. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the study aims to investigate the cognitive and ideological meanings embedded in Hosni Mubarak's political discourse rather than to quantify linguistic features. The research employs a **contrastive discourse analytical design** to compare Mubarak's inaugural speech delivered on **14 October 1981** with his three speeches during the Egyptian Arab Spring (**28 January, 1 February, and 10 February 2011**). The comparison enables the identification of both continuity and change in Mubarak's discursively constructed political mentality across two distinct

6. Literature Review

Arab Spring discourse has been studied from several linguistic perspectives, including critical discourse analysis, systemic functional linguistics, pragmatics, deixis, cohesion, metaphor, and rhetorical analysis. These studies have generally found that threatened leaders rely on national unity, self-legitimation, emotional appeal, paternalism, promises of reform, and representations of disorder.

Maziad's (2019) cognitive-linguistic critical discourse analysis of Mubarak's Arab Spring speeches investigates how power was represented, negotiated, and progressively weakened in the speeches Mubarak delivered during the Egyptian uprising. It demonstrates the usefulness of integrating Cognitive Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis when examining changes in political authority. This study provides an important foundation for the present research, but the current project differs in its contrastive historical design. Rather than examining only Mubarak's speeches during the uprising, it compares those speeches with his inaugural address in 1981. This makes it possible to investigate changes in his discursively constructed mentality across approximately three decades and across two contrasting moments: the beginning of presidential authority and its final crisis.

Al-Majali's (2015) comparative study of speeches by ousted Arab presidents examines linguistic features and cohesion during the Arab Spring. Although its principal concern is textual organization rather than cognitive conceptualization, it demonstrates that Arab leaders' crisis speeches display systematic linguistic responses to political instability. Maalej's study of Ben Ali provides a more critically oriented analysis, showing how deixis and other discursive strategies change across the final speeches of a leader facing revolutionary opposition.

A recent contribution to the study of Arab political discourse is Alharahsheh's (2025) doctoral dissertation, which investigates the discourse topics and the discursive and ideological strategies employed in the political speeches of several Arab leaders who were removed from power during the Arab Spring. Adopting a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, the study examines how these leaders attempted to construct legitimacy, justify political authority, and respond to revolutionary movements

through various ideological and rhetorical strategies. The findings demonstrate that self-legitimation, appeals to national unity, security discourse, constitutional legitimacy, and the delegitimization of political opponents constitute recurring features across the speeches of the ousted leaders. The study concludes that these discursive strategies were systematically employed to preserve political authority and resist demands for regime change.

Comparable discursive strategies have also been identified in the rhetoric of other American political figures associated with social democracy. Using an integrated sociolinguistic and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, Aiello (2022) demonstrates that Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez strategically employs inclusive language, explanatory discourse, and conceptual metaphors to construct a distinctive political identity while enhancing the accessibility of complex political issues, particularly for marginalized communities. The study argues that these linguistic resources transform progressive ideological principles and policy objectives into narratives that resonate with wider public audiences, thereby facilitating political engagement and ideological alignment.

Fairclough (2015) maintains that CDA provides a robust analytical framework for revealing the ideological assumptions embedded in political and policy discourse, demonstrating how language contributes to the reproduction and legitimization of social and political power. Building on this perspective, Mustafa (2023) shows that linguistic resources such as modality, personal pronouns, evaluative expressions, and rhetorical strategies play a significant role in legitimizing presidential authority, mobilizing public support, and constructing persuasive narratives during periods of political uncertainty and national crisis.

Ali, Javed, and Aqdas (2025) investigate the discursive construction of democratic power in Zohran Mamdani's victory speech adopting van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Critical Discourse Analysis (SCCDA). The study examines how linguistic and cognitive strategies contribute to the construction of political legitimacy, collective identity, and democratic authority. Drawing on van Dijk's concepts of mental models, ideological polarization, and social cognition, the authors demonstrate that Mamdani strategically represents "*the people*" as the legitimate source of political power by emphasizing shared working-class experiences, social solidarity, and collective agency while simultaneously constructing an ideological distinction between ordinary citizens and political or economic elites. The analysis further reveals that inclusive pronouns, evaluative language, narrative exemplars, and metaphorical expressions function as cognitive mechanisms that activate shared mental representations and reinforce democratic values and political participation.

7. Political Context

Mubarak delivered his first presidential address (14 October 1981) shortly after the assassination of Anwar Sadat. His central communicative task was to reassure the public that the state would survive the assassination and that the transfer of authority would not produce political collapse. His inaugural discourse

consequently emphasized protection, responsibility, institutional continuity, national unity, and restraint.

The 28 January speech was delivered after several days of mass demonstrations and the major confrontations of the “Friday of Anger.” Its central communicative problem was no longer how to introduce a new presidency but how to defend an established regime against a popular challenge. The speech therefore shifts from the developmental language of 1981 to a vocabulary of danger, security, disorder, and control.

By 1 February, security framing had not ended the uprising. Mubarak therefore adopted a more emotional and autobiographical discourse. He recognized the peaceful origins of the protests, announced that he would not seek another term, and emphasized his service, military identity, his biography, and attachment to Egypt.

The final speech (10 February) was delivered amid expectations that Mubarak would resign. Instead, he announced that some presidential powers would be delegated to Vice President Omar Suleiman while he remained formally in office, retaining the presidency.

8. Analysis

From a **Cognitive Discourse Analysis (CDA)** perspective, a speaker's mentality refers to the cognitive models, conceptualizations, and mental representations that shape how the speaker interprets political reality and constructs relationships with the audience. Following the work of Lakoff (1987), van Dijk (2008), Hart (2023), and Chilton (2004), mentality is reconstructed through conceptual metaphors, framing, deixis, modality, and epistemic stance rather than inferred as a psychological fact. Thus, the analysis concerns the discursively constructed mindset reflected in the speeches.

Example 1: Legitimacy

The inaugural speech (1981) constructs leadership as a **collective national responsibility**. Mubarak presents himself as the constitutional successor to President Anwar Sadat and emphasizes continuity rather than personal authority.

“I assume responsibility before God and the people.”

In the inaugural context, the presidency can be understood as an office transferred according to constitutional rules. The conceptual framing is **LEADERSHIP IS RESPONSIBILITY**. The presidency is presented as a burden of responsibility rather than an opportunity for personal power. Expressions of responsibility direct attention away from privilege and toward obligation. The president is cognitively positioned as someone who has received a difficult assignment at a moment of crisis. This construction reduces the apparent distance between ruler and ruled. Mubarak does not initially present himself as an exceptional historical figure. Instead, he constructs himself as an official entrusted with a national duty. The frame legitimizes authority by moralizing it. Presidential power appears acceptable because it is represented as service rather than domination. It is a state-preservation ideology.

The ideological framing promotes constitutional legitimacy, institutional continuity, political unity, and collective responsibility

On the other hand, Mubarak increasingly personalizes leadership in Arab Spring Speeches (2011). In 28 January speech, the legitimacy is viewed as Security legitimacy where it derives from balancing freedom against chaos and preserving stability.

“I lean toward freedom ... as much as I hold on to ... safety and stability.”

Mubarak states that he favors people's freedom to express their opinions while also holding firmly to Egypt's safety and stability. This creates the image of a reasonable president mediating between competing priorities. Mubarak does not explicitly reject freedom. Instead, he positions himself as the person who must reconcile freedom with security. The conceptual frame is **THE PRESIDENT IS A BALANCER**. The political crisis is conceptualized as a scale with two sides. The president occupies the position of the person holding the scale. Ideologically, the balancing frame presents political decisions as technical acts of moderation rather than exercises of power. Moreover, it creates an asymmetry. Freedom is represented as something Mubarak “leans toward,” whereas safety and stability are things he “holds on to.” The latter formulation suggests firmness, possession, and non-negotiability. The speech therefore appears balanced while giving cognitive priority to stability.

Legitimacy in 1 February speech can be seen as Biographical legitimacy. It derives from military identity, service, sacrifice, and attachment to Egypt.

“History will judge me”

Mubarak appeals to history as the final judge of his actions. The Conceptual metaphor, **HISTORY IS A JUDGE**, personifies history as a court capable of delivering an objective verdict. The speech reflects self-legitimation, where past achievements are used to interpret present political realities. Mubarak assumes that citizens should evaluate him based on historical contributions rather than immediate political demands. Instead of emphasizing constitutional succession, Mubarak legitimizes his authority through his biography and personal sacrifices. The ideological frame displaces judgment from the present population to an abstract future authority. Instead of accepting the protesters' current verdict, Mubarak implies that only history can judge him fairly. The frame therefore protects Mubarak's moral legitimacy even as his political legitimacy collapses.

Paternal-constitutional legitimacy is legitimacy derives from fatherhood, constitutional procedure, delegated authority, and national sovereignty in Mubarak's final speech. Mubarak announced that he would delegate certain powers to Vice President Omar Suleiman rather than resign immediately.

“I delegate authority”

Conceptual frame: **POWER IS A POSSESSION THAT CAN BE TRANSFERRED**

The verb “delegate” presupposes:



- an original holder of authority;
- ownership or control of powers;
- a recipient;
- a temporary or limited transfer;
- continued superior status of the delegator.

The ideological function is viewed as the construction preserves Mubarak's sovereignty over the transition. It rejects the protesters' cognitive model: the people possess sovereignty and may remove the president. Instead, it offers: the president possesses authority and may distribute some of it. Delegation therefore appears as reform while reproducing the same vertical model of power.

Example 2: Future vs. Past

Mubarak's inaugural speech constructs a future-oriented mentality through conceptual metaphors such as **THE FUTURE IS A JOURNEY** and **THE NATION IS A PROJECT UNDER CONSTRUCTION**. Expressions such as "We shall continue the march of development" and "We shall build Egypt" portray the future as an achievable destination that requires collective movement and sustained effort. Cognitively, the speech activates a **PATH schema**, in which Egypt progresses toward prosperity under purposeful leadership. This reflects a mindset characterized by optimism, confidence, and long-term planning. The discourse activates a **future mental space**. It encourages the audience to conceptualize political leadership as directing a national journey toward development. The future-oriented framing legitimizes Mubarak's new presidency by presenting him as the leader capable of guiding Egypt toward modernization and stability.

In contrast, the Arab Spring speeches reveal a past-oriented mentality dominated by crisis management rather than future planning through the conceptual metaphors **LIFE IS A JOURNEY OF SERVICE** and **THE PRESIDENT IS A SERVANT OF THE NATION**. In the following statements, there is a shift attention from long-term development to immediate survival. The future is no longer conceptualized as an open path but as an uncertain and potentially dangerous space. The discourse activates mental models of uncertainty and risk rather than progress. Ideologically, the future becomes secondary to the immediate objective of preserving the existing political order.

Throughout my life..." (28 January)

"I have spent my entire life serving Egypt" (1 February)

I have indeed lived for this homeland (10 February)

This activates autobiographical memory. Instead of presenting legal or constitutional arguments, Mubarak constructs legitimacy through his personal history. His military career becomes evidence supporting his continued leadership. The inaugural speech reflects a mentality focused on building the future, whereas the Arab Spring speeches reflect a mentality focused on preventing national collapse. The cognitive model shifts from optimism to uncertainty.

Example 3: Citizens

In the Inaugural Speech (1981), citizens are represented as political partners, "Together we shall overcome difficulties." The repeated

use of **we** constructs shared responsibility and collective participation. The **PEOPLE ARE PARTNERS** frame promotes cooperation and national solidarity. The pronoun "we" constructs shared agency. Power is cognitively distributed.

In 28 January speech, citizens become divided into two cognitive categories. Hart (2014) identifies this as a common cognitive strategy for legitimizing authority through categorization. The speeches create an **ingroup/outgroup** schema.

"Some seek to spread chaos."

Positive citizens:

- peaceful
- patriotic

Negative actors:

- disorder
- violence
- hidden interests

Mubarak, in his 1 February speech, describes the demonstrations as beginning with sincere young people and citizens before being exploited by actors seeking manipulation, chaos, and constitutional destruction.

Protests began with "honest young people" but were "exploited"

Conceptual frame: THE YOUTH ARE INNOCENT BUT VULNERABLE

This construction creates two categories:

Positive category

- honest youth;
- sincere citizens;
- peaceful demonstrators;
- people with legitimate concerns.

Negative category

- manipulators;
- exploiters;
- producers of chaos;
- enemies of constitutional order.

Instead of treating the opposition as one political group, Mubarak divides it into good protesters whose grievances may be heard and bad actors who corrupt and manipulate the protests. This protects him from appearing entirely dismissive. He can recognize the youth while rejecting the movement's political direction. Mubarak's ideology show that the youth are given moral legitimacy but denied full political competence. They are represented as honest enough to deserve sympathy but inexperienced enough to be manipulated. This framing authorizes the president to reinterpret the meaning of the uprising on the protesters' behalf.

In 10 February speech, citizens are increasingly represented through the family metaphor.

"I speak to you as a father to his sons and daughters."

The conceptual metaphors are:

PRESIDENT IS FATHER

THE NATION IS A FAMILY

Citizens are positioned as family members requiring guidance and protection. The relationship shifts from horizontal cooperation to vertical paternalism. Mubarak explicitly describes his address as a father speaking to his sons and daughters.

The family frame assigns political roles as follows:

Family domain	Political domain
father	Mubarak
sons and daughters	Egyptian citizens
family	Egyptian nation
parental care	presidential protection
parental wisdom	political experience
family obedience	acceptance of guidance

The metaphor creates emotional closeness, but it does not create equality. A father may love his children, yet he traditionally occupies a superior position in experience, authority, decision-making and knowledge. Citizens are therefore represented as loved dependents rather than equal sovereign actors. Ideologically, the father frame depoliticizes the demand for resignation. A political conflict between citizens and a ruler becomes a family disagreement between children and their father. It can also moralize resistance. Rejecting Mubarak may be associated cognitively with ingratitude, disobedience, rejection of paternal care or damage to family unity. The frame thus legitimizes hierarchy through affection.

Example 4: Guardian

The guardian frame is illustrated in the representation of Mubarak as Egypt's guardian. Since Mubarak delivers his first presidential address shortly after the assassination of Anwar Sadat, his central communicative task aims at reassuring the public that the state would survive the assassination and that the transfer of authority would not produce political collapse. The discourse therefore emphasizes protection, preservation, national unity, responsibility, and institutional continuity. In the Inaugural Speech (1981), political change is framed positively.

"We shall continue the march of development"

"Protect and not threaten; keep and not waste"

The inaugural speech constructs Egypt as a political community moving along a path that must continue despite Sadat's assassination. Future forms such as "we shall" construct confidence and shared commitment. The future appears open but manageable.

The conceptual frames are:

THE STATE IS A CONTINUING JOURNEY CHANGE IS PROGRESS

The importance of the journey frame lies in its presupposition that the general direction has already been established. The task is not to redefine the political system radically but to continue moving forward. This frame supports an ideology of **continuity rather than rupture**. Sadat's assassination is represented as an obstacle on Egypt's path, not as a reason to reconsider the political structure.

Moreover, Mubarak's address includes the promise to "protect and not threaten" and to "keep and not waste."

The example is constructed through two parallel oppositions:

- protect versus threaten;
- keep or preserve versus waste.

This is an antithetical structure. The speech does not merely describe what Mubarak will do; it contrasts legitimate and illegitimate forms of political authority. The positive verbs (protect, preserve, and keep) are attached implicitly to Mubarak. However, their negative opposites such as (threaten, waste, destroy) represent the form of government he claims to reject.

The conceptual frames are:

THE PRESIDENT IS A GUARDIAN

THE NATION IS A VALUABLE POSSESSION

The verb "protect" activates a guardian schema involving a protector, a valuable object needing protection, a source of potential danger, and protective action. Mubarak is thus placed cognitively between Egypt and possible danger. His presidency is conceptualized not as domination but as a shield. The verb "keep" or "preserve" represents Egypt and its achievements as valuable possessions that must not be lost or wasted. Ideologically, the guardian frame legitimizes centralized authority. If the president is the protector of the nation, then strong presidential power can be interpreted as necessary rather than oppressive. The expression also produces positive self-presentation. Mubarak defines his leadership in advance as protective, economical, and morally responsible. At the same time, the formulation backgrounds popular sovereignty. Citizens are represented mainly as people who require protection, while the president occupies the active role of protector.

Mubarak's references to protecting citizens, property, security, and stability activate the familiar guardian model already present in 1981. However, the frame functions differently in 2011. In 1981, the protector frame was associated with recovering from assassination and preserving national institutions. In 28 January 2011, it is used to position the state against domestic protest. The demonstrations are not primarily construed as communicative acts through which citizens express political demands. They are cognitively categorized as a dangerous process.

"These demonstrations have taken a dangerous turn."

The conceptual frames are: **PROTEST IS DANGER &
CHANGE IS CHAOS**

Expressions referring to events taking a “dangerous turn” activate a threat frame. The frame foregrounds burning buildings, violence, fear, and uncertainty. As a result, Mubarak states “I have instructed the government to maintain security and stability.” The conceptual frame is **GOVERNMENT IS PROTECTOR**. The cognitive role allocates Mubarak as the responsible protector, government institutions are instruments of protection, citizens are potential victims, and violent actors, protesters, are sources of danger. Furthermore, the ideological frame conflates the regime with the state. Protecting Egypt becomes semantically close to protecting Mubarak’s government. This conflation is ideologically important because it presents opposition to the president as opposition to national stability. The regime’s political interests are represented as national interests.

In 1 February, Mubarak promises constitutional amendments and a transition leading to the next election. Change is therefore represented as a process that must occur gradually and according to an established route.

“I understand the aspirations of the youth.”

“I have instructed constitutional amendments.”

The conceptual frame, **CHANGE IS A CONTROLLED JOURNEY**, suggests that change should occur through existing institutions rather than revolution.

In the JOURNEY SCHEMA:

- the Constitution defines the road
- the president manages movement
- elections are the destination
- immediate resignation is a dangerous interruption;
- protest threatens to push the nation off course.

The ideological frame contrasts **ordered transition** with **revolutionary rupture**. Mubarak does not reject change. Instead, he attempts to control its conceptual meaning where legitimate change is gradual, constitutional, and managed by the existing state. In other words, any change outside this model can be categorized as chaos, destruction, or unconstitutional action.

In 10 February speech, Egypt is framed as a protected space threatened by external actors.

“I reject foreign interference.”

NATION IS A FORTRESS

The rejection of foreign intervention or “foreign dictates” activates the fortress frame.

Its conceptual structure is:

Fortress element	Political meaning
protected territory	Egypt
walls or borders	sovereignty
defenders	president, state, armed forces
external attackers	foreign governments or pressures
internal vulnerability	division and instability

Fortress element

Political meaning

The cognitive frame spatially divides politics into inside and outside. The conflict is partially relocated from Mubarak versus Egyptian protesters to Egypt versus external pressure. Mubarak positions himself inside the national space as its defender. Foreign actors are placed outside as potential violators of sovereignty.

The fortress frame allows Mubarak to represent resistance to resignation as patriotism. Instead of appearing to defend personal power, he appears to defend Egypt from external interference. It also places domestic opponents in a difficult ideological position. When foreign governments support transition, protesters’ demands may be associated directly or indirectly with external agendas. Thus, the frame can delegitimize domestic opposition through spatial association with the foreign “outside.”

To sum up, in 1981, Mubarak presents authority as a new constitutional responsibility exercised in cooperation with the people. In January and February 2011, he progressively reframes authority as protection, personal sacrifice, paternal guidance, constitutional duty, and resistance to external pressure. The four speeches therefore represent different stages in the cognitive construction of political legitimacy. Although Mubarak consistently presents himself as a patriotic leader, his cognitive representation of leadership changes markedly between the **1981** inaugural speech and the 2011 Arab Spring speeches. The shift is from a future-oriented mentality of institutional reconstruction **to a** defensive mentality focused on preserving political order and personal legitimacy. A notable contrast emerges across Mubarak’s speeches during the Arab uprising. The 28 January speech primarily relied on fear framing, portraying unrest as chaos that threatened Egypt. The 1 February speech shifted toward paternalistic framing, presenting Mubarak as the father of the nation who spoke to his “sons and daughters.” By 10 February, however, the dominant frame became constitutional and institutional legitimacy. This progression demonstrates a strategic cognitive shift: as emotional and paternal appeals lost persuasive force, the discourse increasingly emphasized legal authority, institutional continuity, and the protection of the constitutional order as the principal sources of political legitimacy. This evolution is itself a significant finding for a cognitive discourse analysis because it illustrates how changing political circumstances can lead to the reconfiguration of conceptual and ideological framing.

Conclusion

Mubarak’s discursively constructed mentality undergoes a substantial transformation. The analysis reveals that Mubarak’s speeches do more than describe political events. They attempt to control how those events are cognitively understood. In the 1981 inaugural speech, his cognitive worldview is characterized by development, optimism, institutional reconstruction, and collective participation. By contrast, the 2011 Arab Spring speeches reveal a mentality dominated by protection, preservation, and crisis

management. From a Cognitive Discourse Analysis perspective, this contrast illustrates how the same political actor reconstructs his mental representation of leadership and national reality in response to radically different historical circumstances, shifting from a discourse of nation-building to one of regime preservation. The four speeches reveal both continuity and transformation in Mubarak's political cognition. The central continuity is the representation of the president as Egypt's guardian. Across both periods, the president claims superior responsibility for preserving the nation, defining stability, and managing political change. The contrast between the inaugural and final speeches therefore illustrates the gradual exhaustion of Mubarak's legitimating discourse. In 1981, he presents himself as the representative of institutional continuity after a national shock. In 2011, he attempts to preserve power by merging himself with the nation, the Constitution, stability, military duty, and historical memory. Yet the revolutionary discourse cognitively separates Egypt from Mubarak. Once "Egypt" and "the regime" are no longer accepted as equivalent concepts, the ideological foundation of his speeches becomes increasingly ineffective.

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