

METAPHORIC MODELING OF THE CONCEPT OF WAR IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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War has been a central theme in human history, and its conceptualization has evolved over time through various metaphoric models. Metaphors shape how we perceive, discuss, and engage with war, influencing everything from military strategy to political discourse and public perception. This article explores different metaphorical frameworks used to model war and their implications, with examples from English fiction book.

The concept of conceptual metaphor is addressed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, who argue that the structure of thought reflects the structure of human activity [Lakoff, Johnson 1980].

Metaphorization, as described by Lakoff, involves mapping concepts from a well-known source domain to a less understood target domain to facilitate comprehension. This allows abstract or complex ideas to be grasped through more familiar experiences.

Example: War as a Game

Source domain: Games (e.g., chess, football)

Target domain: War

Mapping:

War is structured with strategies and rules → Like a game with defined moves

Generals and commanders are players → Like team captains or chess masters

Victories and losses in battle → Like winning or losing a match

In Ender's Game by Orson Scott Card, war is metaphorically conceptualized as a game where Ender and his peers believe they are training in a simulated environment. The metaphor blurs the line between reality and strategy, making them perceive war as something controlled and winnable like a game, even when real consequences emerge.

This metaphor influences how people perceive war—sometimes trivializing its real consequences when viewed purely as a strategic contest rather than a human tragedy.

One of the most common metaphoric models of war is that of a game. This framework emphasizes strategy, rules, and competition, framing war as a structured contest where one side emerges victorious based on skill and tactics. This perspective is evident in military simulations, war games, and strategic planning, which borrow terminology from sports and board games (e.g., "chess-like strategy," "winning move"). While this model highlights planning and foresight, it can also trivialize the human cost of war by reducing it to a mere competition.

Another powerful metaphor presents war as a disease or plague that spreads, infects societies, and must be eradicated. This model is often used in anti-war rhetoric, highlighting war's destructive and uncontrollable nature. Phrases such as "the war epidemic" or "violence is like a virus" reinforce the idea that war is a pathological condition requiring treatment. This perspective calls for peace efforts as a means of healing, though it can also oversimplify the causes of war by depicting it as an external affliction rather than a human-driven phenomenon. In *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut, the horrors of war are depicted as a kind of mental and societal disease, affecting not only soldiers but also entire generations. The novel's disjointed narrative mirrors the trauma war inflicts on the human mind.

In the modern industrial and technological age, war is often metaphorically conceptualized as a machine. This model emphasizes efficiency, mechanization, and systematic execution, where soldiers are seen as "cogs in the war machine." This perspective is particularly relevant in discussions of mechanized warfare, drone strikes, and cyber warfare. While it highlights logistical precision and technological advancements, it can also dehumanize combatants and civilians by reducing them to components in a larger mechanism. George Orwell's 1984 portrays a society where perpetual war serves as a means of maintaining control. The war is described in mechanical and bureaucratic terms, emphasizing how governments manipulate war like an impersonal machine.

The metaphor of war as fire is commonly used to depict its destructive power and rapid spread. Phrases like "the flames of war" or "war ignited" suggest an uncontrollable and consuming force. This model is useful in emphasizing the chaos and devastation caused by conflicts, but it can also imply inevitability, reducing the potential for human agency in preventing or resolving war. In *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien, war is often described as a spreading fire, particularly in references to Sauron's conquests. The imagery of burning lands and smoldering battlefields reinforces the uncontrollable destruction of war.

In some contexts, war is metaphorically framed as a journey or odyssey, portraying soldiers as travelers navigating through trials and hardships. This model is often used in personal narratives of veterans, emphasizing endurance, transformation, and heroism. While it humanizes the experience of war, it can also romanticize the concept by focusing on individual struggles rather than collective suffering.

The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien depicts the Vietnam War through the personal journeys of soldiers, both physical and psychological. The war experience is presented as an arduous and transformative journey, deeply affecting the characters.

With the rise of the military-industrial complex, war is frequently modeled as a business venture, with investments, costs, profits, and stakeholders. This metaphor sheds light on the economic motivations behind conflicts and the role of arms trade, military contracts, and war economies. While it is a pragmatic approach to understanding war's financial aspects, it can also encourage a commodification of conflict, where ethical considerations take a backseat to

economic interests. Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* satirizes the war economy, illustrating how war profiteers manipulate conflict for financial gain. The novel exposes the absurdity of treating war as a business opportunity.

Zoomorphic metaphor correlates birds and animals with the military realities: a bird – slang word for a helicopter (Dickson, 2004, 236, 338) and a hawk – a term for cold weather (Dickson, 2004, 311).

Metaphoric modeling of war shapes our understanding and responses to conflicts. While these metaphors provide frameworks for analysis, they also influence policies, strategies, and public attitudes toward war. By critically examining these models, we can gain deeper insights into how war is perceived and potentially challenge narratives that perpetuate violence. A more nuanced and conscious use of metaphors can help foster a broader discourse on conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

References:

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