

## Comparative Analysis of War Metaphors of Pak-China Print Media

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### ABSTRACT

*This study is a comparative critical discourse analysis of the “COVID-19 IS WAR” metaphor in the print media of Pakistan and China by employing Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). The study recognized the war metaphor’s power in framing public understanding and mobilizing behavior during crises and investigated its deployment in two distinct sociopolitical contexts. A corpus was constructed from COVID-19-related news stories published in Pakistan’s Dawn and China’s Global Times throughout 2020. Using the Pragglejaz Group’s (2007) Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) and assisted by AntConc software for corpus analysis to identify and quantify war-related lexical items. The findings reveal a significant difference in usage frequency: the metaphor was positioned 544 times in the Global Times corpus, compared to 246 times in the Dawn corpus. The qualitative cross-cultural analysis interprets this disparity as curtailing from differing governmental communication strategies and media ideologies. In the Chinese context, the metaphor was employed pervasively as a uniting and mobilizing tool, aligning with a state narrative of collective struggle, national strength, and top-down mobilization against the pandemic. On the other hand, in the Pakistani English-language press, the metaphor was used more selectively, often serving a primarily cautionary function within a more pluralistic discourse. This study concludes that while the “war” metaphor was a universal rhetorical feature of pandemic communication, its frequency and strategic purpose were fundamentally shaped by the specific political and media cultures of each nation. The research underscores the necessity of contextual, cross-cultural analysis in understanding the discursive construction of global crises.*

**Keywords:** *Conceptual Metaphors, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, War Metaphors, Corpus linguistics, Cross-cultural variations, Antconc software*

### INTRODUCTION

Language is more than just a mere communication channel and is instead a basic tool for the construction and creation of social reality itself (Fairclough, 2001, 2015). Dominant discourses therefore mirror and reinforce the ideologies that pervade a particular social context. One major theoretical framework for explaining this and provided by the study of Cognitive Linguistics and the theories compiled by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), who basically indicated that the way that language reflects the embodiment and is therefore the direct representation and embodiment of the underlying conceptual structure itself. One major tenet for this theoretical approach is the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) and basically indicates that metaphor is more than just a poetic way of speaking and instead provides for the understanding of how we think about a whole conceptual target domain through the channeling and employment-based framework for the source domain itself (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Kövecses, 2010).

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Global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic offer a rich context for understanding these interactions. In fact, because COVID-19 was a global challenge of pandemic proportions, people were compelled to understand it quickly, which led to a proliferation of all sorts of metaphorical discourse surrounding it. In these, perhaps “COVID-19 IS WAR” was easily one of the most pervasive, where the virus was personified as “the enemy,” where acts like wearing masks and following social distancing were characterized as “engaging in battle,” and where healthcare practitioners became known as “the front line soldiers.” This metaphor served to communicate urgency, legitimize drastic measures, and rally collective action (e.g., Sabucedo et al., 2020; Wicke & Bolognesi, 2020).

While the use of war metaphors in pandemic discourse has been widely documented (see, e.g., Bagli, 2022; Martinez-Brawley & Gualda, 2020), research has concentrated on Western contexts. Cross-cultural comparative studies are few and far between, despite the fact that CMT posits that although some metaphors may be near-universal (grounded in common bodily experience), their specific elaboration and frequency are deeply shaped by cultural, political, and historical contexts (Kövecses, 2005). Preliminary evidence indicates that such variation exists; for example, one study found differential use of war metaphorical framing across Spanish and English (Magaña, 2023). This supports a glaring omission: how do unique sociopolitical and media systems shape the deployment of a globally prevalent crisis metaphor?

This paper fills this research vacuum by performing a systematic comparative analysis of the metaphor 'COVID-19 IS WAR' in the print media in Pakistan and China. Both Pakistan and China are the crucial dyad that acts as strategic partners, sharing close bilateral relations, but with vastly different political systems, media ideologies, and conflict and governance histories. The analysis will take place through both countries' leading English dailies in 2020: Pakistan's Dawn, and China's English-language government-adjacent newspaper, 'Global Times'.

The selection of Pakistan's Dawn and China's Global Times is theoretically and methodologically strategic. Dawn, Pakistan's leading English-language daily, represents a relatively pluralistic media environment and addresses an elite, international readership. On the other hand, Global Times is an English-language newspaper closely aligned with the Chinese state and plays a key role in circulating official narratives, particularly during national crises.

The juxtaposition of these two newspapers enables a controlled cross-cultural comparison between media systems operating under markedly different political and ideological conditions. This contrast allows the study to examine how a globally striking metaphor—COVID-19 IS WAR—is differentially positioned in relation to institutional control, crisis communication strategies, and national narratives, thus strengthening the explanatory depth of the analysis.

The corpus-based approach not only refines the COVID-19 IS WAR metaphor analysis by facilitating systematic and quantifiable and extensive analysis with regards to metaphorical expression in media discourses, but by using AntConc and the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP), this analysis raises the standards for metaphorical expression analysis as it not only makes the results quantitatively correct but qualitatively precise as well. This approach not only facilitates normalized comparisons concerning the prevalence and use of the war metaphor across cultures by illustrating that while there is universalization with regards to the war metaphor, there is also systemic variation with regards to its magnitude and specific use.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

To conduct a comparative analysis of war metaphors, two specialized corpora were constructed from the English-language online editions of Dawn (Pakistan) and Global Times (China). Articles were retrieved from the newspapers' respective official websites using their advanced search functions. The

search was constrained to the period January 1 to December 31, 2020. The initial article collection used the keywords: "COVID-19 OR coronavirus OR pandemic OR virus" to capture a broad set of pandemic-related news. From this initial pool, articles were screened for relevance; only hard news, editorials, and features directly addressing the pandemic's social, political, or public health dimensions were included. Announcements, stock market reports, and sports news merely mentioning the virus were excluded. The final corpora comprised. The Dawn corpus approximately consists of 450 articles, 356322 words and The Global Times corpus consists of 500 articles, 666166 words.

The identification of metaphors followed a rigorous, multi-stage procedure integrating quantitative and qualitative methods. Each corpus was first scanned for potential war-related lexical items by using AntConc software (Version 4.2.0, Anthony, 2022). A predefined wordlist for the Source Domain i.e. WAR was developed based on prior literature (e.g., Semino, 2021) and pilot readings. This list included items such as: war, fight, battle, enemy, frontline, defense, attack, weapon, strategy, victory, defeat, soldier, army, combat, mobilize, campaign, and their morphological variants.

The concordance lines generated by AntConc for each war-related lexical item were then examined manually by employing the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) established by the Pragglejaz Group (2007). Metaphorically identified expressions were grouped under the conceptual metaphor COVID-19 IS WAR. Quantitative frequency patterns were then examined, followed by qualitative interpretation of how the war metaphor structured pandemic understanding in each media context. If a contrast existed and the understanding of the context was seen through the more basic meaning, the instance was marked as a metaphorical mapping from WAR to COVID-19. Each identified instance was implied for its specific mapping (e.g., VIRUS IS AN ENEMY, PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES ARE WEAPONS, MEDICAL PERSONNEL ARE SOLDIERS). Ambiguous cases were reviewed and discussed to ensure consistency.

### **ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

The analysis was guided primarily by Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), which provided the foundation for understanding the systematic cross-domain mappings. To address criticisms of CMT regarding the cultural grounding of complex metaphors, Primary Metaphor Theory (Grady, 1997) was referenced to consider how basic experiential correlations (e.g., DIFFICULTIES ARE ADVERSARIES) might underpin the more elaborate "war" frame in both cultures.

The quantitative analysis compared the raw frequency and normalized frequency (per 10,000 words) of the "COVID-19 IS WAR" metaphor across the two corpora to establish the scale of usage. The subsequent qualitative analysis followed Deignan's (1999) approach to cross-cultural metaphor comparison. This involved examining variations in conventional phrasing and collocations and differences in which aspects of the WAR source domain were most prominently exploited. This mixed-methods approach allowed for a robust description of both the quantitative importance and the qualitative, culturally-inflected nuances of the war metaphor in Pakistani and Chinese pandemic discourse.

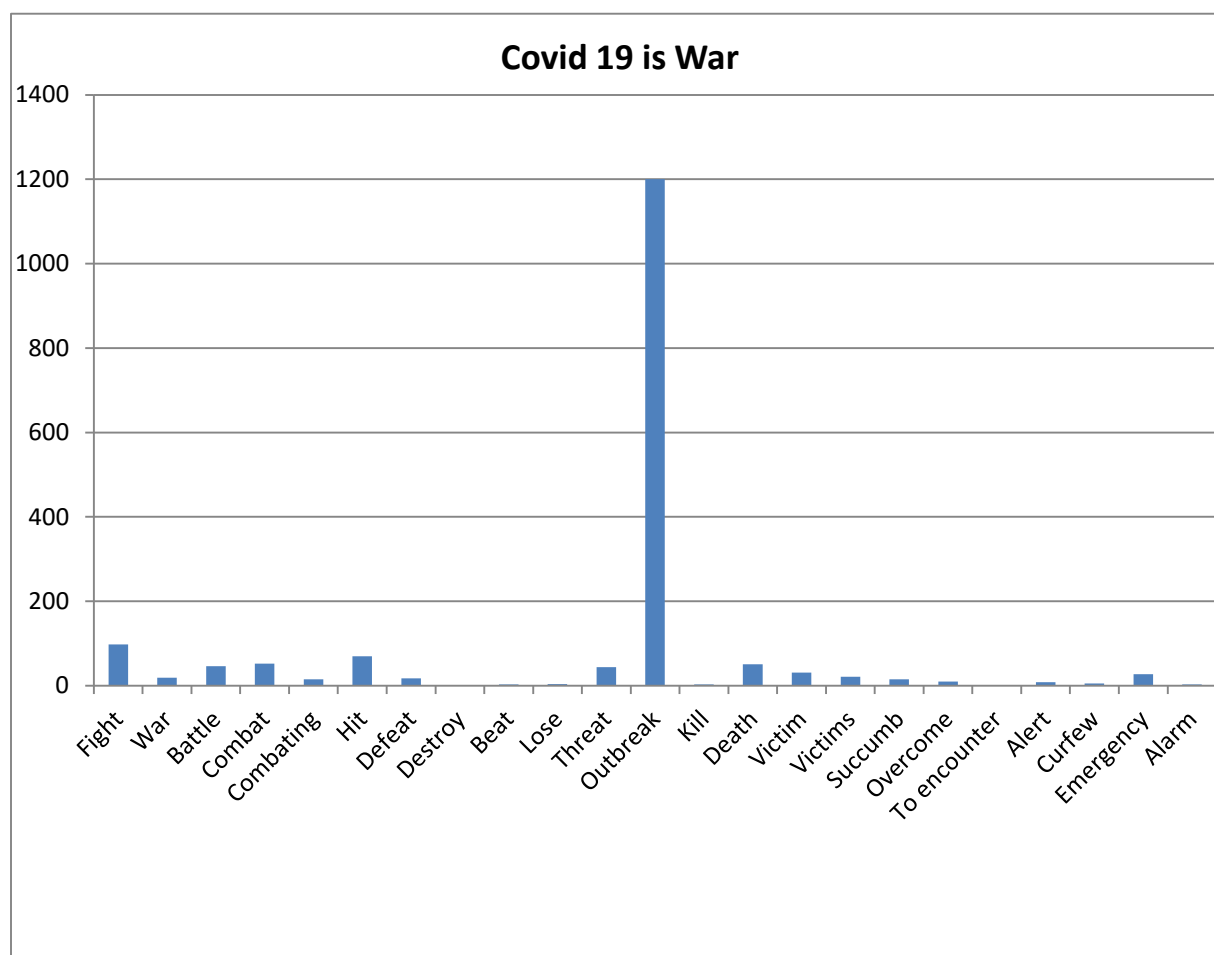
### **RESULTS**

As shown in Table 1, it was found that lexical words associated with war were high in number. The word OUTCOME is high in number. There were many different lexical words used for war metaphors as shown in the table.

**Table 1:**

The Occurrence of the Lexical Words Connected To Covid-19 Is War in Dawn Newspaper

Lexical Word	Frequency	Lexical Word	Frequency	Lexical word	Frequency	Lexical Word	Frequency
Fight	98	Defeat	17	Kill	3	To encounter	1
War	19	Destroy	1	Death	51	Alert	8
Battle	46	Beat	3	Victim	31	Curfew	5
Combat	52	Lose	4	Victims	21	Emergency	27
Combating	15	Threat	44	Succumb	15	Alarm	3
Hit	70	Outbreak	1200	Overcome	10		



**Figure 1:** The Occurrence of the Lexical Words Connected To Covid-19 Is War

In the corpus of Dawn newspaper, various lexical words related to war are collected with the help of collocations. Following are the collocations that made COVID-19 a war. Different aspects of COVID-19 as a war were also described and given in the table below.

**Table 2:**

Collocations Realizing the Covid-19 or Corona Virus as a War in the Daily Dawn

Aspects of Covid-19	Collocations (types: 20, tokens: 171)
The severity of the Situation	Fight, war, battle, combat, hit
Damages caused by the Covid-19	Kill, death, die, victims
Destructive impact of Covid-19	Defeat, destroys, beat, lose, succumb, corrodes, Threat
Get the situation under controlled	Overcome, to counter
Awareness of the situation	Alert
Rules set due to the current situation	Curfew

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, various metaphors and analogies related to fights, wars, and battles have been used to describe the efforts to combat the virus. These metaphors help convey the seriousness of the situation, the need for collective action, and the resilience required to overcome the challenges posed by the pandemic. War metaphor likens the fight against the virus to a war effort. It emphasizes the need for unity, strategy, and resources to combat the pandemic, much like a nation at war. Similarly, Schnepf, & Christman, (2022) also collected the metaphor mostly the War metaphors (e.g., battles, front lines, combat), which present the virus as an enemy that needs to be fought and beaten in their research.

Grady (1997) captured this tendency via the “primary” metaphor DIFFICULTIES ARE OPPONENTS. Aggressive military powers and invaders are the most extreme examples of opponents, and wars are the most extreme examples of dealing with them. This explains why War metaphors have been found in communication about difficulties ranging from cancer to climate change (Atanasova & Koteyko, 2017; Semino *et al.*, 2018b). But Amaireh, (2022) mapped this conceptual metaphor as Covid-19 is war’ generated from another primary metaphor "Argument is a war". Taking the above concept as "Covid-19 is war", the underneath discussion was carried out.

The analysis of the corpus of "DAWN" Newspaper reveals that the conceptual metaphor COVID-19 IS WAR is the most frequent in the data with the frequency of 1744. Fighting the virus was portrayed as a war. Many metaphorical expressions related to the Source Domain (SD) WAR are used, such as battle 2 (n, v.), batter, fight (n, v.), hit (n, v.), war, victims, succumb, death, beat, victory, threat, emergency, confront, overcome, alert, combat (ing), alarm, beating, counter, defeat, and against. Searching the frequency of the source domain WAR in the corpus, 544 tokens of the lexical item of war were found to refer to the metaphorical concept of COVID-19 IS WAR. Most of them talk about real wars like World War I & II or the War in Syria. For example, "History shows that Olympic Games could not take place on time twice during World Wars 1 and 2." (April 16, 2020). Although the lexical item war in this context was not used metaphorically, it talks about the COVID-19 crisis. The lexical item war was also used metaphorically to talk about the pandemic, for example, "PM Imran asks the world for debt relief in the war on COVID-19" (April 13, 2020). As it is clear from this context, a complete image of war is demonstrated; many lexical items related to war are used, such as victory, war, and fighting.

The lexical item FIGHT was used 98 times metaphorically to refer to the pandemic. For example, "While Pakistan's achievement in the fight against the coronavirus needs constant efforts to prevent a spike in new cases, the National Institute of Health (NIH) that played a key role in establishing several labs for COVID-19 tests has again become headless after three years." (August 4, 2020). An important finding from this research is that the COVID-19 IS WAR metaphor serves as an influential cognitive and discursive device within the print media of the Pakistani nation, with its usage influenced by its political and media context. Corpus evidence clearly shows that prominent war vocabulary like "fight" not only talks about the phenomenon of the COVID-19 disease but performs the socially important tasks of social role definition, assignment of responsibilities, and justification of corresponding actions.

These results highlight that pandemic metaphors are not simply rhetorical or language-pitched selections, but rather potent tools of framing that are embedded within larger ideological frameworks. In using both Conceptual Metaphor Theory tools and corpus research, this study contributes to ongoing debates on the cognitive framing of global crises, and draws attention to the importance of critically analyzing metaphor use in global health communication. Searching the lexical item BATTLE, and battling in the corpus of the Dawn newspaper. The quantitative analysis showed that there were 72 tokens, and examining the context reveals that 46 were used metaphorically to refer to the pandemic, and 26 instances were excluded because they did not refer to the COVID-19 crisis. For example "Biden, 77, was due to give a speech on the "battle for the soul of the nation" in Gettysburg, the Pennsylvania battlefield where the Civil War turned decisively in favor of Abraham Lincoln's north in 1863" (Oct 07, 2020). An example in which the lexical item battle is used metaphorically to refer to the crisis is "WHO, 37 countries launch alliance to share tools to battle virus" (May 30, 2020). The statement underscores the importance of international cooperation and solidarity in responding to global health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. It highlights the role of the WHO and participating countries in working together to share expertise and resources to confront the virus effectively.

Another lexical item related to the conceptual metaphor COVID-19 IS WAR is HIT. Searching the corpus, 249 occurrences of the lexical item hit were found. By examining them carefully, 70 were used metaphorically. For example, "PM tells FO to help students stuck in virus-hit city" (Feb 13, 2020). Below is an example of the metaphorical use of the lexical item Hit used to refer to the pandemic. The statement reflects a directive from the Prime Minister to the Foreign Office to prioritize assistance for students facing challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic in a particular city. The phrase "virus-hit city" is not metaphorical but rather a factual description of the situation.

Another lexical item related to the source domain war is Combat. For example, the lexical item combat was used 52 times and its related forms like combating were used 15 times to fight against COVID-19. Searching the corpus, 99 occurrences of the lexical item Combat and Combating were found collectively. However, 32 instances were excluded because they are not used to represent the pandemic, such as "The medics, who arrived on military aircraft late on Friday, included doctors with experience combating SARS or Ebola " (January 26, 2020), "a nation can combat this challenge through discipline and resolve to serve the humanity – a lesson this nation learned when Pakistan came into being" (Apr 5, 2020). Therefore, it is essential to understand the context and find out if the lexical item was used metaphorically and is relevant to the pandemic or not. For example, in one of the headlines, the word combat was used metaphorically to talk about the virus "Govt taking drastic measures to combat Covid-19" (April 03, 2020). As we can notice from the headline, COVID-19 was portrayed as war, requiring collaboration to fight against it. This supports Chuang's (2012) analysis, which revealed that the concept of fighting shapes the basis of metaphors in his study of news headlines. So, the current study shows that the metaphorical use of the concept of fighting is not only frequent in the headlines but also in the body of the news. Table 2 presents the frequency of the lexical item fight in the corpus.

Another lexical item related to the conceptual metaphor COVID-19 IS WAR is a threat, 44 instances were used metaphorically to refer to the pandemic. For example, "His underplaying of the threat of Covid-19 — calling it a "flu" and resisting demands for early lockdowns" (July 24, 2020). The pandemic is compared to a war in which individuals are fighting to convince the audience of the seriousness of the disease; so they feel less dissatisfied with the government's measures of the lockdown and consequently follow the preventative measures. Abstract ideas are converted into physical images of contesting so that they are easier to be understood by the audience. This refers to minimizing or downplaying the seriousness and severity of the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead of recognizing the significant risks posed by the virus, this individual or entity is portrayed as diminishing its importance or impact.

The concept of a "virus threat" falls under the category of "war metaphors." War metaphors are frequently used to describe situations of crisis or conflict, where the language of war and battle is employed to convey a sense of urgency, seriousness, and the need for collective action. Schnepf and Christmann (2021) also showed that the results of their experiments disconfirmed the hypothesis that the war metaphor increases support for restrictive policies. Their studies support the general criticism of Panzeri et al. (2021) that disconfirmed the framing effect of the war metaphor in influencing reasoning and social attitudes towards the COVID-19 emergency. Pasaribu et al. (2021) found the war category as the most prominent category.

Another lexical item that was metaphorically used to refer to the conceptual metaphor COVID-19 IS WAR is Defeat, as exemplified in one of the headlines, "UAE to grant experts 10-year residence visa to defeat Covid" (Nov 16, 2020). Out of 26 occurrences of the lexical word defeat, 17 were found metaphorical expressions of Covid-19 as war. Another lexical item that was metaphorically used to refer to the conceptual metaphor COVID-19 IS WAR is victim. In the total 65 occurrences of the term VICTIM and 46 occurrences of the term were metaphorical expressions. As exemplified in one of the instances, "Colombo orders cremation for all virus victims" (April 13, 2020). The statement describes a policy regarding the handling of deceased individuals who have succumbed to the COVID-19 virus.

Furthermore, there were 27 instances of the metaphorical expression of the lexical word Emergency to refer to the conceptual metaphor COVID-19 IS WAR out of 256 hits. An example of the above-mentioned metaphorical expression is "SHC seeks updates from law officer on draft ordinance for Covid-19 emergency relief" (April 28, 2020). This suggests that there is a proposed legal document or legislation being developed to address emergency relief efforts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to the above discussion, other lexical words death and death frequencies were 51 and 48 out of 371 and 725 respectively. The examples from both kinds are "India's official coronavirus death soared past 50,000 on Monday as the pandemic rages through smaller cities and rural areas where health care is feeble and stigmatization rife" (August 18, 2020) and "US Covid-19 deaths cross 200,000" (September 28, 2020).

Contrarily, the idea of deterministic framing of metaphors, and war metaphor in particular, has been discussed and reviewed in both theoretical and empirical studies. War metaphors often do not evoke concepts or images of the literal domain of war and do not stimulate real projections or interactions between concepts (Bolognesi, 2021). The author calls for practicing "interpretive charity" toward this linguistic use, questioning the prevalence of the war metaphor without risking presupposing its reasons and consequences.

In the field of empirical studies, Panzeri *et al.* (2021) argued experimentally that the willingness to accept war-congruent claims about the pandemic is not directly influenced by war metaphoric framing per se, and is favored by socio-political individual variables and sources of information (Panzeri et al., 2021). Analyzing various empirical studies, Benzi and Novarese (2022) concluded that the current evidence does

not support the claim that the use of metaphor can lead citizens to accept limited civil liberties and authoritarian policies. Among the studies reviewed, they mention the study on Twitter communication by Wicke and Bolognesi, which attests that war framing, is indeed often used to talk about specific topics, such as the treatment of the virus, but not others, such as the effects of social estrangement on the population. The use of the frame thus seems consistent with limitations that, according to critical scholars, are always on the point of being ignored and exceeded in linguistic practice. Benzi and Novarese consequently agree with Flusberg *et al.* (2018) about the importance of not assuming “a preconceived attitude on the use of the metaphor,” thus assigning misleading power to the frame: they consider the unconditional criticism of the use of the war metaphor unfounded and choose other options than rejection of the metaphor itself.

The lexical words like destroys, beat, lose, and succumb, were used in frequencies of 1,3,4 and 15 out of 4,12,25 and 15 occurrences to describe situations of crisis or conflict, where the language of war and battle is employed to convey a sense of urgency, seriousness, and the need for collective action. An example of the lexical word ‘Destroys’ is “Opec+ debates biggest-ever oil cut as virus destroys demand” (April 4, 2020) Next is an example of the lexical word 'beat' is "Mandviwalla calls for efforts to beat coronavirus” (March 12, 2020).

An example of another lexical word 'lose' is "Remember it's not yet over until a vaccine or some tangible treatment is developed or virus loses its potency.” (August 4, 2020). Certainly, the statement emphasizes that the situation regarding the virus isn't resolved until a vaccine or effective treatment is developed, or until the virus diminishes in potency. The mention of the virus losing its potency is a metaphorical expression, suggesting a decrease in its virulence or its ability to cause harm. This underscores the ongoing nature of the challenge posed by the virus and the necessity for continued vigilance and efforts to mitigate its impact.

Furthermore, the example of the lexical word 'succumb' was taken from the corpus, "24 more succumb to the virus in Punjab” (December 10, 2020). It conveys the idea that individuals have been overcome or defeated by the virus, likening the battle against the virus to a conflict. This phrasing emphasizes the seriousness of the situation and the tragic loss of lives due to the ongoing pandemic. They were used to emphasize the severity of the situation and the need to mobilize resources and efforts to address the threat. Similarly, Semino (2021) conducted her research mostly on war metaphors. War metaphors are considered first because they were particularly frequent and controversial at the beginning of the pandemic.

Rappert (2021) offered a comparison between the information about deaths in COVID-19 and the same kind of information shared during the Iraq war. Lack of ‘appropriate’ data has been a common strategy both in discussing the number of deaths from COVID-19 as a consequence of government policy and in discussing the number of civilians killed by the UK in the Iraq War – even if, during the pandemic, deaths have been counted with more reliable and shared methodologies. Considering that, in terms of mobilization of resources, the pandemic has been as close as it can get to ‘fight a war without actually fighting a war’, the author suggests that the government has avoided accountability just as it did during the real war.

War metaphors are frequently used to describe situations of crisis or conflict, where the language of war and battle is employed to convey a sense of urgency, seriousness, and the need for collective action. This includes situations like the COVID-19 pandemic, where terms like "fight," "battle," "enemy," and "defeat" are used to emphasize the severity of the situation and the need to mobilize resources and efforts to address the threat. However, this conclusion does not imply that right-wing individuals would obediently follow the dictates of the war on COVID-19, but only that they are more susceptible to accepting ‘bellicose entailments’ and have a strong ‘emotional involvement’ linked to the war metaphor (Panzeri *et al.* 2021)

The lexical terms encounter, alert, curfew, and alarm were used in ratios of 1, 8, 5, and 3 out of 1,54,27 and 30 occurrences. Examples are "she encounters coronavirus containment measures in the

Netherlands" (April 27, 2020). People "encounter" COVID-19 when they are exposed to the virus, often unintentionally. This can be likened to a chance meeting with an unexpected challenge or obstacle in life. An example of the lexical word alert is "There was alarm in Japan too, where Tokyo's governor warned that the capital was on its highest coronavirus alert level after a spike in infections" (July 16, 2020). In the context of COVID-19, the word "alert" is often used metaphorically in various ways to convey the importance of vigilance, readiness, and responsiveness in dealing with the pandemic. This phrase is commonly used to urge people to remain vigilant and aware of the evolving situation regarding COVID-19.

Similarly, an example of the word 'curfew' is "Last night out in France as 20m face virus curfew" (Oct 17, 202). It signifies the collective effort to successfully address and defeat the challenges posed by the pandemic. These metaphors use the concept of a curfew, which traditionally refers to a set time during which people are required to stay indoors and not engage in certain activities, to convey the idea of limiting various aspects of daily life to combat the pandemic. They emphasize the temporary nature of these measures and the importance of adhering to guidelines to protect public health. Castro, (2021) lists a dozen various intentions with which war metaphors were used during the pandemic. After presenting these different contexts, she remarks that we need further studies on the 'reception of these discourses to examine the effectiveness of the war metaphor.

An example of the lexical word 'alarm' is "Indian presidential palace isolates 500 people after virus alarm" (April 22, 2020). It highlights the importance of implementing preventive measures to mitigate the risk of virus transmission in various settings. Jaworska (2020) claims that 'using war metaphors can sometimes be constructive in that it can mobilize public health efforts; but when it comes to patients, particularly those who suffer from deadly conditions, it can be distressing and even unethical, specifically if they or their doctors are not "winning the battle"

It implies the need to stay informed about updates, follow safety guidelines, and be prepared for changes in public health recommendations. These metaphors emphasize the importance of being attentive, responsive, and proactive in managing the COVID-19 pandemic and convey the idea that being "on alert" is crucial for the safety and well-being of individuals and communities. Rojas (2020) made an analogous point with the idea that the metaphor of 'heroes' in the war hides the fact that people in low-income brackets are more frequently exposed to the virus so that the rest of the population can safely remain in their homes which can be seen in Gillis (2020) research, and Chapman & Miller, (2020) research is evident of the same observations.

**War Metaphors in Global Times Newspaper**

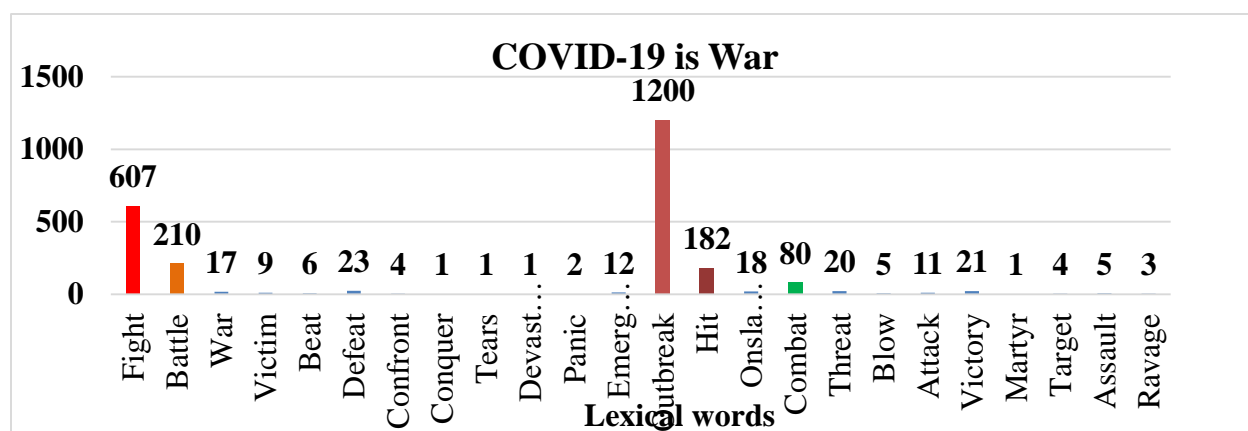
As seen in Table 1, the war metaphor dominates the conceptualization of Covid-19 in the corpus. Linguistic units such as "war, fight, attack, battle, frontline, enemy, and hit" are among the most used militaristic vocabulary in COVID-19 discourse. All of the newspapers use such linguistic items to conceptualize the situation; the health sector and society are going through.

**Table 3:**

The Frequency of the Lexical Items Related To Covid-19 Is War in Global Times Newspaper

Lexical words	Frequencies	Lexical words	Frequencies
Fight	607	Outbreak	1200
Battle	210	Hit	182

War	17	Onslaught	18
Victim	9	Combat	80
Beat	6	Threat	20
Defeat	23	Blow	5
Confront	4	Attack	11
Conquer	1	Victory	21
Tears	1	Martyr	1
Devastate	1	Target	4
Panic	2	Assault	5
Emergency	12	Ravage	3



**Figure 2:** COVID-19 is War

Military vocabulary is frequently used in medical discourse. War metaphors are highly used when the disease is reported or discussed. The disease is conceptualized as an alien and enemy, which has caused urgency and motivated the public to fight against the threat (Sontag, 1989). The way humans conceptualize and describe certain concepts is highly metaphorical, where one entity is understood in terms of the other. In the same way, table 1 highlights the concepts related to war and their metaphorical mapping with health/disease/COVID-19. Human beings typically think and talk about DISEASE in terms of WAR. As Sontag (1989) has also identified war metaphors are abundantly found in medical discourse whenever diseases are discussed. Similarly, the current pandemic situation is perceived metaphorically as a wartime situation that has disturbed the public, health workers, governments, and the whole world globally.

The analysis of the corpus of "Global Times" Newspaper reveals that the conceptual metaphor COVID-19 IS WAR is the most frequent in the data. Fighting the virus was portrayed as a war with a frequency of 2443 times. Many metaphorical expressions related to the Source Domain (SD) WAR are used, such as battle 2 (n, v.), batter, fight (n, v.), hit (n, v.), war, victims, onslaught, death, beat, victory, threat, emergency, confront, overcome, alert, combat(ing), alarm, beating, counter, defeat, and against, Devastate, Panic, Attack, Victory, Martyr, Target, Assault, Ravage Searching the frequency of the source domain WAR in the corpus, 246 tokens of the lexical item war were found. Only 17 items were used metaphorically. For example, "We hope together with our African friends, we will put efforts and enhance the war against COVID-19" (Aug 19, 2020).

The lexical item FIGHT was used 607 times metaphorically to refer to the pandemic. For example, "Chinese President Xi Jinping said on Friday that China firmly supports the European Union (EU) in its fight against the COVID-19 epidemic." (March 11, 2020). This shows that the pandemic has been framed as a battle and the virus as an enemy, and people, institutions, and countries do their best to conquer and win the battle against the enemy.

Searching the lexical item BATTLE, and battling in the corpus of the Dawn newspaper. The quantitative analysis showed that there were 255 tokens, and examining the context reveals that 210 were used metaphorically to refer to the pandemic, and 45 instances were excluded because they do not refer to the COVID-19 crisis. For example, "China is making important contributions to the global battle against the pandemic and the restoration of growth 27 Mar" (March 27, 2020).

Another lexical item related to the conceptual metaphor COVID-19 IS WAR is hit. Searching the corpus, 301 occurrences of the lexical item hit were found. By examining them carefully, it was observed that 182 were used metaphorically. For example, "PM tells FO to help students stuck in virus-hit city" (Feb 13, 2020). Below is an example of the metaphorical use of the lexical item threat used to refer to the pandemic. The statement reflects a directive from the Prime Minister to the Foreign Office to prioritize assistance for students facing challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic in a particular city. The phrase "virus-hit city" is not metaphorical but rather a factual description of the situation.

Another lexical item related to the source domain war is Combat. For example, the lexical item combat was used 120 times to fight against COVID-19. Searching the corpus, 80 occurrences of the lexical items Combat and Combating were found collectively. However, 40 instances were excluded because they were not used to represent the pandemic, such as "China's decisive and effective measures to combat the virus have enabled it to control the outbreak in the shortest possible time effectively" (January 26, 2020). Therefore, it is essential to understand the context and find out if the lexical item was used metaphorically and is relevant to the pandemic or not. As we can notice from the headline, COVID-19 was portrayed as war, requiring collaboration to fight against it. This supports Chuang's (2012) analysis, which revealed that the concept of fighting shapes the basis of metaphors in his study of news headlines. So, the current study shows that the metaphorical use of the concept of fighting is not only frequent in the headlines but also in the body of the news.

Another lexical item related to the conceptual metaphor COVID-19 IS WAR is threat, 20 instances were used metaphorically to refer to the pandemic. For example, "84protecting yourself from the coronavirus becomes a threat to your very existence21 " (April 21, 2020). The pandemic is compared to a war in which individuals are fighting to convince the audience of the seriousness of the disease; so they feel less dissatisfied with the government's measures of the lockdown and consequently follow the preventative measures. Abstract ideas are converted into physical images of contesting so that they are easier to be understood by the audience. This refers to minimizing or downplaying the seriousness and severity of the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead of recognizing the significant risks posed by the virus, this individual or entity is portrayed as diminishing its importance or impact.

The concept of a "virus threat" falls under the category of "war metaphors." War metaphors are frequently used to describe situations of crisis or conflict, where the language of war and battle is employed to convey a sense of urgency, seriousness, and the need for collective action. Schnepf and Christmann (2021) also showed that the results of their experiments disconfirmed the hypothesis that the war metaphor increases support for restrictive policies. Their studies support the general criticism of Panzeri *et al.* (2021) that disconfirmed the framing effect of the war metaphor in influencing reasoning and social attitudes towards the COVID-19 emergency. Pasaribu, *et al.* (2021) found the war category as the most prominent category.

Another lexical item that was metaphorically used to refer to the conceptual metaphor COVID-19 IS WAR is Defeat, as exemplified in one of the headlines, "Global synergy needed to defeat COVID-19" (April 03, 2020). Out of 30 occurrences of the lexical word defeat, 23 were found metaphorical expressions of Covid-19 as war.

Another lexical item that was metaphorically used to refer to the conceptual metaphor COVID-19 IS WAR is victim. In total 18 occurrences of victims and 9 occurrences of victims were metaphorical expressions of Covid-19. As exemplified in one of the instances, "China, like other affected countries, is a victim of the virus." (April 3, 2020). The statement describes a policy regarding the handling of deceased individuals who have succumbed to the COVID-19 virus.

Furthermore, there were 12 instances of the metaphorical expression of the lexical word Emergency to refer to the conceptual metaphor COVID-19 IS WAR out of 313 hits. An example of the above-mentioned metaphorical expression is "Under the COVID-19 emergency level 2, underground cold places in Beijing will be closed" (Jun 16, 2020). This suggests that there is a proposed legal document or legislation being developed to address emergency relief efforts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition to the above discussion, other lexical words beat and deaths with the frequency of 6 out of 17 instances. An example is "After recovering from COVID-19, renowned Chinese tenor Warren Mok said he is more confident than ever that humanity will beat the virus" (May 19, 2020). The next lexical item is outbreak with a frequency of 1200 out of 1378. An example of the lexical word 'out' is "The COVID-19 outbreak in China has almost seen its end" (March 17, 2020). The mention of the virus losing its potency is a metaphorical expression, suggesting a decrease in its virulence or its ability to cause harm. This underscores the ongoing nature of the challenge posed by the virus and the necessity for continued vigilance and efforts to mitigate its impact.

Furthermore, the example of the lexical word 'attack' was taken from the corpus, "Medium and small logistic companies are troubled as roads are blocked and market demand is low because of the coronavirus attack" (Feb 13, 2020). It conveys the idea that individuals have been overcome or defeated by the virus, likening the battle against the virus to a conflict. This phrasing emphasizes the seriousness of the situation and the tragic loss of lives due to the ongoing pandemic. They were used to emphasize the severity of the situation and the need to mobilize resources and efforts to address the threat. Whereas, Semino (2021) conducted her research on war metaphors. War metaphors are considered first because they were particularly frequent and controversial at the beginning of the pandemic.

The lexical terms onslaught, blow, confront, conquer, and tear were used in ratios of 18, 5, 4, 1, and 1 out of 23, 43, 8, 2, and 1 occurrences. Examples are "Cambodian hospital project can be completed on schedule despite virus onslaught" (Feb 16, 2020). An example of the lexical word blow is "The outbreak of the deadly virus dealt a heavy blow to China's economy in the first quarter" (April 11, 2020). The example of the word confront is "China's political system might be getting in the way of its ability to confront the coronavirus outbreak" (Feb 05, 2020). Additionally, the example of the lexical word 'conquer' is "For now, one of the most important things is to show support for the people of China and their government by sending the message that they will be able to quickly conquer the virus" (Feb 18, 2020). An example of the word 'tear' is "COVID-19 tears world apart" (April 21, 2020).

Moreover, some other lexical words like panic, victory, martyr, target, assault, and ravage were also used in the Global Times corpus for the War metaphors. The lexical word 'panic' was used two times exemplified as "US government loses decency under virus panic" (March 19, 2020). Another word 'victory' was used with a frequency of 21 out of 46 occurrences. An example is, "To fight for an early victory over the virus" (March 10, 2020). The next lexical word is 'martyr' used with the frequency of 1 occurrence. For example, "Li has since been recognized as a martyr by Chinese authorities for sacrificing his life while

fighting the virus” (April 11, 2020).

The frequencies of target, assault, and ravage were 4, 5, and 3 out of 44, 10, and 3. The examples are “China's strict prevention and control measures against imported cases of COVID-19 do not target any nationality or race” (April 14, 2020), “10A total of 460,000 businesses in China succumbed to the novel coronavirus assault in the first quarter of 2020” (April 15, 2020) and “US President Donald Trump and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, have recklessly accused China of allegedly covering up the viral spread and slowing the response so that the virus could ravage the rest of the world” (June 07, 2020).

**Comparative Analysis of War Metaphors of Pak-China Newspapers**

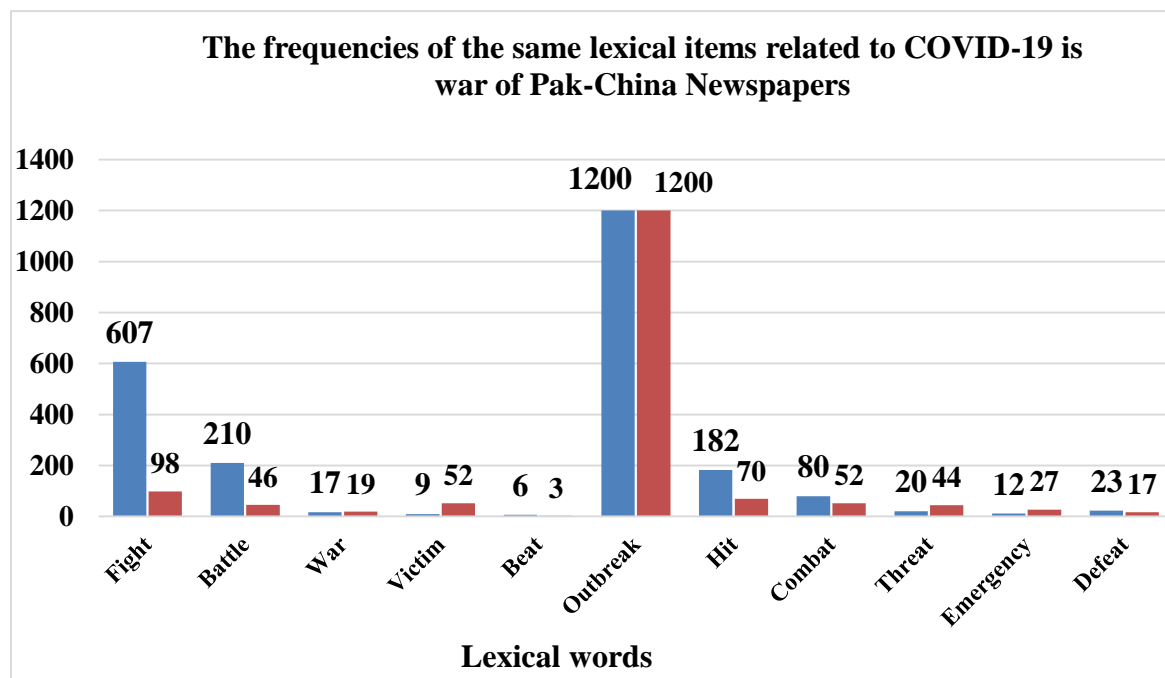
The war domain is the most common source of metaphorical items both in the Dawn and Global Times corpora which seems to confirm the pervasiveness of war metaphors to refer to human action against diseases as confirmed from previous studies such as COVID-19 IS WAR (Craig 2020; Wicke and Bolognesi 2020; Semino 2021) or Ebola (Trčková 2015; Balteiro 2017). The major theme of this metaphor or main meaning focus, i.e. “the basic and central knowledge about the source domain, inherited by the target, that is widely shared in a community” (Kövecses 2005), is violence, which leads to the reinterpretation of the measures taken against the disease as inherently hostile and aggressive. War-related words and expressions belong to a conceptual metaphor that can be formulated as coronavirus is war or, more precisely, recovering from coronavirus is fighting in the war, a resemblance metaphor (Grady 1999) that arises from a behavioral comparison between source and target (i.e. the source and target domains share some features which motivate the metaphorical mapping),5 and a “many-correspondence” metaphor (de Mendoza Ibáñez, 1997), as such shared features are capable of giving rise to multiple meaning implications. This metaphor presents different sets of ontological correspondences as a result of transferring attributes from the source domain of war to talk about the coronavirus disease: to stay healthy is to fight a battle, to overcome the virus is to beat an enemy, to recover health is a victory, the actions against the virus are part of a military mission, citizens are soldiers and the coronavirus is a threat.

After analyzing the data of both the newspapers separately, hence for the sake of comparison same lexical items related to COVID-19 IS WAR were collected. Most prominent lexical words like 'fight, battle' are higher in Global Times than in the Dawn newspaper. The frequencies of the same lexical items of both newspapers were found as given in the table below.

**Table 4:**

The Frequencies of the Same Lexical Items Related To Covid-19 Is War of Pak-China Newspapers

Lexical words	Frequencies of Global Times	Frequencies of Dawn
Fight	607	98
Battle	210	46
War	17	19
Victim	9	52
Beat	6	3
Outbreak	1200	1200
Hit	182	70
Combat	80	52
Threat	20	44
Emergency	12	27
Defeat	23	17



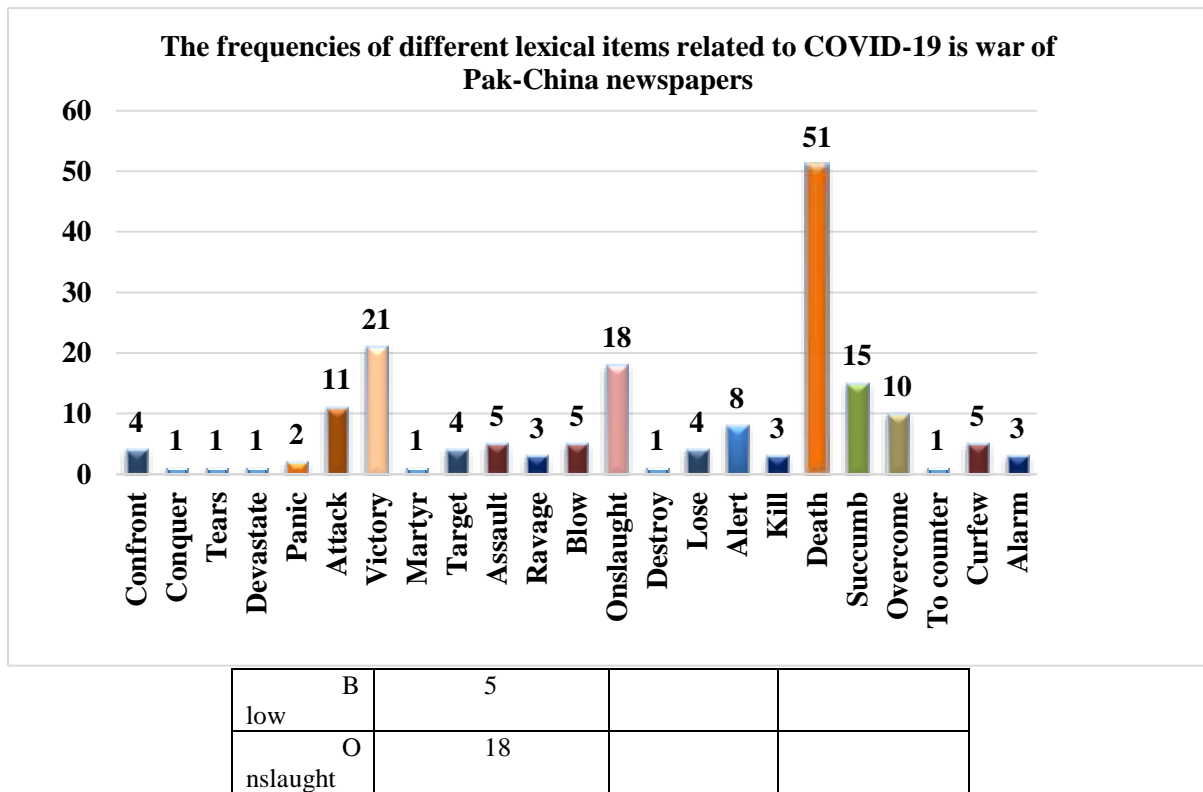
**Figure 3:** COVID-19 is War

Similarly, the frequencies of different lexical items related to COVID-19 IS WAR of Global Times and Dawn newspapers were also found. These lexical items were briefly explained before in the discussion section. A combined table of these different lexical items is given below.

**TABLE 5:**

The Frequencies of Different Lexical Items Related to Covid-19 is War of Pak-China Newspapers

Lexical Words	Frequencies of Global Times	Lexical Words	Frequencies of Dawn
Confront	4	Destroy	1
Conquer	1	Lose	4
Tears	1	Alert	8
Devastate	1	Kill	3
Panic	2	Death	51
Attack	11	Succumb	15
Victory	21	Overcome	10
Martyr	1	To counter	1
Target	4	Curfew	5
Assault	5	Alarm	3
Ravage	3		



**Figure 4:** The Frequencies of Different Lexical Items Related To Covid-19 in War of Pak-China Newspapers

As the virus is represented as an enemy in the military rhetoric in both print media, the steps that must be taken to stay healthy are represented against that enemy. In this regard, the process of recovering health, social well-being, and economic stability is conceptualized as a violent struggle for survival in which citizens and politicians have a mission to accomplish for the welfare of society. This scenario is linguistically manifested in both corpora through military terms which focus on the action of fighting such as fight, battle, war, combat, defeat and many others.

An important finding from this research is that the COVID-19 IS WAR metaphor serves as an influential cognitive and discursive device within both print media of the Pakistani and Chinese nations, with its usage influenced by their respective political and media contexts. Corpus evidence clearly shows that prominent war vocabulary like "fight" not only talks about the phenomenon of the COVID-19 disease but performs the socially important tasks of social role definition, assignation of responsibilities, and justification of corresponding actions. Chinese media rely on "collectivization" and "integration" with state-sponsored metaphorical expressions, whereas the usage of the "war" metaphor in the Pakistani media is more institutional.

These results highlight that pandemic metaphors are not simply rhetorical or language-pitched selections, but rather potent tools of framing that are embedded within larger ideological frameworks. In using both Conceptual Metaphor Theory tools and corpus research, this study contributes to ongoing debates on the cognitive framing of global crises, and draws attention to the importance of critically

analyzing metaphor use in global health communication.

### **Cross-cultural Variations in War Metaphors**

The frequency of war metaphors in china print media is two times higher than in Pakistani print media. There could be several reasons why the frequency of war metaphors might be higher in Chinese print media compared to Pakistani print media.

The first reason might be their Government Narrative. China's government may have a stronger focus on projecting power and unity through media, which could lead to a higher frequency of war metaphors in their press. The Chinese Communist Party often uses rhetoric emphasizing national strength and defense, which could contribute to an increased usage of war metaphors. Besides the Government narrative, the other reason may be China was the origin of that disease and the intensity was higher than Pakistan.

China has a long history of conflict and warfare, which may influence the language used in their media. References to historical battles, strategies, and martial prowess might be more common in Chinese discourse compared to Pakistan, where historical narratives might focus on different aspects of the nation's history. Moreover, China is involved in various territorial disputes, particularly in the South China Sea and with Taiwan. This could lead to heightened tensions and a greater propensity for war-related language in Chinese media compared to Pakistan, which may not be involved in such frequent or intense territorial disputes.

Chinese culture places a greater emphasis on collective security and national defense compared to Pakistani culture. This could manifest in the language used by media outlets, with Chinese newspapers more likely to use martial language to evoke a sense of national unity and strength. Similarly, China's position as a major global player and its involvement in international affairs may also contribute to a higher frequency of war metaphors in its media. References to strategic competition, military alliances, and geopolitical tensions could be more common in Chinese media compared to Pakistani media. Overall, the reasons for the disparity in the frequency of war metaphors between Chinese and Pakistani print media likely stem from a combination of political, historical, cultural, and strategic factors.

Similarly, war-related metaphors, spoken words serve dual purposes: informing and bolstering morale, especially during challenging times. War metaphors are often employed to inspire resilience, unity, and determination, framing struggles in terms of conflict and victory. Furthermore, spoken words in tough situations carry emotional weight and can assemble people, providing hope, motivation, and solidarity in addition to conveying factual information. From this point of view, metaphor operates as a useful strategy of self-protection and positive self-presentation. By contrast, the affective import of metaphors that conceptualize the virus as an enemy or a tide is negative: such metaphors basically serve the purpose of warning citizens about the danger of infection and thus persuading them to conform to the law and stay at home.

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