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**NGUYỄN MẠNH TUẤN**

**CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR “POLITICS IS WAR” IN THE AMERICAN POLITICAL NEWS DISCOURSE**

**(Ẩn dụ ý niệm “Chính trị là chiến tranh” trong diễn ngôn tin tức chính trị Mỹ)**

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**SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS**

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| **Supervisors** | **:** | **1. Prof. Dr. Nguyen Hoa**  **2. Dr. Huynh Anh Tuan** |
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and rationale of the study

Having been motivated by the use of war-like language by political figures during the events of January 6th, 2021, the researcher developed his interest in the way conceptual metaphors of war are used to shape public perception and incite action. To investigate this further, Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) was selected as the research focus. However, a significant limitation is its tendency to analyze metaphors in a relatively decontextualized manner, without fully considering the specific social, political, and cultural contexts in which these metaphors are used. Given the context, a combined approach of Multi-level View Analysis (MLV) and Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) is suggested to provide a comprehensive, multi-layered cognitive framework while addressing ideological and power dynamics in political communication.

1.2. Research aims, objectives, and research questions

This study investigates the *“POLITICS IS WAR”* metaphor, focusing on how sub-domains of war are selected and structured in political discourse. The research addresses three questions:

(RQ1) Which sub-domains of war are most commonly used to represent politics in news discourse?

(RQ2) How is the metaphor structured in political discourse?

(RQ3) Why are specific war sub-domains used to frame political events?

1.3. Scope of the study

This research examines the *“POLITICS IS WAR”* metaphor within American political news discourse, specifically in journalistic opinion pieces. It employs three theoretical frameworks: Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), Multi-level View (MLV), and Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA). The study focuses on 100 opinion articles from The New York Times about the 2022 US mid-term election, published between 2021 and 2023.

1.4. Research approach

This study, based on pragmatism and the critical paradigm, uses a mixed-method approach with a qualitative focus. It identifies and interprets war metaphors in American political news using the Metaphor Identification Procedure and *“semantic tension.”* The Multi-level Views Analysis examines schematic levels of political events, while Critical Metaphor Analysis explores power and ideology. Quantitative methods complement this by measuring the frequency of war metaphors to support the qualitative findings.

1.5. Significance of the study

*Theoretically,* this study expands our understanding of the sub-domains within the conceptual metaphor *“POLITICS IS WAR”* in political news discourse and validates the relevance of existing frameworks like Conceptual Metaphor Analysis (CMA) and Multi-level Analysis. *Methodologically,* it explores the internal structures of these sub-domains and the influence of power relations and ideologies in framing politics through war concepts. *Practically,* the findings offer insights into the persuasive power of war metaphors and suggest educational applications for teaching the role of metaphor in shaping political narratives and public opinion.

1.6. Structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured into seven primary chapters including Chapter 1 (Introduction), Chapter 2 (Literature Review), Chapter 3 (Research Methodology), Chapter 4 (Common sub-domains within conceptual metaphor *“POLITICS IS WAR”* in the American news discourse), Chapter 5 (Conceptual structures within conceptual metaphor *“POLITICS IS WAR”*), Chapter 6 (Framing political events through the lens of *“War”* concepts), Chapter 7 (Conclusion). The parts followed by Chapter 7 include List of Published Studies, References and Appendices.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on conceptual metaphor, covering five key areas. It begins with approaches to metaphor, including Classical Theory and Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), discussing conceptual mappings, unidirectionality, domain relationships, critiques, and the Pragglejaz Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP). It then examines the Multi-Level View (MLV), focusing on its structure and cognitive hierarchies. Next, it discusses Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) and its role in uncovering ideologies and power dynamics. The chapter concludes by identifying gaps in the literature and laying a theoretical foundation for the following empirical investigation.

2.1. Classical theory of metaphor

Aristotle (350 BCE) initiated the study of metaphor by defining it as a linguistic device that transfers meaning from one context to another. He classified metaphors into four types, emphasizing analogy as the most complex and effective form (Hawkes, 2018). While Aristotle’s theory highlighted the power of metaphor in enhancing language, subsequent scholars criticized its reliance on similarity and its limited scope (Membrez, 2019; Wood, 2017; Yan-jun, 2006). They argued that metaphors often involve more complex relationships than simple comparison and that cultural context significantly influences their interpretation (Ortony,1975; Richards, 1936; Reddy, 1979; Pepitone & Triandis, 1987)

2.2. Conceptual metaphor theory

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), posits that metaphors are fundamental to human thought, not mere linguistic devices. Unlike traditional views, CMT argues that we understand abstract concepts by mapping them onto concrete experiences.

2.2.1. Conceptual mappings

Conceptual Mapping involves a partial correspondence between two conceptual domains: the source domain (concrete) and the target domain (abstract) to understand how abstract concepts are linked to concrete experiences (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).. The mapping process occurs unconsciously and involves various characteristics that contribute to our understanding of abstract concepts through concrete experiences (Kövecses, 2010).

2.2.2. The unidirectionality of conceptual metaphor

According to the concept of unidirectional metaphorical mappings between two conceptual domains, as proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), a more concrete and familiar source domain is used to structure and understand a more abstract and complex target domain, with the mapping occurring primarily in one direction.

2.2.3. Source domain in relation to target domain

When analyzing or communicating about a target domain, there is a selective emphasis on specific aspects of a source domain. Due to cognitive and communicative constraints, certain facets are prioritized, leading to the overshadowing and neglect of other important aspects, referred to as “hidden” aspects. This selectivity highlights the complex dynamics between source and target domains and the potential impact on achieving a holistic understanding.

***2.2.4. Image schemas of the conceptual metaphor of war as a source domain***

Various image schemas-recurring patterns of perceptual and motor experiences-contribute to our understanding of the conceptual metaphor of *“war.”* These schemas include the conflict schema, which represents opposing forces in a struggle; the force schema, conveying effort and intensity in arguments; and the goal-pursuit schema, relating to achieving goals such as *“winning an argument.”* Other schemas like spatialization, which maps abstract concepts onto physical space, containment, involving boundaries, journey, relating to progress, attack-defense, involving the dynamics of attacking and defending positions, and winning-losing, which describes the outcomes in debates, all interact to shape our linguistic and conceptual framing of intellectual conflicts and persuasion through the metaphor of war.

***2.2.5. Dimensions of conceptual metaphor***

Over the years, metaphor research has advanced significantly in unraveling the complexities of metaphorical language and its cognitive underpinnings. Kövecses (2002) provides a comprehensive taxonomy that categorizes metaphorical phenomena along four dimensions: conventionality, function, nature, and the level of generality. This framework, while crucial, is complemented by the contributions of other influential scholars such as Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Gibbs (1992), Casasanto (2008), and Grady, who have expanded the scope of metaphor research. Integrating these perspectives allows metaphor scholars to further explore how metaphor influences cognition, communication, and cultural understanding.

***2.2.6. Grouping, categorizing, and generalizing conceptual metaphors***

*2.2.6.1. Conceptual keys*

Charteris-Black (2004) argues that a conceptual key is broader and more general than a conceptual metaphor, as it encompasses all related metaphors, such as “*NATION IS A PERSON”* encompassing the metaphor *“America is a person.”*

*2.2.6.2. Generic space*

Fauconnier and Turner (1998) describe the generic space in blending theory as a mental construct that captures shared abstract structures across input spaces, facilitating the integration and creation of coherent cognitive blends, thus playing a crucial role in metaphor formation and cognitive processes.

*2.2.6.3. Concept and categorization*

Murphy (2002) and Rosch (1978) explored human categorization, emphasizing the importance of prototypes in simplifying cognitive processes by organizing knowledge, which plays a fundamental role in perception, memory, and language.

*2.2.6.4. Blending metaphors*

Conceptual blending, as explained by Fauconnier and Turner (1998, 2002), integrates elements from different mental spaces to create new meanings, particularly through blending metaphors from distinct conceptual domains.

***2.2.7. Critique of conceptual metaphor theory***

*2.2.7.1. Reliance on linguistic intuition*

Critics of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) argue that its reliance on intuition and lack of explicit criteria for identifying and analyzing metaphors undermines its credibility, raising concerns about its *generalizability* and *unfalsifiability (Vervaeke & Kennedy, 1996)*.

*2.2.7.2. Lack of explicit criteria*

Certain psychologists and linguists, such as Glucksberg (2001) and Steen (2007), express concerns about the challenge of *distinguishing between literal and metaphorical meanings*. They suggest that statements like *“he was depressed”* should be seen as entirely literal, not as driven by conceptual metaphors like SAD IS DOWN. However, ordinary speakers and traditional metaphor scholars do not generally view such phrases as poetic or metaphorical.

*2.2.7.3. Responses to criticisms*

To tackle challenges in metaphor research, alternative approaches like blending theory and the Extended CMT framework have been suggested (Do & Vu, 2023; Gibbs, 2011). Subjectivity is addressed through methods like Steen’s five-step approach, MIP, MIPVU, and corpus methodologies (Steen et al., 2010). Kövecses (2017) introduces a multi-level view (MLV) combining image schemas, domains, frames, and mental spaces. Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) explores power relations and intentions in metaphors, addressing CMT’s limitations with pragmatic considerations (Chen, 2007; Li, 2016).

***2.2.8. Pragglejaz Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP)***

The Pragglejaz Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) is a systematic method developed by an international group of metaphor researchers to identify metaphorically used words in natural discourse (Pragglejaz Group, 2007). The procedure involves several key steps:

*Reading the Text:* Read the entire text to grasp its overall meaning.

*Determining Lexical Units:* Segment the text into individual lexical units, which can be words or phrases.

*Establishing Contextual Meaning:* Determine the meaning of each lexical unit within the specific context of the text.

*Determining Basic Meaning:* Identify if the lexical unit has a more basic meaning in other contexts, typically one that is more concrete, human-oriented, and historically older.

*Comparing Meanings:* Compare the contextual meaning with the basic meaning to see if they contrast but can be understood in relation to each other.

*Identifying Metaphors:* If the contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning and can be understood in comparison to it, mark the lexical unit as being used metaphorically.

*2.2.8.1. Strengths of MIP*

MIP offers explicit criteria that reduce subjectivity and increase consistency among researchers. Its flexibility allows adaptation to different texts and contexts, making it a versatile tool for linguistic and discourse analysis (Steen et al., 2010).

*2.2.8.2. Weaknesses of MIP*

MIP struggles with identifying correct lexical units in multi-word expressions and phrasal verbs, leading to inconsistencies (Steen et al., 2010). It may miss metaphorical meanings in idiomatic expressions like *“kick the bucket”* and faces difficulties in resolving ambiguous terms or specialized language like *“campaign,”* often related to the *“POLITICS IS WAR”* metaphor.

*2.2.8.3. Strategies to overcome weaknesses of MIP*

To address MIP’s challenges, researchers could treat common phrases as single lexical units and use specialized dictionaries and consensus-based analysis to handle contextual ambiguity and better capture metaphorical meanings over time.

2.3. Multi-level view of conceptual metaphor (MLV)

The analysis of conceptual metaphors has been challenging due to the variety of overlapping terms and frameworks used to describe them. This terminology dilemma complicates the systematic analysis, which Kövecses (2017) addressed by introducing a *“multi-level view of conceptual metaphor”*.

2.3.1. Conceptual structure of conceptual metaphor

*2.3.1.1. Image schemas and conceptual metaphors*

Image schemas, recurring patterns derived from our physical experiences, are crucial in forming conceptual metaphors, as they preserve embodied logic across different domains, shaping how we understand abstract ideas.

*2.3.1.2. Conceptual metaphors and frames*

Sullivan (2013) uses the term “frame” to describe more detailed conceptual structures within a domain, such as WAR consisting of various frames like FUNCTION and QUALITY.

*2.3.1.3. Conceptual metaphors and mental spaces*

Kövecses (2017) highlights, mental spaces, distinct constructs representing scenarios in discourse, hold essential contextual information for understanding metaphors in discourse.

2.3.2. Cognitive hierarchies of conceptual metaphor

The multi-level view of metaphor, as proposed by Kövecses (2017), offers hierarchies ranging from the most schematic level, involving image schemas, to the least schematic level, represented by mental spaces.

2.3.3. Implications of multi-level views

The multi-level view of metaphor enhances conceptual metaphor theory by addressing challenges in selecting expressions, identifying structures, and understanding metaphor systems (Kövecses, 2015; 2017).

2.4. Critical metaphor analysis (CMA)

Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA), as proposed by Charteris-Black (2004), combines pragmatics, rhetoric, cognitive linguistics, critical discourse analysis, and corpus linguistics to uncover the unconscious intentions of language users.

2.4.1. Multiple roles of conceptual metaphors

Conceptual metaphors are crucial in Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA), linking language and thought by making abstract concepts understandable through concrete terms (Huang, 2020; Landau et al., 2010). Pragmatically, they shape political discourse to influence public opinion based on context and rhetorical goals (Raquel et al., 2015; Gibbs, 2023). Linguistically, they organize metaphors into systems, connecting expressions to broader structures for analyzing discourse patterns (Rakova, 2003; Valenzuela, 2013).

2.4.2. Interdisciplinary nature of CMA

Unlike Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), CMA uses corpus data for empirical analysis, enhancing objectivity while retaining a cognitive focus. It also complements Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by uncovering hidden ideologies and power structures, offering deeper insights into how metaphors shape societal norms.

2.4.3. Analytical stages in CMA

Charteris-Black’s Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) involves three stages:

*Metaphor Identification:* Identify and classify metaphorical keywords in texts, determining whether their usage is metaphorical or literal, and infer broader conceptual metaphors.

*Interpretation:* Understand and interpret these metaphors to uncover patterns and cognitive structures that shape how experiences are conceptualized.

*Explanation:* Explain the social and ideological motivations behind metaphors, focusing on their persuasive function and the influence of both individual and social factors like ideology and culture.

2.4.4. Application of CMA to conceptual metaphor analysis

Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) can be enhanced by integrating it with corpus linguistics, and by considering socio-political, cultural, and historical backgrounds, as well as the speaker’s intentions. However, CMA alone may not fully address the exploration of cognitive structures within specific conceptual metaphors like POLITICS IS WAR. To achieve this, incorporating multilevel conceptual models, such as Kövecses’s Multilevel View, is necessary to examine metaphors at varying levels of specificity and abstraction.

2.4.5. A combined framework of CMA and MLV of conceptual metaphor analysis

The combined framework merges Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) with the Multi-Level View of Conceptual Metaphor for a comprehensive approach. CMA focuses on socio-cultural and power dynamics, while the Multi-Level View analyzes metaphorical structures across cognitive levels like image schemas, domains, and frames.

2.5. Review literature and methodology of related research

2.5.1. War metaphor in political discourse

The *“war”* metaphor has become a powerful tool in U.S. government communication, framing policies like Nixon’s *“War on Drugs”* (Sharp, 1994) and Johnson’s *“War on Poverty”* (Farmbry, 2014) as urgent battles requiring national effort. This metaphor simplifies complex issues and evokes familiar models of conflict, making challenges relatable and mobilizing public support (Gibbs, 1994; Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011). War metaphors also elicit strong emotional responses, fostering resilience and unity during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic (Seixas, 2020). Their effectiveness is rooted in cultural and cognitive familiarity, making them versatile across contexts like politics, sports, and healthcare (Bowdle & Gentner, 2005).

2.5.2. Previous studies on conceptual metaphors of War as a source domain

The war metaphor is widely studied for its prevalence in human conceptual systems (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999; Charteris-Black, 2004; Musolff, 2004). Lakoff explored its use in justifying the Gulf War, while Charteris-Black (2004) examined *“Terrorism is War”* and *“Sport is War.”* Researchers like Wei (2001) and Bacharach (2006) analyzed war metaphors in Taiwanese and U.S. rhetoric, while Vestermark (2007) and others studied their use in political speeches across different countries. Sun Ling (2010) identified frames like *“A POLITICAL ELECTION IS A BATTLE,”* emphasizing the metaphor’s power in political discourse.

2.5.3. The gaps in previous studies

Many studies on conceptual metaphors, like *“POLITICS IS WAR,”* lack systematic exploration of the sub-domains and broader cognitive structures. To address this, I propose combining Kövecses’s (2017) Multi-Level View Analysis (MLVA) with Charteris-Black’s (2004) Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA). This integrated approach systematically analyzes sub-domains in both war and politics, examining their interaction. MLVA uncovers cognitive structures, while CMA reveals how metaphors influence power and ideologies. This synthesis provides a more comprehensive understanding of metaphors, covering both cognitive and socio-political dimensions, overcoming the limitations of purely qualitative methods.

Chapter 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is guided by three research questions:

1. What are the most common sub-domains of politics in the *“POLITICS IS WAR”* metaphor within political news discourse?

3. How is the *“POLITICS IS WAR”* metaphor conceptually structured in political news discourse?

3. Why are *“WAR”* metaphors used to frame political events and issues?

To address these questions, the thesis outlines a methodology that includes the procedures for identifying, classifying, interpreting, and explaining conceptual metaphors using the integrated CMA-MLV model. Additionally, the chapter discusses data sources and selection criteria to ensure the study’s transparency and replicability.

3.1. Research approach and research design

Mixed methods research (MMR) is particularly relevant for exploring conceptual metaphors in political discourse, as it allows for a multifaceted analysis that enriches both depth and breadth. The philosophical foundations of pragmatism and critical theory support this methodology, with pragmatism aiding in qualitative synthesis (Hannes & Lockwood, 2011) and critical theory providing frameworks for analyzing metaphors in policy and discourse (Strydom, 2011; Talib & Fitzgerald, 2016).

3.1.1. Philosophical ground of the study

3.1.1.1. Pragmatism

Pragmatism is particularly well-suited for researching the *“POLITICS IS WAR”* metaphor because it emphasizes practical consequences and real-world applications of ideas (Goldkuhl, 2004; Giacobbi et al., 2005).

3.1.1.2. Critical theory

Critical theory is particularly well-suited for researching the *“POLITICS IS WAR”* metaphor because of its focus on uncovering and challenging power structures, social oppression, and ideological constructs (Guliashvili, 2019; Chiang & Duann, 2007; Chahbane & Zrizi, 2023).

3.1.2. Application of mixed methods to research questions

The mixed methods approach in this thesis systematically addresses the research questions. For RQ1, a quantitative analysis of 100 political articles using corpus linguistics tools will identify war-related metaphors, followed by qualitative categorization with the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP). RQ2 employs qualitative methods and a multi-level view analysis to interpret these metaphors and uncover cognitive structures. For RQ3, critical metaphor analysis (CMA) will explore the historical contexts, power relations, and ideologies behind the metaphors, integrating both quantitative and qualitative findings. This approach ensures a comprehensive investigation of each research question.

3.1.3. Research design

The research unfolded in three stages:

*Stage 1 (RQ1):* A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used to identify and classify metaphors from 100 articles collected from The New York Times. Using Word Smith Tools 8.0, a checklist of war-related lemmas was analyzed to find potential metaphors, followed by manual identification using the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP). Metaphors were then classified.

*Stage 2 (RQ2):* This stage focused on qualitative analysis of the most conventional metaphors identified earlier. These were subjected to cognitive analysis using a multi-level view, exploring how the *“POLITICS IS WAR”* metaphor is conceptualized in political discourse.

*Stage 3 (RQ3):* The final stage involved qualitative analysis for interpreting and evaluating metaphors using Conceptual Metaphor Analysis (CMA). This included examining historical contexts, power relations, and ideologies within the metaphors. The results from both quantitative and qualitative analyses were then discussed in depth, offering a comprehensive exploration of the metaphors and their broader implications.

3.2. Research methods

The decision to use qualitative methods, including Qualitative Content Analysis and Discourse Analysis, stems from the need to explore conceptual metaphors in political discourse deeply. These methods analyze textual data, identifying patterns and themes, while Critical Metaphor Analysis examines broader ideologies and power relations. Quantitative methods are also employed to analyze political events from 2021 to 2023 using 100 New York Times articles. Word Smith Tools 8.0 identifies key lexemes from a checklist of 61 war-related lemmas, enhancing precision in classifying metaphors by frequency and usage.

3.2.1. Identifying and classifying conceptual metaphor (RQ1)

3.2.1.1. Data collection – quantitative methods

*Data source*

This research on the metaphor *“POLITICS IS WAR”* analyzes 100 political news articles from The New York Times between 2021 and 2023, focusing on U.S. mid-term elections. The selected timeline offers insights into geopolitical situations between the Democratic Party and the Republic Party, as well as the internal conflict within each party. The dataset provides a strong foundation for understanding the use of war metaphors in political communication and their impact on public perception.

*Construction of corpus*

This research builds a corpus of opinion articles from prestigious U.S. newspapers, focusing on political events like the 2022 midterm election. To ensure a representative and manageable dataset, the researcher chose opinion articles from 2021 to 2023.

*Sampling*

*+ Criteria for Choosing Sampling:* The sampling criteria are designed to ensure a comprehensive and unbiased representation of opinions on key geopolitical events from January 1st, 2021, to December 31st, 2023. The primary focus is on thematic relevance, selecting articles that provide insightful perspectives on the 2022 U.S. midterm election.

*+ Random Sampling:* Random sampling will be used to select opinion articles on the 2022 U.S. midterm election from 2021 to 2023. This method helps eliminate biases that might arise from non-random selection, ensuring each article within the timeline has an equal chance of inclusion.

*+ Focus on Key Themes:* The analysis will concentrate on key themes of the 2022 U.S. midterm election, such as fraud allegations, racial gerrymandering, and campaign finance mechanisms.

*+ Manual Review and Selection:* A manual review process will involve scrutinizing each article to ensure a broad spectrum of opinions, political perspectives, and writing styles are represented.

*+ Encoding:* Selected articles will be coded sequentially from 1 to 100, with each article assigned a unique identifier based on its topic (e.g., A1-T1 for Article 1 - Topic 1).

3.2.1.2. Key lemmas checklist – quantitative methods

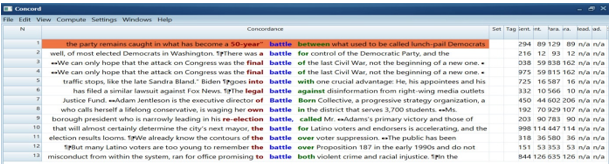
A list of 61 lexical items related to the *“WAR”* metaphor, drawing from classifications by scholars like Camiciottoli (2007) and Fabiszak (2007) are compiled.

3.2.1.3. Concordance analysis – quantitative methods

The concordance analysis is exemplified through the case of *“battle”*. The lemmas related to *“battle”*, including *“battle,” “battles,” “battled,”* and *“battling”*, were analyzed using Word Smith Tools 8.0, specifically its concordance feature. The analysis produced the following results:

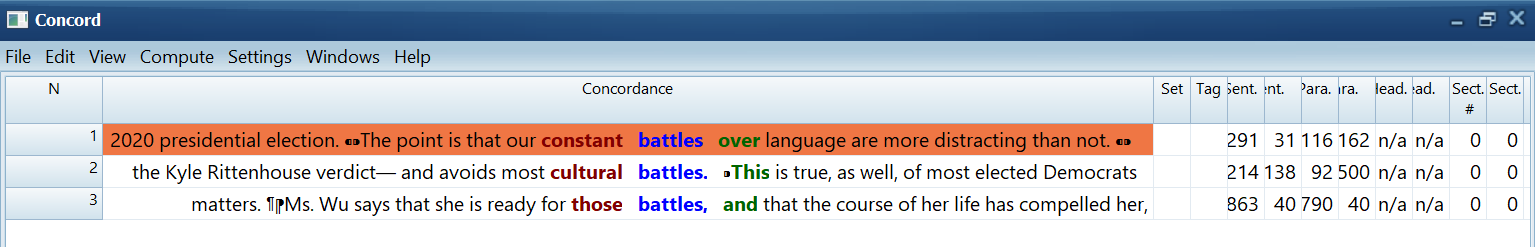
**Figure 1.**

***The “Battle” Concordance***



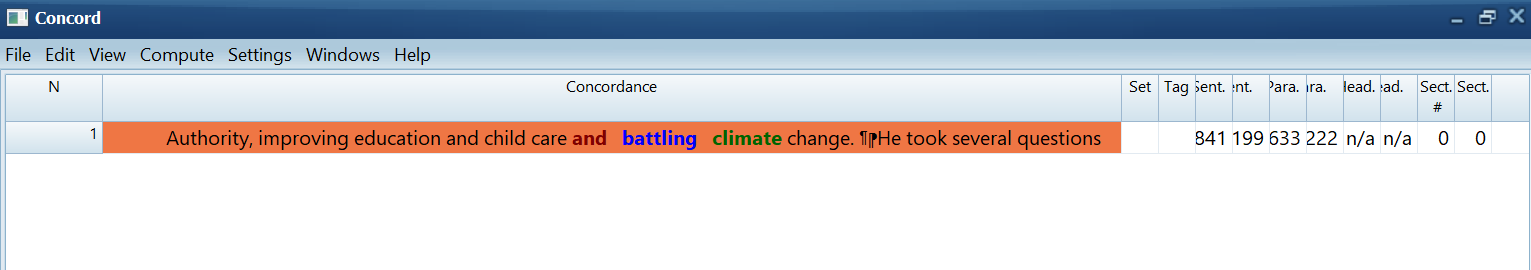
**Figure 2.**

***The “Battles” Concordance***



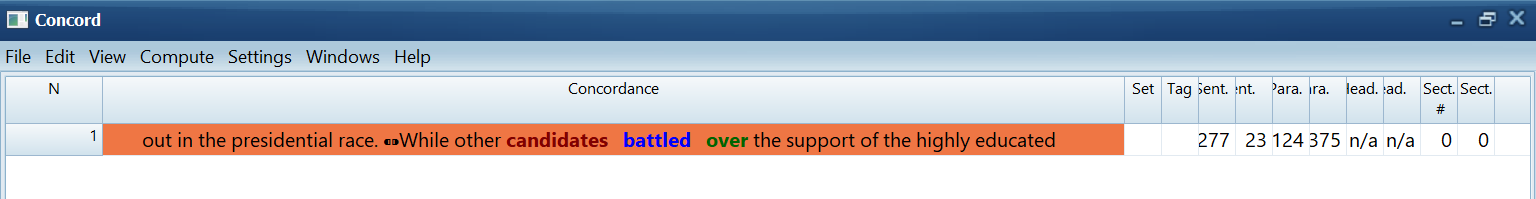
**Figure 3.**

***The “Battling” Concordance***



**Figure 4.**

***The “Battled” Concordance***



In the next step, 13 tokens of *“battle,”* 3 tokens of *“battles,”* 1 token of *“battling,”* and 1 token of *“battled”* were subjected to qualitative analysis using the Metaphor Identification Procedure (Pragglejaz Group, 2007) to distinguish metaphorical expressions from non-metaphorical ones.

3.2.1.4. Metaphor Identification (MIP - Pragglejaz Group, 2007) – qualitative methods

To identify Conceptual Metaphors of War, the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) by Pragglejaz Group (2007) war applied. The process involves:

1. Determining the meaning of the word in context.

2. Checking its original meaning.

3. Comparing the two meanings.

4. Identifying any conceptual connections.

Focusing on the word *“attack”* in the text, the mapping process is as follows:

ATTACK → ACT OF VIOLENCE

RHETORICAL ATTACK → STRATEGIC MANEUVERS

AMERICAN MID-TERM ELECTION → POLITICAL BATTLEFIELD

This led to the conceptual metaphor *“POLITICS IS A PHYSICAL BATTLE.”*

3.2.1.5. Metaphor grouping and classification – qualitative methods

After having been identified, specific or distinct metaphorical expressions were then grouped, based on the notion of conceptual metaphor key (Charteris-Black, 2004), generic space and blending theory (Fauconnier and Turner’s, 1998), concepts and categorization (Murphy, 2002; Rosch, 1978).

The following is a summary of the steps involved in creating the generic conceptual metaphor:

*Identify Specific Target Domains:* Begin with distinct political activities and events, identifying the specific domains where conceptual metaphors manifest.

*Categorize into Intermediate Target Domains:* Group specific target domains into broader, intermediate categories based on structural similarities.

*Generalize Intermediate Source Domains:* Recognize and categorize the concrete source domains.

*Develop Intermediate Conceptual Metaphors:* Combine the intermediate target and source domains to form intermediate metaphors.

*Create the Generic Metaphor:* Integrate the intermediate metaphors into a high-level, generic metaphor that encapsulates the overarching theme.

3.2.1.6. Selection of the most common source domains – quantitative methods

*Identify Generic Metaphors:* Identify key metaphors (e.g., “POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IS A PHYSICAL CONFRONTATION”).

*Quantify Occurrences:* Count the frequency of each expression (e.g., *“fight”*: 31 occurrences, *“attack”*: 9 occurrences, “*defeat*”: 22 occurrences, “*destroy*”: 3 occurrences, “*hit*”: 1 occurrences, *“kill”*: 5 occurrences, “*strike*”: 2 occurrences, *“struggle”*: 28 occurrences, “*war*”: 4 occurrences).

*Calculate Frequency:*

*Frequency* = × 100

If 105 occurrences out of 438 total relate to *“POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IS A PHYSICAL CONFRONTATION,”* the frequency is 24%.

*Interpretation:* This frequency shows how common the metaphor is. Then, it is compared across metaphors to determine the most prevalent.

3.2.2. Metaphor interpretation (Multi-level view - Kövecses, 2017) – qualitative methods (RQ2)

After being selected as a conceptual metaphor, the *“attack”* metaphor was analyzed under the MLV approach as follows:

*Image Schema:* The metaphor follows a Source–Path–Goals schema, representing the direction and purpose of the attack in a political context.

*Domain:* The metaphor is categorized under the domain *“POLITICS IS A PHYSICAL BATTLE,”* reflecting the adversarial nature of political competition.

*Frame:* The metaphor frames rhetorical attacks as strategic maneuvers in a political battle, aiming to achieve victory.

*Mental Spaces:* The *“attack”* metaphor creates a mental space of a power struggle between Democrats and Republicans. It emphasizes the competition for power, particularly highlighting the Republicans’ efforts to gain support from Latino voters, positioning the Democrats as being under threat.

3.2.3. Metaphor explanation (Critical Metaphor Analysis – Charteris-Black, 2004) – qualitative methods (RQ3)

*Ideology:* The *“attack”* metaphor implies an ideological stance that frames political competition as a constant struggle for power, with electoral victory as the primary goal. This perspective often prioritizes winning over other objectives like social justice or policy advancement.

*Historical Background:* The metaphor is deeply rooted in the history of U.S. political competition, particularly in electoral contexts. It reflects a long-standing belief that political parties are perpetually battling for power and influence.

*Power Relations:* The metaphor highlights the power dynamics between political parties, such as the Republicans’ efforts to erode Democratic support among Latino voters. It also suggests that Democrats are in a defensive position, striving to protect their coalition and maintain power.

Chapter 4. COMMON SUB-DOMAINS WITHIN CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS *“POLITICS IS WAR”* IN THE AMERICAN POLITICAL NEWS DISCOURSE

4.1. Common sub-domains/ generic metaphors of the conceptual metaphor *“POLITICS IS WAR”*

The analysis of data identified 438 distinct conceptual metaphors within the *“POLITICS IS WAR”* framework, categorized into 8 generic groups based on shared source domains. In the context of the U.S. 2022 mid-term elections, 40 linguistic expressions exemplified the use of war metaphors, reflecting how political activities are framed as combative and strategic. These metaphors were further broken down into specific and intermediate levels. The following are the details of the findings:

**Table 1.**

***Frequency of conceptual metaphor occurrence***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Generic Conceptual Metaphor** | **Intermediate Conceptual Metaphor** |
| **1** | POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IS A PHYSICAL CONFRONTATION | 1. POLITICAL INVOLEMENT/  ARRANGEMENT/  PARTICIPATION IS PHYSICAL AGGRESSION  (*attack, fight*)  2. ELECTORAL RESULT IS A CONFLICT OUTCOME (*defeat*)  3. POLITICAL ADVERSITY IS PHYSICAL HARM (*destroy, kill, hit*)  4. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES ARE WARFARE (*strike*)  5. POLITICAL ENDEAVOUR ARE BATTLES (*struggle*)  6. POLITICAL APPROACH IS WARFARE ENGAGEMENT (*war*) |
| **2** | ELECTORAL CONTEST IS AN ORGANIZED CONFLICT | 1. POLITICAL CHALLENGES ARE THREATENING PHYSICAL ATTACKS (*assault, fire*)  2. POLITICAL STRATEGIES ARE VIOLENT REACTIONS (*backfire*)  3. POLITICAL COMPETITION IS VIOLENT FIGHTS (*battle*) |
| **3** | POLITICAL APPROACH IS MILITARY OPERATION | 1. POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING IS BATTLE STRATEGIC EXECUTION (*strategy, strategist, deploy*,  *campaign, launch*)  2. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES ARE MILITARY/ STRATEGIC ACTION (*command, conquer, invade*  *siege*)  3. POLITICAL AMBITIONS ARE MILITARY OBJECTIVES (*target, territory*)  4. A POLITICAL STRATEGY IS A MILITARY WEAPON (*weapon*) |
| **4** | POLITICAL ELECTION IS A DEFENSIVE BATTLE FOR POWER | 1. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IS SOCIAL/  RELIGIOUS PROTECTION (*defend*)  2. DEMOCRATIC GOVERNING IS PHYSICAL BLOW (*survive*) |
| **5** | POLITICAL SUCCESS IS A MILITARY SUCCESS OR ACHIEVEMENT | 1. GAINING POLITICAL ADVANTAGE IS WINING A BATTLE (*win*)  2. ELECTORAL SUCCESS  IS A MILITARY VICTORY (*victory*)  3. GIVING UP A POLITICAL ATTEMPT IS A MILITARY DEFEAT (*surrender*) |
| **6** | POLITICAL AUTHORITY IS MILITARY CONTROL | 1. POLITICAL POWER IS A MILITARY CAPTURE (*dominate*)  2. POLITICAL POWER IS A FORTIFICATION (*entrench*) |
| **7** | POLITICAL CONFLICTS ARE MILITARY HINDRANCE | 1. POLITICAL CHALLENGES ARE MILITARY RESISTANCE (*rebel, resist*)  2. POLITICAL ISSUES ARE MILITARY OBSTACLES (*threat, barrier*) |
| **8** | POLITICAL SUPPORTERS ARE MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS | 1. POLITICAL GROUPS ARE MILITARY UNITS (*arm, force, troop*)  2. POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP IS MILITARY ALLIANCE (*ally*) |

4.2. The most common subdomains in the conceptual metaphor POLITICS IS WAR

The study found eight common generic metaphors, with their prevalence determined by the total occurrences of related expressions. The key findings include:

Generic metaphor 1: POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IS A PHYSICAL CONFRONTATION – 24% of occurrences.

Generic metaphor 3: ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNERS ARE MILITARY STRATEGISTS – 23% of occurrences.

Generic metaphor 5: POLITICAL SUCCESS IS A MILITARY SUCCESS AND ACHIEVEMENT – 26% of occurrences.

Generic metaphor 8: POLITICAL SUPPORTERS ARE MILITARY UNITS – 10.2% of occurrences.

These percentages represent the ratio of each metaphor’s occurrence to the total number of metaphorical expressions analyzed, indicating their relative prominence in political discourse.

4. 3. Other findings related to Research Question 1

4.3.1. Variability in Metaphorical Richness

There is notable variability in metaphor richness across terms, revealed by their token-to-metaphor ratio. Terms like *“ally,”* *“fight,”* and *“strategy”* show a high proportion of metaphors relative to token count, indicating consistent metaphorical use. In contrast, terms like *“win”* and *“victory”* have substantial metaphorical usage but lower ratios. Some terms, like *“threat”* and *“war,”* have lower metaphor density, while others like *“backfire,” “trench,”* and *“resist”* consistently carry metaphorical weight. These findings highlight the diverse and nuanced use of metaphors in political discourse, reflecting how political concepts are framed and communicated.

4.3.2. Central Themes

The findings for RQ1 reveal that the metaphors depict politics as a competitive arena shaped by rivalry, social and racial struggles, the defense of democracy, and strategic political maneuvers. Themes include political rivalry, parallels to social and racial dynamics, defending democratic values through legislative battles, and strategic planning akin to military operations.

4.4. Revisiting the research question

The study identifies 438 specific metaphors within the *“POLITICS IS WAR”* framework in political news discourse, revealing dominant themes such as PHYSICAL CONFLICT, STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT, and MILITARY VICTORY. Unlike previous studies, this research offers more detailed categorization and focuses on frequency to measure dominance, aligning with Lakoff and Johnson’s cognitive tools. It highlights the importance of hierarchical cognitive structures like image schemas and domains for deeper analysis, identifying 24 new intermediate conceptual metaphors. This approach provides a richer, more detailed understanding of political processes than previous research.

4.5. Reflection on the findings about analytical frameworks

Addressing RQ1 posed challenges due to a lack of explicit criteria, reliance on intuition, and complex domain structures, leading to ambiguity in metaphor analysis. To improve reliability, the study introduces clear criteria, expert collaboration, and contextual and hierarchical analysis. It addresses the difficulty of identifying metaphors in individual words or phrases due to subjective interpretation, suggesting principles like comparing meanings and analyzing domain hierarchies. Two examples illustrate solutions: Case 1 resolved differing interpretations of *“campaign”* by mapping it as a metaphor for military strategy, and Case 2 clarified that *“won”* fits within the domain of war using hierarchical analysis.

Chapter 5. CONCEPTUAL STRUCTURES WITHIN CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR *“POLITICS IS WAR”*

5.1. Findings and discussion on metaphorical structures of generic metaphor 1

***5.1.1. Findings of metaphorical structures of generic metaphor 1***

***Table 3.***

***Main findings of MLV analysis of the conceptual metaphor “POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IS A PHYSICAL CONFRONTATION.”***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Specific aspects** |
| **Image Schemas** | FORCE: Compulsion and Resistance |
| BALANCE: Equilibrium |
| EXISTENCE: Removal |
| LOCOMOTION: Source-Path-Goal |
| **Domains** | Political Engagement as Physical Aggression |
| Electoral Result as Conflict Outcome |
| Political Adversity as Physical Harm |
| Political Activities as Warfare |
| Political Endeavor as Battles |
| Political Approach as Warfare Engagement |
| **Frames** | Competition and Struggle |
| Aggression and Confrontation |
| Defense and Protection |
| Strategic Maneuvering |
| Triumphs and Setbacks |
| **Mental Spaces** | Gerrymandering as an assault on voter rights, Trump’s rhetoric toward immigrants, Democratic internal disputes |
| Donald Trump takes action to sabotage or prevent the passage of the infrastructure bill. |
| Ms. Castro’s progressive social agenda is a battleground where opposing forces clash, influencing her strategic decisions and rhetorical positioning. |
| Biden’s political identity is maintained through his tough-on-crime policies and assertive approaches to governance. |
| Opposing proposals for public financing of campaigns and independent redistricting committees cause disputes within Democrats. |
| The Democratic Party faces challenges and vulnerabilities to build and maintain electoral support among demographic groups and in competitive states. |

5.1.2. Discussion on metaphorical structures of generic metaphor 1

5.1.2.1. IMAGE SCHEMAS: Foundational cognitive structures for mapping POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT into PHYSICAL CONFRONTATION

The FORCE schema is central to the metaphor *“POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IS A PHYSICAL CONFRONTATION”* in political discourse, framing politics as an aggressive battle where actors try to overpower opponents. Examples like *“fight for control”* and *“struggles of the Democrats”* demonstrate how political actions are metaphorically depicted as physical confrontations. Other schemas, such as EXISTENCE, LOCOMOTION, and BALANCE, add depth by invoking ideas of survival, movement, and power balance.

5.1.2.2. DOMAINS: The organizing structures for the mapping of POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT into PHYSICAL CONFRONTATION

The metaphor *“POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IS A PHYSICAL CONFRONTATION”* draws from the domain of physical conflict, using terms like *“attack,” “destroy,”* and *“struggle”* to frame political activities. Basic domains rooted in physical experiences, like “attack,” help interpret political engagement, while abstract domains extend this to broader conflicts, like the *“war on drugs.”* Political actions are metaphorically mapped as conflict, with party infighting as *“fights”* and threats to democracy as efforts to *“destroy.”*

5.1.2.3. FRAMES: Cognitive tools for specific perspectives about political engagement competition and struggle

The metaphor *“POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IS A PHYSICAL CONFRONTATION”* frames politics as a competitive struggle using terms like *“attack,” “destroy,”* and *“struggle.”* It emphasizes:

*Competition:* Phrases like *“fight for control”* depict politics as intense battles for power and influence.

*Aggression:* Political actions mirror physical confrontations, reflecting assertive tactics.

*Defense:* Politics is framed as defending democracy and interests against threats.

*Strategy:* Political actors plan tactical moves to advance their agendas.

*Outcomes:* Political results are seen as victories or defeats, shaping the course of agendas.

5.1.2.4. MENTAL SPACES: Elaboration and facilitation of mapping political engagement into physical confrontation

In the metaphor *“POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IS A PHYSICAL CONFRONTATION,”* mental spaces activate frames of aggression, defense, and competition. Terms like *“attack”* and *“fight”* depict politics as adversarial, with political actions interpreted as aggressive maneuvers against threats. Defeats are likened to losing battles, while elections are framed as victories or losses that shape power dynamics. Mental spaces also facilitate innovative mappings, such as framing threats to democracy as destructive forces.

5.2. Findings and discussion on metaphorical structures of generic metaphor 3

***5.2.1. Findings of metaphorical structures of generic metaphor 3***

**Table 4.**

***Main findings of MLV analysis of the conceptual metaphor “ELECTORAL CAMPGINS ARE MILITARY OPERATIONS”***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Specific aspects** |
| **Image Schemas** | FORCE: Enablement, Blockage |
|
| LOCOMOTION: Source-path-goal |
|
| **Domains** | Political campaigning as strategic battle execution |
| Political activities as military/strategic action |
| Political ambitions as military objectives |
| A political strategy is a military weapon |
| **Frames** | Strategic thinking |
| Tactical decision-making |
| Deliberate political focus |
| The weaponization of social issues and political discourse |
| **Mental Spaces** | Senator Mark Warner criticizes the perceived strategy of obstructing the passing of a significant infrastructure investment bill |
| The Republican Party adopted the overall shift tactics, particularly under the leadership of Mitch McConnell. |
| The campaign’s efforts to connect with Latino voters and highlight the importance of this demographic group in the electoral calculus of the election are deliberate and strategic |
| The tactic of manufacturing outrage around critical race theory (CRT) in order to exploit and capitalize on underlying fears and anxieties within certain segments of society. |
| Suffrage restriction was not merely a passive barrier but an active instrument employed to achieve a specific political outcome. |

5.2.2. Discussion on metaphorical structures of generic metaphor 3

5.2.2.1. IMAGE SCHEMAS: Foundational cognitive structures for mapping ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS into MILITARY OPERATIONS

The metaphor *“ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS ARE MILITARY OPERATIONS”* highlights the strategic and goal-driven nature of campaigns using two key schemas: FORCE and Source-Path-Goal.

*Force Schema:* Electoral campaigns are likened to military strategies, focusing on exerting influence, overcoming obstacles, and controlling outcomes. Terms like *“deployed politicians”* and *“commanding lead”* emphasize the calculated and adversarial nature of campaigns.

*Source-Path-Goal Schema:* This schema represents campaigns as strategic movements toward objectives, with terms like *“weapon”* and *“target”* reflecting deliberate planning and resource allocation to achieve political goals.

5.2.2.2. DOMAINS: The organizing structures for the mapping of ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS into MILITARY OPERATIONS

Domain matrices and hierarchies map electoral campaigns onto military operations by organizing related concepts like *“deploy,” “command,”* and *“strategy”* into structured frameworks.

*Domains:* Matrices align political actions such as *“command”* and *“strategy”* with military counterparts, highlighting their organized, goal-oriented nature.

*Hierarchies:* Domain hierarchies structure sub-domains like *“divide-and-conquer,”* emphasizing strategic planning in both political and military contexts.

*Political planning:* The metaphor parallels military and political strategies, with terms like *“top-down strategy”* reflecting calculated maneuvers.

*Conflict mapping:* Political activities are framed as physical conflict, enhancing the understanding of the strategic nature of campaigns.

5.2.2.3 FRAMES: Cognitive tools for specific perspectives about electoral campaigns

The metaphor *“ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS ARE MILITARY OPERATIONS”* focuses on strategic and tactical political decision-making.

*Strategic thinking:* Political actors engage in calculated planning, using power, offensive messaging, and counter-strategies to achieve goals.

*Tactical adaptability:* Campaigns adjust to divisive issues, target new voter territories, and respond to changing dynamics.

*Deliberate focus:* Specific demographic groups, like Latino voters or voters of color, are strategically targeted through policies and messaging.

*Weaponization of issues:* Social issues such as racism and crime are deliberately used to influence public opinion and gain electoral advantage.

5.2.2.4. MENTAL SPACES: Elaboration and facilitation of mapping political campaigns into military operations

The metaphor *“ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS ARE MILITARY OPERATIONS”* maps political dynamics onto military strategies, enhancing our understanding of electoral tactics.

*Frames activates mental spaces:*Political actions, like deploying key figures or using a *“divide-and-conquer”* strategy, are framed as tactical military maneuvers to weaken opposition.

*Strategic planning and tactical decision-making:* The metaphor highlights the parallels between political planners and military strategists, emphasizing leadership, expertise, and targeted outreach for electoral success.

*Instrumental nature of electoral tactics:* Electoral maneuvers, like using racism or suffrage restrictions, are seen as coercive tools, strategically weaponized to influence public opinion.

*Facilitation of innovative metaphorical mappings:* The metaphor fosters comparisons between political strategies and military operations, such as GOP tactics targeting Latino voters or spreading disinformation as military maneuvers.

5.3. Findings and discussion on metaphorical structures of generic metaphor 5

5.3.1. Findings of metaphorical structures of generic metaphor 5

**Table 5.**

***Main findings of MLV analysis of the conceptual metaphor “POLITICAL SUCCESS IS A MILITARY VICTORY”***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Specific aspects** |
| **Image schemas** | LOCOMOTION: Source-path-goal |
|
| **Domains** | Gaining political advantage is winning a battle |
| Electoral success is a military victory |
| Giving up a political attempt is a military defeat |
| **Frames** | Struggle for dominance |
| Political triumphs |
| Strategic maneuvering and mobilization |
| Ethical considerations |
| **Mental Spaces** | The National Party is determined to gain the majority of votes. |
| Despite demographic changes favoring the Democratic Party, these shifts have not translated into their clear victories. |
| Republicans aimed to achieve their political objectives and goals by stymying Democratic policy initiatives and resisting compromise. |

5.3.2. Discussion on metaphorical structures of generic metaphor 5

5.3.2.1. IMAGE SCHEMAS: Foundational cognitive structures for mapping POLITICAL SUCCESS into A MILITARY VICTORY

The Source-Path-Goal schema serves as a conceptual foundation for understanding political success as a journey that mirrors military victory, emphasizing the deliberate and strategic nature of political efforts that lead to success. For example, the metaphor *“political victory”* demonstrates a structured progression from the starting point (source), through the journey of negotiation and persuasion (path), to the achievement of passing a bill (goal). Similarly, the metaphor *“win”* aligns with the Source-Path-Goal schema by highlighting the organized and strategic progression from initial efforts (source), through deliberate activities (path), to a successful electoral outcome (goal).

*5.3.2.2 DOMAINS:* *The organizing structures for the mapping of POLITICAL SUCCESS into A MILITARY VICTORY*

In the metaphorical framework *“POLITICAL SUCCESS IS A MILITARY VICTORY,”* domain matrices and hierarchies provide a structured way to understand and analyze political achievements by drawing parallels with military victories.

*Domains as organizing structures:* The domain matrices of *“victory”* and *“win”* represent different facets of political success, such as electoral triumphs and strategic achievements. For instance, terms like *“overwhelming victory,”* *“victory party,”* and *“landslide victory”* are akin to decisive military wins, emphasizing the scale and significance of political achievements.

*Hierarchical organization of domains:*Common themes between political and military contexts include:

*+ Political conflict and struggle:* Conflict and struggle in both war and political campaigns involve intense opposition and aggressive tactics.

*+ Political strategy and planning:* Just as in warfare, detailed strategic planning is crucial in political campaigns to achieve victory.

*+ Political victory and loss:* Victory and defeat are central themes in both domains, with success being the ultimate goal and avoiding defeat essential.

*+ Political alliance:* Alliances and coalitions in politics are paralleled by military alliances, both of which are vital for achieving success.

*+ Political persistence:* Overcoming challenges and persistence are significant in both political and military contexts, where sacrifices are necessary for ultimate success.

*Mapping Political Activities into Physical Conflict:* This framework organizes political achievements as military triumphs, enhancing the understanding of electoral dynamics through themes of conflict, strategy, and victory.

*5.3.2.3. FRAMES: Cognitive tools for specific perspectives about political success*

The metaphor *“POLITICAL SUCCESS IS A MILITARY VICTORY”* highlights parallels between political and military triumphs, focusing on competition, strategy, and ethics.

*Frames of the struggle for dominance:*These frames emphasize the competitive nature of politics, where political factions and parties are portrayed as opposing forces vying for control.

*Frames of Political Triumphs:*These frames depict political success as significant milestones that signal power and influence.

*Frames of strategic maneuvering and mobilization:* These frames emphasize the importance of strategic planning and mobilization in achieving political success.

*Frames of ethical considerations:* These frames address the ethical dimensions of political strategies, emphasizing the importance of aligning political actions with democratic principles and integrity.

*5.3.2.4. MENTAL SPACES: Elaboration and Facilitation of Mapping Political Success into A Military Victory*

The conceptual metaphor *“POLITICAL SUCCESS IS A MILITARY VICTORY”* activates mental spaces that structure the discourse around political strategies, competition, and coalition-building, allowing these political elements to be conceptualized as military operations.

*Elaboration of the Mappings Process*

The mapping process from political success to military achievement involves activating mental spaces that highlight key aspects such as competition, victory, coalition-building, and strategic maneuvering.

*+ Competition and Triumph in Electoral Races:* Mental spaces related to competition and triumph frame electoral races as strategic battles, where candidates and parties use tactics to secure victory, much like in military campaigns.

*+ Coalition-Building and Demographic Shifts:* Mental spaces concerning coalition-building and demographic shifts contribute to the metaphorical mapping by emphasizing the importance of forming alliances and adapting strategies to changing political landscapes.

*Facilitating Innovative Metaphorical Mappings*

The metaphor *“POLITICAL SUCCESS IS A MILITARY VICTORY”* also facilitates innovative conceptual mappings that enrich the understanding of political strategies by applying military logic.

*Strategic Depth in Political Actions:* By framing political actions as military strategic moves, the metaphor encourages viewing political maneuvers through the lens of military planning, including the allocation of resources, timing, and managing public perception.

*Cognitive Tools for Deepening Understanding:* Innovative metaphor mappings, such as viewing the use of race in politics as a tactical weapon, serve as cognitive tools that deepen the understanding of political maneuvers.

*Cross-Domain Juxtaposition:* Mental spaces allow for the juxtaposition of political and military domains, enhancing the interpretation of political strategies.

5.4. Findings and discussion on metaphorical structures of generic metaphor 8

5.4.1. Findings of metaphorical structures of generic metaphor 8

**Table 6**

***Main findings of MLV analysis of the conceptual metaphor “POLITICAL SUPPORTERS ARE MILITARY UNITS.”***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Specific aspects** |
| **Image Schemas** | CONTAINMENT: Container |
| SPACE: Center-periphery |
| **Domains** | Political groups are military units |
| Political relationship is military alliance |
| **Frames** | Influence and power of political groups in decision making |
| Influence and power of political groups in passing legislative agenda |
| Influence and power of political groups in overturning political results |
| **Mental Spaces** | President Biden and those who support his progressive policies may work together to advance shared objectives. |
| A collective group of individuals may collaborate with Turner in various ways. |
| While the caucus traditionally supports incumbents and allies, there are indications of a potential shift toward embracing new voices and approaches. |

5.4.2. Discussion on metaphorical structures of generic metaphor 8

5.4.2.1. IMAGE SCHEMAS: Foundational cognitive structures for mapping POLITICAL SUPPORTERS into MILITARY UNITS.

The metaphorical framework *“POLITICAL SUPPORTERS ARE MILITARY UNITS”* uses the image schemas of CONTAINER and CENTER-PERIPHERY to conceptualize the relationship between political supporters and political entities.

*CONTAINER Image Schema:* the CONTAINER schema highlights how political supporters are metaphorically enclosed within the boundaries of a political campaign or party, similar to how military units are organized.

*CENTER-PERIPHERY Image Schema:* The use of *“arm”* can also invoke the CENTER-PERIPHERY schema, where political supporters occupy a central and vital role in the campaign.

*Source-Path-Goal Image Schema:* The metaphorical use of *“ally”* in political contexts can also involve the Source-Path-Goal schema.

5.4.2.2. DOMAINS: The organizing structures for the mapping of POLITICAL SUPPORTERS into MILITARY UNITS

The metaphorical framework “POLITICAL SUPPORTERS ARE MILITARY UNITS” uses the domains of *“arm”* and *“ally”* to structure and organize the relationship between political supporters and political entities, drawing parallels to military units and alliances.

*Domains as organizing structures:* The metaphor of *“arm”* emphasizes specialized roles within political organizations, similar to military units. Each *“arm”* within a political organization, such as endorsement committees or advocacy groups, plays a role in enhancing the organization’s overall effectiveness, much like different military units support the overall mission.

*Hierarchical organization of domains:* The metaphor of *“arm”* is hierarchically organized to highlight specialized roles within a political organization, much like different units within a military structure. The metaphor of *“ally”* is organized around the concept of military alliances, emphasizing supportive relationships in politics.

*Mapping political supporters into military units:* The domains of *“arm”* and *“ally”* facilitate the conceptualization of political supporters as military units or allies, enabling the analysis of political dynamics through a familiar framework of military strategies and alliances.

5.4.2.3. FRAMES: Cognitive tools for specific perspectives about political coalition

The metaphorical frameworks *“POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IS MILITARY SUPPORT”* and *“POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP IS MILITARY ALLIANCE”* provide a structured way to understand political influence, collaboration, and strategic maneuvering by drawing parallels with military actions.

*Frames emphasizing influence and power:*

*+ Strategic actions as tools:* In *“POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IS MILITARY SUPPORT,”* frames highlight the significant influence and power that specific political groups or entities wield in shaping political decisions and outcomes.

*+ Organizational entities in elections:* Frames in this context also underscore the critical role of strategic and organizational entities within political parties during elections.

*Frames highlighting alliances and collaboration:*

*+ Political alliances as military partnerships:* In *“POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP IS MILITARY ALLIANCE,”* frames illustrate how alliances and partnerships are crucial in advancing political agendas and achieving victories.

*+ Coalitions and support:* The frames also show how coalitions and influential support are vital for advancing specific political agendas.

5.4.2.4. MENTAL SPACES: Elaboration and facilitation of mapping political Supporters into military units

*Elaboration of the mappings process*

The metaphor *“POLITICAL SUPPORTERS ARE MILITARY UNITS”* creates mental spaces that help us understand political engagement and relationships through the lens of military operations.

*+ Political engagement is military support:* This mental space highlights the strategic influence and power of political entities, framing them as organized, hierarchical structures similar to military units.

*+ Political relationship is military alliance:* In this mental space, political relationships are framed as alliances, akin to military partnerships formed to achieve common goals.

*Facilitation of innovative metaphorical mappings*

The mental spaces derived from the metaphor *“POLITICAL SUPPORTERS ARE MILITARY UNITS”* allow for innovative metaphorical mappings that enrich our understanding of political dynamics.

*+ Strategic and coordinated support:* The framing of political entities like the Black caucus as influential and strategically organized groups draws parallels with military units coordinating efforts in support of broader missions.

*+ Collaborative alliances:* In the mental space *“POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP IS A MILITARY ALLIANCE,”* the emphasis on collective involvement and collaboration between political actors and their supporters aligns with the dynamics of military alliances.

5.5. Discussion of the research question: How is the conceptual metaphor *“POLITICS IS WAR”* conceptually structured?

5.5.1. Revisiting the research question

The multi-level view analysis reveals how our understanding of politics is deeply influenced by the metaphor of war, offering insights into the ways in which political dynamics are conceptualized.

*IMAGE SCHEMAS: Foundational cognitive structures*

Image schemas provide the basic cognitive frameworks that map elements of warfare onto political engagement.

*DOMAINS: Organizing structures*

Domains act as organizing structures, translating elements of war into political contexts.

*FRAMES: Cognitive tools for structuring*

Frames provide specific perspectives on political engagement within the *“POLITICS IS WAR”* metaphor.

*MENTAL SPACES: Elaboration and facilitation*

Mental spaces illustrate the specific use of the *“POLITICS IS WAR”* metaphor by facilitating the mapping process.

5.5.2. Reflection on the Findings in relation to the theoretical framework and analytical framework

5.5.2.1. Theoretical framework

*Alignment with theory*

The Multi-Level View (MLV) analysis of the metaphor *“POLITICS IS WAR”* supports the cognitive linguistic view that metaphors shape our understanding of abstract concepts like politics by grounding them in physical experiences and extending them into more sophisticated mental representations.

*Contribution to theory*

The MLV analysis enriches the understanding of metaphorical thinking, emphasizing the depth and complexity of how metaphors shape our cognition.

5.5.5.2 Analytical framework

*Application of methods*

By building from basic cognitive structures (image schemas) to more complex frameworks (mental spaces), the method provided a thorough examination of how different cognitive levels shape the overall understanding of the metaphor.

*Methodological rigor*

The MLV analysis ensured a comprehensive understanding of the metaphor and highlighted the robustness of the MLV framework.

*Framework adaptation*

Adapting Kövecses’s levels of conceptualization ensured that each cognitive level was thoroughly addressed, effectively mapping out the metaphor’s conceptual architecture and revealing its depth and complexity.

*5.5.2.3 Limitations and improvements*

While the MLV analysis offers a robust framework, it highlighted the need for clearer guidelines for each layer of the analysis. Developing more detailed methodological steps for each cognitive level - image schemas, domains, frames, and mental spaces - would enhance the precision and replicability of future analyses.

**Chapter 6. FRAMING POLITICAL EVENTS**

**THROUGH THE LENS OF ‘WAR’ CONCEPTS**

6.1. Ideological foundations for the framing of War metaphors in political discourse

This section examines how ideologies like democracy protection, political accountability, and social justice underpin the use of war metaphors in political discourse, framing political activities as calculated and strategic battles.

6.1.1. War metaphors: Useful tools to frame ideologies of protecting democracy

War metaphors effectively frame political struggles to protect democracy by emphasizing the adversarial nature of political conflicts. In this metaphorical framework, democracy is portrayed as being *“under attack,”* with threats depicted as *“battles*” or *“wars”* aimed at undermining democratic norms. Furthermore, voter suppression tactics are likened to *“targets”* and *“weapons,”* underscoring the deliberate and calculated efforts to control voter demographics.

6.1.2. War metaphors: Useful tools to frame ideologies of political accountability

The analysis of WAR metaphors clearly highlights how political accountability and fairness are consistently framed through combative language. For instance, the metaphor of *“assault”* reflects the serious threat posed to electoral integrity, invoking war imagery to emphasize the dangers of disinformation. In a similar vein, the metaphor of *“backfire”* further illustrates the critical need for accountability in political messaging. Additionally, the metaphor of *“ally”* emphasizes the strategic importance of political alliances, drawing direct parallels to military cooperation. Likewise, metaphors such as *“arm”* and *“force”* underscore the organized and strategic nature of political leadership, further likening it to military operations where success ultimately depends on strong leadership, effective alliances, and clear communication.

6.1.3. War metaphors: Useful tools to frame ideologies of political strategies

By comparing political events to military operations, these metaphors highlight the strategic and combative nature of politics. For example, *“kill”* reflects the intensity of internal power struggles within parties, while *“victory”* and *“win”* emphasize the battle for control within the Democratic Party, driven by ideological tensions. Metaphors like *“ally,” “arm,”* and *“force”* underscore the role of alliances and strategy. Additionally, race is depicted as a political *“weapon”* in shaping strategies, with failure to address racial attacks leaving candidates vulnerable, as seen in the Virginia election.

6.1.4. War metaphors: Useful tools to frame ideologies of the political competitive nature and divides

By likening politics to a battlefield, these metaphors emphasize the need for persistence, planning, and tactical thinking to succeed. The metaphor of *“struggle”* vividly captures internal and external political challenges, highlighting how adversarial dynamics shape legislative agendas and electoral outcomes. Similarly, “defeat” underscores the win-or-lose nature of political power struggles. The role of strategists and the concept of *“strategy”* further stress the importance of careful planning and tactical expertise in navigating the political landscape, much like military commanders.

6.1.5. War metaphors: Useful tools to frame ideologies of racial equality and social justice

War metaphors effectively frame the fight for racial equality and social justice by emphasizing the persistence, determination, and tactics needed to address systemic challenges. Phrases like “ready for those battles” highlight the ongoing struggle and determination required in local politics. Activists' efforts are depicted as “waging battles,” underscoring continuous engagement. Metaphors like “target” and *“weapon”* express how racial issues are manipulated to exploit social divides, much like war tactics used to maintain power dynamics.

6.1.6. War Metaphors: Useful Tools to Frame Ideologies of Civil Engagement and Public Participation

War metaphors effectively frame civic engagement and public participation by emphasizing the competitive and strategic nature of political campaigns. Terms like “battles” underscore the competition for voter demographics, while metaphors like *“ally,” “arm,”* and *“force”* highlight the importance of coalition-building and advocacy. These metaphors convey the high stakes and persistence needed for political success and social change, likening it to a military campaign.

6.2. The power relations in the conceptual metaphor *“POLITICS IS WAR”*: explanations for the framing of war metaphors in political discourse

This section of the research explores the power relations within the collected data, shedding light on the use of war metaphors to frame political events under the conceptual metaphor *“POLITICS IS WAR”*.

6.2.1. The parallels between the adversarial nature of political information and media control and war concepts: reasons for politics-into-war mapping

6.2.1.1. Historical backgrounds for framing the adversarial nature of political information and media control into war concepts

The historical roots of politics and media shape the use of war metaphors in modern political discourse. Political power struggles have long been portrayed as battles, from Roman Republic alliances and propaganda (Taylor, 2023; Pfeijffer & Enenkel, 2004) to today’s media framing of politics as conflict (Mazzoleni, 2000; Jameson & Entman, 2004). Rhetorical strategies have been weaponized, as seen in Cold War anticommunist rhetoric undermining civil rights (Lewis, 2004) and recent attacks labeling Barack Obama as a “communist” (Parlett, 2014; Berlet, 2010). Racial and social divisions have also been manipulated, from Jim Crow to today (Domke, 2001; Smith, 2023; Messanga & Nzekaih, 2021), explaining the continued power of war metaphors in framing political battles.

6.2.1.2. Parallels between the adversarial nature of political information and media control and war concepts: explanations for the use of war metaphors to frame political events.

War metaphors effectively frame political events by emphasizing the adversarial nature of media and information control. Strategies involve manipulating racial and social divisions and weaponizing rhetoric. The internet and social media have intensified these battles, adding complexity to narrative control. Modern tactics like *“catch and kill”* reflect historical methods of narrative suppression. Biden's reference to voting rights suppression as an *“assault”* on democracy and Trump's *“scorched-earth”* tactics highlight the use of war metaphors to emphasize strategic political actions. Labels like *“socialism”* are weaponized to dominate discourse, continuing the historical struggle for power and influence in media (Mazzoleni, 2000; Berlet, 2010; Smith, 2023).

6.2.2. Parallels between the adversarial nature of social and racial dynamics and war concepts: reasons for politics-into-war mapping

6.2.2.1. Historical backgrounds for framing social and racial dynamics into war concepts

The historical context of racial and social justice movements often uses war metaphors to depict the intense struggle against systemic oppression. The Civil Rights Movement (1950s-1960s) employed military-like tactics and terms such as the *“battle for desegregation”* to emphasize the fight for justice (Tofiño, 2024; McAdam, 1996). Systemic oppression, like Jim Crow laws, has been described as an *“assault”* on democracy, reflecting efforts to disenfranchise Black voters (Daniels, 2020; Kohler-Hausmann, 2021). The Voting Rights Act of 1965 increased Black voter registration and office-holding (Cascio & Washington, 2012), with terms like *“defeat”* symbolizing ongoing racial inequalities (Harshita et al., 2021). Similarly, the Anti-Apartheid Movement (1948-1994) used war metaphors, strategic alliances, and economic sanctions to combat South Africa’s racist policies (Bolsmann, 2007; Lubotzky & Arieli, 2021).

6.2.2.2. Parallels between the adversarial nature of social and racial dynamics and war concepts: explanations for the use of war metaphors to frame political events.

Social and racial dynamics are often framed through war metaphors, emphasizing adversarial interactions between groups. Political campaigns describe securing votes from marginalized communities as *“battles,”* such as the *“battle for Latino voters.”* Systemic oppression is seen as an entrenched enemy, with terms like *“assault”* on democracy used to highlight the aggressive tactics that disenfranchise marginalized groups. Within the Democratic Party, Black voters’ influence is critical, with *“defeat”* illustrating both their importance and the challenges faced by marginalized candidates. Racial dynamics are strategically manipulated, as seen in Nixon’s *“war on drugs,”* targeting Black communities. Similarly, racially charged attacks are portrayed as part of a *“winning message,”* urging political parties to address these strategies (Daniels, 2020; Kohler-Hausmann, 2021; Bolsmann, 2007).

6.2.3. Parallels between the adversarial nature of political battles over power and war concepts: reasons for politics –into-war mapping

6.2.3.1. Historical backgrounds for framing political battles over power into War concepts

War metaphors have long framed political power struggles, especially in partisan conflict. During the Civil Rights Movement, the fight for racial equality and segregationist backlash were depicted as military struggles, pushing Democrats left and Republicans right (McAdam, 2015; Tofiño, 2024). The Republican Southern Strategy used racial tensions as an *“attack”* on civil rights (Maxwell & Shields, 2019; Black, 2021). The Watergate scandal was framed as a “battle” to restore democracy, with Nixon using aggression to maintain power (Liebovich, 2003; Arnold & Roos, 1974). Similarly, the Vietnam War exposed deep divisions within the Democratic Party, a split still evident today (Wells & Gitlin, 1994; Noel, 2016).

6.2.3.2. Parallels Between the Adversarial Nature of Political Battles over Power and War Concepts: Explanations for the Use of War Metaphors to Frame Political Events.

War metaphors vividly capture the aggressive struggle for dominance, control, and influence in politics. For example, a *“conservative attack”* illustrates intense competition as parties use aggressive tactics for advantage. The metaphor of *“assault”* reflects Republican efforts to regain influence in Congress, while *“target”* shows how specific voter groups are controlled, often disadvantaging minorities. The metaphor of *“weapon”* emphasizes how public opinion is manipulated, and *“kill”* captures efforts to defend democracy from systemic threats. Internal party conflicts are also framed as war, with metaphors like *“victory”* and *“win”* reflecting power struggles within the Democratic Party. (Maxwell & Shields, 2019; Liebovich, 2003).

6.2.4. Parallels between the adversarial nature of strategic and tactical planning and war concepts: reasons for politics-into-war mapping

6.2.4.1. Historical backgrounds for framing strategic and tactical planning into war concepts

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 illustrates intense legislative *“battles”* where strategic planning and coalition-building were key to overcoming opposition (Purdum, 2014; Loevy, 1990). President Johnson navigated the bill through Congress using complex strategies (Rodriguez & Weingast, 2003). Military metaphors, like *“fight,”* highlight the adversarial nature of policy changes and the strategic efforts required. This approach, seen in the U.S. Constitution's creation (Robertson, 2020) and Roosevelt's New Deal (Bruner, 2020), persists in modern campaigns, such as Obama’s data-driven strategy in 2008 targeting key demographics (Smith, 2018).

6.2.4.2. Parallels between the adversarial nature of political battles over power and war concepts: Explanations for the use of war metaphors to frame political events.

War metaphors in politics highlight power dynamics in strategic planning, especially in legislative battles and campaigns. For instance, President Biden’s push for the infrastructure bill is framed as a battle, reflecting intense negotiations. Similarly, campaigns use war-like strategies, targeting voter groups and deploying messaging to gain an edge. Political alliances are likened to war-time partnerships, such as between Ms. Essaibi George and former Mayor Walsh. These metaphors also reveal internal party struggles, with factions vying for power, as seen with Black voters' influence in the Democratic Party. Terms like *“backfire”* underscore the risks of poorly executed strategies (Smith, 2018).

6.3. Discussion of the findings to research question: “Why are the metaphorical concepts of “WAR” so employed to frame political events and issues?”

6.3.1. Revisiting the research question: “Why are the metaphorical concepts of “WAR” so employed to frame political events and issues?”

This research shows how war metaphors reveal key ideologies of power and politics. Politics is framed as a battlefield, where media control and information are crucial. Social justice movements are depicted as battles, requiring persistent efforts to fight systemic oppression. War metaphors also highlight political conflicts, portraying engagement as competitive and aggressive, with gains for one side meaning losses for the other. Ideologically, these metaphors emphasize the defense of democracy, racial equality, and electoral integrity, reflecting the seriousness and strategy involved in political relationships and campaigns.

6.3.2. Reflection on the findings of the theoretical framework and analytical framework

6.3.2.1. Reflection on theoretical framework

This research examines the metaphor *“POLITICS IS WAR”* to explore power relations and ideology in political discourse. It highlights the adversarial and strategic nature of politics, showing how metaphors serve as tools for power and influence. Unlike studies by Lakoff et al., which view metaphors as cognitive tools, this research integrates power dynamics, emphasizing how metaphors shape political realities. Other studies focus on cognitive effects or cultural contexts without directly linking them to power structures. This research ties war metaphors to themes like democracy, political accountability, and social justice, framing them as strategic efforts to protect these values.

6.3.2.1. Reflection on analytical framework

The research emphasizes the robust combination of Multi-level View (MLV) and Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) to examine the *“POLITICS IS WAR”* metaphor. This analytical framework provides a clear methodology for identifying and interpreting metaphors, applicable to various political contexts. Additionally, the framework’s focus on power relations and ideologies enables a detailed understanding of how political actors use metaphors to strategically navigate power dynamics and achieve their goals.

Chapter 7. CONCLUSION

**7.1. Recapitulation**

This research explores the metaphor *“POLITICS IS WAR”* in recent American political discourse, motivated by its influence on public opinion, particularly after the January 6th Capitol riot. Focusing on journalists' use of war metaphors to frame events, the study analyzes their frequency, structure, and the power dynamics they convey. It examines common subdomains, conceptual structure, and reasons for war metaphors in politics. Using cognitive linguistics, multi-level view analysis, and Critical Metaphor Analysis, the research analyzes metaphors from The New York Times (2021-2023), uncovering how these metaphors reflect deeper social, historical, and power relations.

7.2. Key findings

7.2.1. Dominant generic conceptual metaphors within POLITICS IS WAR

The analysis identifies 438 conceptual metaphors, grouped into 24 intermediate metaphors like PHYSICAL AGGRESSION and MILITARY VICTORY, which are further condensed into 8 broader categories, such as POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IS A PHYSICAL CONFRONTATION and POLITICAL SUCCESS IS A MILITARY SUCCESS. This study uniquely categorizes all 438 metaphors, revealing new and commonly recognized ones.

***7.2.2. Conceptual structure in MLV analysis within POLITICS IS WAR***

In this research, four dominant metaphors - specifically generic metaphors 1, 3, 5, and 8 - are selected for deeper analysis using the multi-level view (MLV) framework. Starting from image schemas, which map basic physical experiences like force and balance onto political engagement, the analysis then moves to domains that structure knowledge about political dynamics through matrices and hierarchies.

7.2.3. Power relations and ideologies in conceptual metaphor framing

The metaphorical concept of *“WAR”* is frequently used to frame political events and issues because it effectively captures the adversarial, strategic, and high-stakes nature of politics. This metaphor emphasizes ideologies such as politics being a battlefield, where control over media, social justice struggles, and inter- and intra-party conflicts are depicted as aggressive contests.

7.3. Implications

7.3.1. Theoretical implications

The research on the metaphor *“POLITICS IS WAR”* in American political discourse presents key theoretical advancements by extending Lakoff and Johnson’s Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). Through Multi-Level View Analysis (MLV), the study shows how basic physical experiences translate into complex mental representations, reinforcing the idea that metaphors are deeply embedded in thought. Additionally, the research emphasizes the role of power relations and ideologies in metaphorical thinking, revealing how metaphors function as tools for exercising power.

7.3.2. Methodological implications

The research on *“POLITICS IS WAR”* in American political discourse introduces several methodological implications for future studies in political linguistics and metaphor analysis. It highlights the significance of employing a comprehensive multi-level approach, integrating cognitive linguistics and Multi-Level View (MLV) analysis to examine metaphors across various cognitive levels, such as image schemas, domains, frames, and mental spaces. Additionally, the integration of Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) adds layers of understanding by connecting metaphors to historical backgrounds, power relations, and ideologies.

***7.3.3. Practical Implications***

The research on the metaphor *“POLITICS IS WAR”* provides a groundbreaking methodological approach combining Critical Metaphor Analysis and Multi-Level View for studying metaphors in political language, making it a crucial resource for researchers and students in cognitive linguistics.

7.4. Limitations and recommendations for future research

7.4.1. Limitations

The main limitations of the study are:

- The research is confined to the New York Times, potentially overlooking diverse perspectives found in other media outlets.

- The study primarily focuses on American political discourse, ignoring potential variations in metaphor usage across different cultures.

- While the study links war metaphors to ideologies, it falls short in comprehensively examining the complex interplay between various ideologies and the influence of emerging political trends.

7.4.2. Recommendations for Future Research

To overcome the limitations of the current study on the metaphor *“POLITICS IS WAR,”* future research should:

- Expand media and temporal scope: Include a wider range of media outlets and time periods to capture a more comprehensive picture of metaphor usage in political discourse.

- Investigate additional metaphorical domains: Analyze metaphors beyond *“POLITICS IS WAR,”* such as “*POLITICS IS BUSINESS”* or *“POLITICS IS THEATER,”* to gain a more holistic understanding of political metaphor usage.

LIST OF PUBLISHED STUDIES

Nguyễn Mạnh Tuấn (2020). Multi-level view of conceptual metaphors’ framework: an application to metaphors for covid 19. *2020 International Graduate Research Symposium & 10th East Asia Chinese Teaching Forum,* 553-566. University of Languages and International Studies, VNU: Vietnam National University Press, Hanoi.

Nguyễn Mạnh Tuấn (2021). Applying Top-down and Bottom-up Approaches to solve the methodological problems of Conceptual Metaphor Analysis. *2021 International Graduate Research Symposium,* 842-852. University of Languages and International Studies, VNU: Vietnam National University Press, Hanoi.