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METAPHORICAL FRAMING OF CONFLICT, PEACE AND SECURITY : A CORPUS BASED CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF MILITARY PRESS RELEASES

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Abstract

Military press releases constitute a strategically significant form of institutional discourse through which military institutions communicate operational developments, construct narratives of national security, and shape representations of conflict and peace. Such discourse frequently employs cognitive and persuasive resources, particularly conceptual metaphors, to frame military actions, legitimize institutional positions, and construct particular understandings of geopolitical developments. The present study investigates the metaphorical framing of conflict, peace, and security in official press releases issued by Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). The study draws on a corpus comprising of ISPR press releases published during the second half of the calendar year 2024. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) serves as the theoretical foundation, while Charteris-Black's (2004) Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) provides the analytical framework. AntConc (Version 4.3.1), a corpus analysis software, is employed to identify and examine recurring metaphorical patterns, their linguistic realizations, and their contextual functions. The findings reveal that conceptual metaphors play a significant role in constructing institutional narratives of conflict, representing military actions, and communicating broader perspectives on national and international peace and security. Furthermore, religious, ideological, and nationalist metaphorical framings contribute to legitimizing institutional positions and reinforcing particular interpretations of military responsibilities and geopolitical realities. The study demonstrates that metaphorical framing operates as a significant discursive resource in military strategic communication through which conflict, peace, and security are linguistically constructed, ideologically positioned, and communicated to the public. It contributes to the understanding of the relationship between cognitive metaphor, institutional discourse, and the exercise of discursive power in Pakistan's military communication.

Keywords: *Conceptual Metaphors, Military Press Releases, Source Domain, Target Domain.*

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1. Introduction

The twenty-first century has witnessed significant transformations in the ways information is produced, disseminated, and interpreted, particularly in relation to matters of national and public interest. The rapid circulation of information through institutional and digital communication channels has increased public access to socio-political developments, regional affairs, and geopolitical situations. In this context, military institutions occupy a significant position in communicating strategic developments, national security concerns, and their institutional responses to emerging regional and international challenges. Public awareness of the strategic role of military institutions has consequently become an important dimension of contemporary national and geopolitical discourse. Technological advancement has further transformed information dissemination by facilitating access to institutional communication and expanding opportunities for public engagement with strategic information (Ekanayake & Wishart, 2014).

Language plays a fundamental role in constructing and communicating institutional perspectives, particularly in strategically sensitive domains such as military communication. The emergence of cognitive linguistics as an interdisciplinary branch of linguistics has introduced a significant perspective on understanding how language reflects human cognition and constructs meaning. Within this discipline, metaphors are recognized not merely as linguistic embellishments but as cognitive resources through which abstract experiences, ideological positions, and complex socio-political realities are conceptualized. The use of metaphors in institutional communication, particularly press releases, provides opportunities to construct particular interpretations of events, reinforce institutional identities, and establish relationships between institutions and their audiences. In public relations, the press release genre serves as an important medium for disseminating institutional information, communicating organizational positions, and maintaining relationships with diverse stakeholders (Majeed & Zahra, 2021). In military strategic communication, these functions acquire additional significance because institutional messages frequently address sensitive matters concerning conflict, national sovereignty, defence, peace, and security.

The relationship between language and cognition has received considerable scholarly attention through the development of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT).

Traditionally, metaphors were predominantly regarded as literary devices employed to enhance the aesthetic and expressive qualities of language. However, the development of cognitive linguistics, particularly through the contributions of George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, and other cognitive linguists, established a different understanding of metaphor as a fundamental mechanism of human thought and conceptualization. Cognitive linguistics approaches the relationship between language and cognition from a usage-based perspective, emphasizing the role of experience, context, and meaning construction in linguistic communication (Dąbrowska & Divjak, 2015). According to Conceptual Metaphor Theory, abstract concepts are frequently understood through more concrete and familiar experiences, establishing systematic relationships between source and target domains. These conceptual mappings enable individuals to interpret complex phenomena through familiar patterns of human experience. Conceptual metaphors are generally categorized into structural, orientational, and ontological metaphors, each representing different dimensions of conceptual organization and meaning construction.

Metaphors are particularly significant in political, institutional, and military discourse because they provide cognitive and linguistic resources for interpreting complex realities and communicating particular ideological perspectives. Metaphorical systematicity facilitates the understanding of abstract concepts by foregrounding selected dimensions of experience while potentially backgrounding alternative interpretations. Consequently, metaphors do not merely represent existing realities; they also contribute to the construction of contextualized meanings and influence the ways in which particular events and experiences are understood (Lakoff & Johnson, 2024). In military communication, such metaphorical representations may contribute to framing conflict as a struggle, peace as stability or harmony, and security as protection, defence, or safeguarding national sovereignty. Through these conceptual associations, military institutions can construct coherent narratives concerning operational developments, national interests, geopolitical challenges, and their institutional responsibilities.

Military press releases constitute a particularly significant genre for examining the metaphorical construction of conflict, peace, and security. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) serves as an official military communication platform through which information concerning military operations, national security developments, defence initiatives, and regional and international engagements is disseminated. These press releases provide an important linguistic resource for examining how military-related developments are represented and communicated to the public. Beyond their informational function, such institutional texts may employ metaphorical expressions to frame military actions, characterize security challenges, construct representations of adversarial relationships, and communicate broader narratives of national interest and regional peace. The examination of these metaphorical patterns offers an opportunity to investigate how

linguistic choices contribute to the construction of institutional meanings and ideological perspectives within Pakistan's military strategic discourse.

The significance of metaphorical framing becomes particularly evident when examining the interconnected dimensions of conflict, peace, and security. Conflict-related metaphors may construct representations of military confrontation, threats, resistance, and operational responses. Similarly, peace-related metaphors may communicate ideas of stability, reconciliation, cooperation, and regional harmony. Security-related metaphors may foreground national protection, sovereignty, defence, and institutional responsibilities. These metaphorical representations are not necessarily independent; rather, they may interact to establish an integrated institutional narrative through which military activities and geopolitical developments are interpreted. Furthermore, religious, ideological, and nationalist conceptualizations may contribute to the construction of particular meanings concerning national identity, collective responsibility, military legitimacy, and the pursuit of peace and security.

Despite the significance of military communication in shaping public understanding of national and geopolitical developments, comparatively limited scholarly attention has been directed towards the systematic examination of conceptual metaphors in the genre of military press releases. Existing research has explored institutional communication, metaphorical representations, and related dimensions of public discourse (Ali et al., 2024; Chigbu et al., 2025; Majeed & Zahra, 2021). Nevertheless, the metaphorical framing of conflict, peace, and security within Pakistan's military press releases remains an area requiring further investigation. In particular, the relationship between metaphorical expressions, their underlying conceptual mappings, and their ideological and persuasive functions requires a systematic corpus-based examination. This research gap provides the rationale for investigating how conceptual metaphors are employed in Pakistan military press releases to construct and communicate institutional perspectives on conflict, peace, and security.

To address this gap, the present study examines a corpus comprising 174 press releases issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) during the second half of the calendar year 2024. The study draws upon Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory as its theoretical foundation and Charteris-Black's (2004) Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) as its analytical framework. AntConc (Version 4.3.1) is employed as a corpus analysis tool to identify recurring metaphorical expressions and investigate their linguistic patterns within the selected corpus. Through the integration of corpus-assisted analysis and critical metaphor interpretation, the study seeks to move beyond the identification and classification of metaphorical expressions towards an examination of their contextual meanings, ideological associations, and institutional functions. Particular attention is given to how metaphorical representations construct

narratives of conflict, communicate perspectives on peace, and reinforce particular understandings of national and international security.

The study is expected to contribute to the fields of cognitive linguistics, corpus linguistics, critical discourse studies, and military strategic communication by providing a systematic account of metaphorical framing in Pakistan's military institutional discourse. It further offers insights into the relationship between cognitive metaphor, ideological representation, and discursive power, particularly in the construction of institutional narratives concerning conflict, peace, and security. By examining the metaphorical resources employed in official military communication, the research seeks to develop a deeper understanding of how language functions as a strategic resource for constructing meanings, communicating institutional positions, and negotiating public legitimacy within Pakistan's contemporary geopolitical context. The study aims to critically examine the conceptual metaphors employed in Pakistan military press releases to investigate how conflict, peace, and security are metaphorically framed and how these metaphorical representations perform ideological, persuasive, and institutional functions.

1.1. Research Objectives

1. To identify and classify the conceptual metaphors employed in ISPR military press releases for framing conflict, peace, and security.
2. To examine the underlying conceptual mappings and contextual meanings associated with the identified metaphors.
3. To critically investigate the ideological, persuasive, and institutional functions of conceptual metaphors in constructing narratives of conflict, peace, and security.

The press releases issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) hold considerable significance in the context of military strategic communication, providing institutional representations of military activities, conflict situations, national security concerns, and regional and international geopolitical developments. These press releases constitute an important source of information through which the military communicates its institutional positions, operational developments, and perspectives on national and international peace and security. Examining their metaphorical expressions facilitates an understanding of the underlying conceptual meanings, ideological associations, and persuasive dimensions embedded within military discourse. In this regard, the present study investigates how conceptual metaphors contribute to the metaphorical framing of conflict, peace, and security and how these representations construct particular interpretations of military activities and institutional responsibilities. The research is expected to provide a valuable contribution to future investigations of metaphorical framing in institutional and strategic communication. Furthermore, the identification, classification, and critical interpretation of conceptual metaphors will extend the application of cognitive linguistics to military discourse and offer researchers a broader

understanding of the relationship between language, cognition, ideology, and institutional meaning construction.

Military press releases serve as an important institutional medium for disseminating information about regional geopolitical developments, national security challenges, defence initiatives, and military responses to emerging threats. Their language extends beyond the transmission of factual information by employing cognitive and metaphorical resources to construct particular representations of conflict, peace, and security. The underlying meanings of these institutional messages are frequently communicated through metaphorical expressions that establish conceptual associations between military experiences and broader socio-political realities. In particular, metaphorical representations of inter-services cooperation, national defence, operational preparedness, sovereignty, and collective responsibility contribute to constructing institutional narratives concerning national interests and security objectives. Such representations may also communicate perspectives on regional stability, international peace, and the military's institutional role in addressing security challenges. Furthermore, metaphorical language can foreground particular dimensions of geopolitical developments while backgrounding alternative interpretations, thereby contributing to the ideological and persuasive functions of military communication. Metaphors may also facilitate the expression of complex military and strategic concepts by filling lexical gaps and providing alternative conceptual representations of specialized experiences and institutional realities (Vasylenko, 2022).

The significance of the present study therefore lies in examining the relationship between metaphorical language and the construction of military strategic discourse. By investigating the conceptual mappings and contextual meanings embedded in ISPR press releases, the research seeks to explain how conflict, peace, and security are linguistically represented and ideologically positioned. It further examines how these metaphorical constructions contribute to institutional communication, the legitimization of military responsibilities, and the negotiation of public understanding of national and geopolitical developments. The corpus-based approach provides a systematic means of identifying recurring metaphorical patterns, while Critical Metaphor Analysis facilitates their interpretation in relation to institutional purposes, ideological perspectives, and discursive power. Consequently, the study is expected to enrich existing scholarship in cognitive linguistics, corpus linguistics, and critical discourse studies while providing a foundation for future researchers interested in metaphorical framing within military, political, and other forms of strategic institutional communication.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Cognitive Linguistics and Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Cognitive Linguistics emerged as an interdisciplinary approach to the study of language, cognition, and meaning construction, challenging several assumptions associated with formal and generative approaches to language. Unlike approaches that primarily emphasize the structural and formal properties of linguistic expressions, cognitive linguistics investigates the relationship between language and human conceptualization through experience, embodiment, mental imagery, categorization, and usage-based processes. The development of cognitive linguistics was significantly influenced by the contributions of George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, and Leonard Talmy, who advanced alternative perspectives on the relationship between linguistic structures and human cognition (Wen & Taylor, 2021, p. 1). This approach recognizes language as a cognitive and meaning-making resource through which individuals conceptualize their experiences and interpret the surrounding socio-cultural and physical environment.

A major contribution to cognitive linguistics was Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) influential publication *Metaphors We Live By*, which established a foundational perspective for understanding metaphors as fundamental mechanisms of human thought rather than merely literary or rhetorical devices. Their Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) explains how abstract concepts are understood through more concrete and familiar experiences by establishing systematic relationships between source and target domains. These relationships operate through conceptual mappings, enabling individuals to interpret complex experiences and abstract phenomena through familiar conceptual structures. Conceptual metaphors consequently influence the ways in which individuals understand social realities, cultural experiences, political developments, and ideological positions. Lakoff's (1987) publication *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* further developed cognitive approaches to meaning construction by examining embodied cognition, prototype theory, and radial categories, demonstrating the significance of conceptual organization in understanding language and human experience (Honeck, 1989).

Within the context of military strategic communication, Conceptual Metaphor Theory offers a valuable theoretical foundation for examining how abstract and complex concepts such as conflict, peace, and security are represented through familiar conceptual experiences. Military communication frequently addresses complex phenomena involving national sovereignty, defence, confrontation, operational preparedness, regional stability, and international relations. Such phenomena may be conceptualized through source domains associated with WAR, JOURNEY, FAMILY, BODY, HEALTH, RELIGION, and NATURAL FORCES. For instance, the conceptualization of CONFLICT AS WAR, PEACE AS HARMONY, or SECURITY AS PROTECTION provides cognitive associations through which institutional perspectives on military and geopolitical

developments can be communicated. These conceptual mappings do not simply facilitate linguistic expression; they may also foreground particular dimensions of military realities while backgrounding alternative interpretations. Accordingly, CMT provides an appropriate theoretical foundation for investigating the cognitive mechanisms underlying metaphorical representations in ISPR press releases.

2.2. Critical Metaphor Analysis and Military Strategic Discourse

Although Conceptual Metaphor Theory explains the cognitive mechanisms through which metaphors organize human understanding, examining their ideological and persuasive functions requires a complementary analytical perspective. Building upon developments in critical discourse studies, particularly Fairclough's (1995) contributions, Jonathan Charteris-Black (2004) developed Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) as an analytical framework for investigating the relationship between metaphor, discourse, ideology, and persuasion (Imani, 2022). CMA extends metaphor analysis beyond the identification of linguistic expressions by examining their contextual meanings, ideological associations, and persuasive functions within particular communicative situations.

Charteris-Black (2004, pp. 34–41) proposed three interconnected analytical stages: metaphor identification, metaphor interpretation, and metaphor explanation. The identification stage involves recognizing metaphorical expressions within a particular text or corpus. The interpretation stage examines their contextual meanings and underlying conceptual mappings by considering the relationship between source and target domains. The explanation stage investigates the ideological, persuasive, and communicative purposes served by the identified metaphors within their broader socio-political and institutional contexts. This systematic approach provides an opportunity to investigate not only how metaphors are linguistically constructed but also why particular metaphorical representations are employed and what meanings they communicate.

The integration of corpus linguistics with Critical Metaphor Analysis further strengthens the systematic examination of metaphorical expressions. Corpus-assisted approaches facilitate the identification of recurring linguistic patterns, frequency distributions, and contextual occurrences, while critical interpretation provides insights into the ideological and persuasive dimensions of metaphorical language (Gil, 2019; Moragas-Fernández et al., 2018). Consequently, CMA offers an appropriate analytical framework for examining military strategic communication, where linguistic choices may contribute to constructing institutional identities, legitimizing military responsibilities, and communicating particular perspectives on national and international developments. In this regard, metaphors may function as discursive resources for framing conflict, representing peace, and constructing narratives of national security.

The application of CMA has extended across different forms of public and institutional discourse, including political speeches, media reports, economic communication, corporate discourse, and institutional press releases. Charteris-Black's (2004, 2011) investigations of political rhetoric demonstrate the significance of conceptual metaphors in constructing persuasive arguments and communicating ideological positions. His work, including *Politicians and Rhetoric*, examines how metaphorical representations employed by influential political figures, including Winston Churchill, George W. Bush, Tony Blair, and Barack Obama, contribute to political persuasion and ideological framing. These investigations demonstrate how metaphorical source domains may be strategically employed to construct representations of political situations, national identities, conflict, and collective responsibility.

Similarly, metaphor analysis has been employed to investigate organizational communication and corporate discourse. Research by Koller (2004, 2008, 2021), Brennan and Merkl-Davies (2013), and Fuoli (2018) demonstrates the relevance of metaphorical and critical discourse approaches to examining organizational representations, corporate identities, and institutional communication. In the health sector, metaphorical framing has also received considerable scholarly attention, particularly in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic and its public communication. Studies by Semino et al. (2021) and Wicke and Bolognesi (2020) illustrate how metaphors contribute to communicating complex health-related developments and constructing particular interpretations of emerging crises. Further research has examined metaphorical representations in environmental and disaster-related communication (Nerlich & Jaspal, 2021), climate change discourse (Koteyko, 2010), European financial and economic crises (Musolff, 2020; White, 2003), and communication and media-related press releases (Alkhammash, 2021; Coombs & Holladay, 2018).

These investigations establish the applicability of metaphor analysis across diverse institutional and public communication contexts. However, military strategic communication represents a particularly significant area because its discourse frequently addresses sensitive matters concerning conflict, defence, national sovereignty, peace, and security. The examination of metaphorical framing within military press releases therefore provides an opportunity to extend critical metaphor research towards understanding how military institutions construct and communicate their perspectives on geopolitical realities, operational developments, and institutional responsibilities.

2.3. Empirical Studies on Metaphorical Framing in Political, Military and Institutional Discourse

Chigbu et al. (2025) investigated the use of conceptual metaphors by Nigerian military leaders in post-coup proclamations, particularly examining how metaphorical expressions contributed to constructing legitimacy for newly established military regimes.

The study was conducted within the Nigerian political context and focused on the discursive strategies employed by military leaders to rationalize the overthrow of existing governments and justify their subsequent political authority. The researchers examined 13 post-coup proclamations issued between 1966 and 1999, employing Critical Metaphor Analysis as the analytical framework. The findings identified three dominant metaphorical patterns through which the competing representations of former and newly established regimes were constructed. These metaphorical representations contributed to legitimizing military interventions and establishing particular ideological perspectives concerning political authority. The study provides an important contribution to the understanding of metaphorical framing within military and political discourse. Nevertheless, its focus on post-coup proclamations and regime legitimacy differs from the present research, which investigates the metaphorical construction of conflict, peace, and security in official military press releases.

Cotter et al. (2021) explored conceptual metaphors in public discourse concerning obesity, a significant global health concern. The study examined how metaphorical expressions were employed across different forms of public communication, including research-based discussions, health campaigns, and personal narratives. Drawing upon Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the researchers investigated the pragmatic functions of metaphors and their contributions to communicating social meanings and encouraging particular interpretations and actions. The findings revealed metaphorical framings associated with addiction, epidemics, and religion, demonstrating how conceptual metaphors facilitate the communication of complex social and health-related issues. The study highlights the importance of contextual metaphorical interpretation in understanding social attitudes and the persuasive functions of public discourse. Its relevance to the present research lies in demonstrating how metaphorical framing contributes to the construction of particular interpretations of complex societal issues.

Kazemian and Hatamzadeh (2022) examined conceptual metaphors associated with the COVID-19 pandemic through a comparative analysis of American English and Persian. The researchers developed a comparatively extensive American English corpus and compiled additional data from online sources and influential news websites. Conceptual Metaphor Theory provided the theoretical foundation, while Kövecses's model informed the analytical examination of source and target domain mappings. The study investigated similarities and differences in metaphorical conceptualization across the two languages, particularly focusing on the representation of the pandemic through metaphorical expressions. Its findings revealed differences in the emergence and use of novel metaphorical representations in Persian and American English. The research demonstrates the importance of contextual and cross-linguistic variation in metaphorical framing and provides insights into how complex global developments are conceptualized

through language. This perspective is relevant to the present investigation because military press releases also communicate complex and evolving geopolitical situations through context-dependent metaphorical representations.

Lapka (2021) investigated conceptual metaphors as persuasive linguistic resources in English political discourse. The study examined public speeches delivered by influential political figures, including Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, David Cameron, and Theresa May. A corpus comprising 28 political speeches was developed to investigate four prominent conceptual metaphors: NATION IS A FAMILY, STATE IS A BODY, POLITICS IS WAR, and POLITICS IS A GAME. The findings demonstrated that conceptual metaphors perform multiple persuasive and ideological functions in political communication. Among the identified source domains, WAR emerged as a particularly influential conceptual domain for structuring political discourse, whereas GAME was comparatively less prominent. The study illustrates how metaphorical source domains contribute to constructing political realities and influencing the interpretation of institutional and national developments. Its findings are particularly relevant to the present research because the WAR source domain is also significant for examining how military institutions represent conflict, security challenges, and defence-related activities.

Wardani (2021) investigated metaphorical conceptualizations of the COVID-19 pandemic in press releases issued by Indonesia's Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kominfo). The study examined press releases published between March and October 2020, focusing on metaphor identification, contextual interpretation, and communicative functions. The findings identified nine frequently occurring metaphors, which were organized around three prominent conceptualizations: PANDEMIC IS WAR, PANDEMIC IS A GHOST/SPECTRE, and PANDEMIC IS A MONSTER. The study demonstrated that metaphors functioned as rhetorical and persuasive resources for communicating complex developments and constructing particular understandings of the pandemic. Furthermore, the findings highlighted the significance of metaphorical framing in institutional press releases, particularly in presenting complex information through familiar conceptual associations. This study provides a relevant methodological and empirical foundation for the present research because both investigations examine metaphorical representations within official institutional press releases. However, the present study extends this research direction to the military communication domain by investigating the metaphorical framing of conflict, peace, and security in ISPR press releases.

The reviewed literature demonstrates that Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Critical Metaphor Analysis have been extensively applied to political rhetoric, health communication, corporate discourse, environmental communication, and institutional press releases. Previous investigations have established that metaphors perform important

cognitive, ideological, and persuasive functions by providing conceptual structures through which complex events and abstract realities are communicated. Studies such as Chigbu et al. (2025) have examined metaphorical representations in military proclamations, while Wardani (2021) has demonstrated the relevance of metaphor analysis to institutional press releases. Similarly, Lapka (2021) has highlighted the persuasive significance of WAR-related conceptual metaphors in political discourse.

Despite these contributions, the metaphorical framing of conflict, peace, and security in official military press releases remains an area requiring further corpus-based and critical investigation, particularly within the Pakistani institutional context. Existing military-related metaphor research has largely addressed political legitimacy and military interventions rather than systematically examining the interconnected representations of conflict, peace, and security in contemporary military strategic communication. Furthermore, there is a need to investigate how recurring conceptual metaphors are linguistically realized, how their source and target domains construct contextual meanings, and how their ideological and persuasive functions contribute to institutional narratives.

To address this research gap, the present study examines 174 official press releases issued by Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) during the second half of the calendar year 2024. Drawing upon Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory as its theoretical foundation and Charteris-Black's (2004) Critical Metaphor Analysis as its analytical framework, the study investigates the conceptual metaphors employed to frame conflict, peace, and security. Through corpus-assisted identification and critical interpretation, the research aims to explain how metaphorical expressions construct institutional representations of military activities, communicate perspectives on geopolitical developments, and reinforce particular ideological and persuasive narratives concerning national and international peace and security. In doing so, the study seeks to extend existing scholarship on conceptual metaphor and critical discourse analysis by providing a corpus-based examination of metaphorical framing within Pakistan's military strategic communication.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Approach and Design

Research methodology provides a systematic process for investigating research problems through appropriate theoretical and analytical procedures. It establishes the foundations for data collection, analysis, interpretation, and the presentation of research findings. According to Patel and Patel (2019), "research methodology is the science of studying how research is done scientifically." The present study adopts a corpus-based qualitative research approach, supported by quantitative corpus-assisted techniques, to investigate the metaphorical framing of conflict, peace, and security in ISPR press releases. The qualitative dimension focuses on identifying, interpreting, and critically

explaining conceptual metaphors, whereas the quantitative dimension facilitates the examination of their frequency, distribution, and recurring linguistic patterns within the selected corpus.

The study employs an exploratory research design to investigate how conceptual metaphors are employed in military strategic communication and how they construct particular representations of conflict, peace, and security. The research draws upon Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) as its theoretical foundation and Charteris-Black's (2004) Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) as its analytical framework. These complementary approaches facilitate the identification of metaphorical expressions, interpretation of their underlying conceptual mappings, and critical examination of their contextual, ideological, and persuasive functions. The primary purpose is to move beyond the identification of metaphorical expressions towards understanding how military institutional discourse constructs meanings concerning national defence, geopolitical developments, regional stability, and international peace and security.

3.2. Data Sources and Corpus Compilation

The study utilizes secondary textual data collected from the official website of the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the official media and public relations organization of the Pakistan Armed Forces. The selected press releases constitute the primary textual material for examining metaphorical representations of conflict, peace, and security within Pakistan's military strategic communication. The data comprise 174 official ISPR press releases issued between 1 July and 31 December 2024. The selected period provides a defined temporal boundary for investigating the linguistic and metaphorical patterns employed in military institutional communication during the second half of the calendar year 2024.

The selected press releases address various military and geopolitical developments, including military operations, national defence, counterterrorism activities, regional security concerns, bilateral and multilateral relations, peace initiatives, and the sacrifices of military personnel in safeguarding national sovereignty. These thematic areas provide relevant textual contexts for examining how conflict, peace, and security are metaphorically represented through institutional communication. The collected press releases constitute a corpus of approximately 30,330 words, providing the textual foundation for the corpus-assisted identification and critical interpretation of conceptual metaphors.

The data were collected in November 2025 from the official ISPR website. The selection of this source is based on its institutional authenticity and relevance to the research objectives, as the press releases represent official military communication rather than independent journalistic interpretations. Only press releases published within the

specified six-month period and relevant to the broader themes of military activities, conflict, peace, and security were included in the corpus.

3.3. Corpus Preparation and Data Organization

Following data collection, the selected press releases were compiled into a structured textual corpus for systematic analysis. The documents were organized and prepared for corpus-assisted investigation by removing irrelevant formatting elements and retaining the original linguistic content of the press releases. Each document was assigned an identifiable filename to facilitate the organization, retrieval, and examination of individual texts. The compiled corpus was subsequently processed using AntConc (Version 4.3.1), which facilitated the exploration of recurring lexical items, frequency distributions, concordance lines, and collocational patterns.

The corpus-based approach provides an empirical foundation for identifying linguistic expressions potentially associated with metaphorical representations of conflict, peace, and security. Particular attention was given to lexical items and expressions occurring in contexts involving military operations, national sovereignty, security threats, defence strategies, regional stability, and peace-related developments. These expressions were subsequently examined in their immediate and broader textual contexts to determine their metaphorical status and conceptual significance.

3.4. Theoretical and Analytical Framework

The study employs Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) as its theoretical framework and Charteris-Black's (2004) Critical Metaphor Analysis as its analytical framework. Conceptual Metaphor Theory provides the foundation for examining the relationship between source and target domains through which abstract concepts are understood and represented. In the present study, particular attention is given to the conceptual mappings through which military and geopolitical phenomena are associated with familiar experiences and conceptual structures.

Critical Metaphor Analysis facilitates the systematic examination of metaphorical expressions through three interconnected analytical stages:

Metaphor Identification: This stage involves identifying potential metaphorical expressions within the selected ISPR press releases. AntConc is employed to explore lexical frequencies, concordance lines, and recurring linguistic patterns. The metaphorical status of identified expressions is subsequently established through contextual examination.

Metaphor Interpretation: The identified metaphorical expressions are examined within their textual and institutional contexts to establish their underlying conceptual mappings. Particular attention is given to source and target domains associated with conflict, peace, and security, including the conceptual relationships through which military activities and geopolitical developments are represented.

Metaphor Explanation: The final stage critically examines the ideological, persuasive, and institutional functions of the identified metaphors. It investigates how metaphorical representations contribute to constructing narratives of military responsibility, national sovereignty, defence, regional stability, and international peace and security.

The integration of these stages provides a systematic approach to understanding both the cognitive mechanisms and critical discourse functions of metaphors within ISPR press releases.

3.5. Data Analysis Procedures

The collected corpus is analysed through a combination of corpus-assisted techniques and qualitative critical interpretation. Initially, AntConc (Version 4.3.1) is used to generate word-frequency lists, concordance lines, and collocational patterns to identify recurring linguistic expressions within the corpus. These outputs provide an empirical basis for locating potentially metaphorical expressions and examining their distribution across the selected press releases.

Subsequently, the identified expressions are examined through Conceptual Metaphor Theory to establish their source and target domains and determine the conceptual mappings underlying their contextual meanings. The metaphorical expressions are then organized according to their relevance to the three principal dimensions of the study: conflict, peace, and security. Finally, Charteris-Black's (2004) Critical Metaphor Analysis is applied to interpret their ideological, persuasive, and institutional functions.

The analysis particularly investigates how metaphorical representations construct military activities, characterize security challenges, communicate perspectives on regional and international peace, and reinforce institutional narratives concerning national interests and sovereignty. This analytical procedure enables the study to move beyond descriptive identification towards a critical understanding of metaphorical framing within military strategic communication.

The official ISPR website provides an appropriate and institutionally authoritative source for investigating metaphorical framing in Pakistan military press releases. As the official military public relations organization, ISPR disseminates institutional information concerning military activities, defence initiatives, national security developments, and regional and international engagements. Its press releases therefore constitute relevant primary textual data for examining how the Pakistan military communicates its institutional perspectives on conflict, peace, and security.

The exclusive reliance on official military press releases also establishes consistency between the research title, objectives, research questions, and data source. Unlike newspaper columns or independent journalistic interpretations, official press releases provide direct access to the institutional discourse under investigation.

Consequently, the selected corpus offers a suitable foundation for examining the conceptual metaphors, contextual meanings, ideological associations, and persuasive functions employed in ISPR strategic communication.

Table 1: ISPR Press Releases (Jul-Dec, 2024)

Department	Year (2024)	PR
ISPR	July	26
	August	34
	September	19
	October	27
	November	41
	December	27
Total		174

Table 2: Newspaper Collected Sample

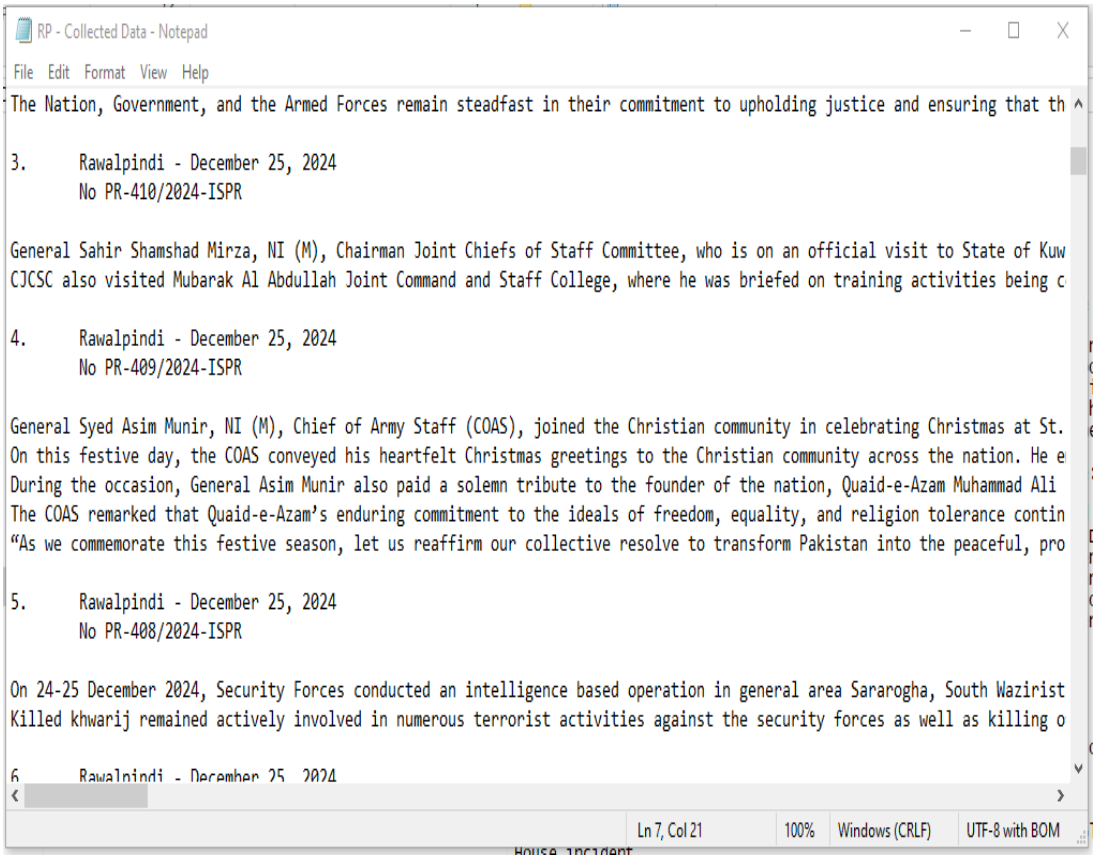
Department	Year (2024)	Columns
Newspapers	Dawn	19
	The Express Tribune	11
Total		**30**

Sampling techniques are broadly categorized into probability and non-probability methods (Omair, 2014). The present study employs purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, to select relevant ISPR press releases according to their relevance to the research objectives. A total of 174 press releases issued between 1 July and 31 December 2024 were selected, focusing on military activities, conflict, peace, national defence, and regional and international security developments.

The selected press releases were retrieved from the official ISPR website and compiled into Microsoft Word documents. Subsequently, the documents were converted into plain text files (.txt) to facilitate corpus analysis using AntConc (Version 4.3.1). Non-linguistic elements, including images, embedded objects, hyperlinks, formatting designs, and irrelevant textual material, were removed while preserving the original linguistic content. The prepared corpus, comprising approximately 30,330 words, was subsequently examined through Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Charteris-Black's (2004) Critical Metaphor Analysis. This procedure facilitated the identification, interpretation, and critical examination of conceptual metaphors employed to frame conflict, peace, and security in ISPR press releases.

Figure 1 : UTF-8 BOM (.txt) file

AntConc Version 4.3.1 was used for corpus analysis. The file my_corpus was



uploaded as the target corpus, while the built-in AmE06_A Press Reportage corpus served as the reference corpus. Keyword analysis generated more than 500 keywords, which were subsequently examined manually using the KWIC feature to identify potential metaphors. Steen et al.'s (2010) procedure guided metaphor identification, while Ahrens and Jiang's (2020) approach was adopted to verify source and target domains. Collocation analysis explored lexical associations, and dictionary meanings were compared with contextual meanings to establish the metaphorical status of identified expressions. The metaphors were then interpreted contextually through Charteris-Black's Critical Metaphor Analysis framework. Ambiguous cases were reviewed through peer consultation and specialist input.

The study followed principles of academic integrity, transparency, and responsible research. Only publicly available ISPR press releases were examined, with no attempt to access confidential or strategically sensitive information. The researcher maintained objectivity, avoided misleading interpretations, plagiarism, hate speech, and politically

motivated claims, and ensured that the analysis remained focused on the stated research objectives and scholarly contribution.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Metaphorical framing of peace, security, and conflict situations

4.1.1. Analysis of metaphors in ISPR press releases

1. Khawarij sent to hell

The recurring metaphorical expression Khawarij sent to hell constructs a strong ideological and moral representation of anti-state militant elements within the broader context of regional security and counterterrorism operations. The source domain of hell draws upon religious narratives associated with punishment, condemnation, and moral accountability, whereas the target domain refers to the ideological and physical defeat of militant groups involved in terrorist activities. This metaphor establishes a strong evaluative relationship between religious morality and national security. By associating militant elements with hell, the discourse constructs their activities as morally unacceptable and ideologically illegitimate. The religious source domain provides vivid imagery through which an otherwise abstract process of ideological condemnation and military defeat becomes comprehensible to the public. Furthermore, the metaphor strengthens the moral justification of counterterrorism operations by positioning the elimination of militant threats within a broader framework of religious values, national responsibility, and public security.

4.2. Intelligence-based Operation (IBO)

The expression intelligence-based operation represents a conceptual framing of military precision, strategic planning, and institutional coordination in counterterrorism activities. The source domain of intelligence draws upon knowledge, information, surveillance, and analytical expertise, while the target domain represents organized military action against security threats. The metaphorical significance emerges through the association of intellectual capabilities with physical military operations. Intelligence is therefore presented as an essential instrument for identifying threats, anticipating hostile activities, and facilitating targeted responses. Within ISPR press releases, this framing constructs military operations as systematic, evidence-informed, and strategically coordinated activities rather than arbitrary exercises of force. It also emphasizes the professional capabilities of security institutions and contributes to the public legitimization of counterterrorism strategies. Consequently, the expression connects informational superiority with operational effectiveness and national stability.

4.3. The Menace of Terrorism

The expression the menace of terrorism constructs terrorism as a persistent and destructive threat to national and regional stability. The source domain of menace evokes danger, fear, intimidation, and an impending threat, whereas the target domain refers to

terrorism as an organized socio-political phenomenon that undermines public safety, institutional stability, and national sovereignty. The metaphor transforms the abstract concept of terrorism into a recognizable threat with potentially devastating consequences for society. Its repeated use emphasizes the continuous nature of security challenges and reinforces the necessity of coordinated institutional responses. In the context of ISPR press releases, the metaphor frames counterterrorism as an essential responsibility of the state and its security institutions. It also establishes an ideological distinction between forces associated with national stability and those perceived as threatening public security.

4.4. Elimination of Khawarij

The metaphorical expression elimination of Khawarij constructs counterterrorism operations as a process of removing an established security threat from the national environment. The source domain of elimination draws upon the physical removal or eradication of an undesirable entity, while the target domain represents the dismantling of militant networks and the neutralization of terrorist threats. This expression extends beyond its literal military meaning by incorporating ideological, moral, and national dimensions. The use of elimination frames counterterrorism as a sustained institutional responsibility associated with protecting citizens, maintaining sovereignty, and restoring peace. Furthermore, the reference to Khawarij introduces a religious and historical dimension through which militant activities are presented as ideologically illegitimate. The metaphor consequently constructs military action as both a security-oriented intervention and a commitment to national stability.

4.5. Ideals of Global Peace

The expression ideals of global peace represents peace as an aspirational condition associated with international harmony, political stability, mutual cooperation, and collective security. The source domain of ideals refers to standards, principles, and desirable conditions, whereas the target domain of global peace represents an abstract international environment characterized by the absence of violence, conflict, and instability. The metaphor establishes peace as an attainable objective that requires continuous diplomatic, political, and institutional efforts. Within the context of ISPR discourse, this framing extends military responsibilities beyond territorial defence and connects national security with wider regional and international stability. It also positions Pakistan's security interests within a broader framework of international cooperation and peaceful coexistence.

4.6. Defending their Motherland

The expression defending their motherland constructs the country as an emotionally significant entity that requires continuous protection and collective commitment. The source domain of defending draws upon the physical protection of a

person, territory, or valuable possession against external threats, whereas the target domain refers to safeguarding national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and ideological identity. The metaphor transforms the abstract concept of national security into an emotionally meaningful responsibility. The use of motherland further personifies the country as a nurturing and protective figure, generating associations with belonging, sacrifice, loyalty, and national identity. In ISPR press releases, this metaphor extends the understanding of defence beyond conventional military engagements to include institutional service, national development, and the protection of public interests. Consequently, it strengthens the emotional connection between citizens, the armed forces, and the state.

4.7. Nation Remains Determined

The expression nation remains determined constructs the nation as a unified human agent possessing psychological strength, resilience, and the capacity to withstand adversity. The source domain of determination draws upon human qualities such as courage, perseverance, commitment, and purposeful action, while the target domain refers to the collective response of Pakistani society to terrorism, security challenges, and regional instability. The metaphor personifies the nation by attributing individual psychological characteristics to a collective political entity. It establishes national resilience as a significant resource in confronting security challenges. Within ISPR discourse, this framing promotes solidarity between the public and security institutions while constructing determination as an essential condition for overcoming conflict and maintaining national stability. It also generates emotional associations with patriotism, sacrifice, and collective responsibility.

4.8. Security forces of Pakistan

The expression security forces of Pakistan constructs national security as an institutional and collective responsibility. The source domain of security forces draws upon the concepts of protection, defence, surveillance, and organized institutional power, whereas the target domain encompasses the national security framework involving the armed forces, intelligence agencies, and other law enforcement institutions. The metaphor presents these institutions as protective mechanisms responsible for identifying, preventing, and responding to threats against the country. Its recurring use establishes a connection between institutional strength and national stability. Furthermore, the reference to Pakistan extends the metaphor beyond geographical territory to include national sovereignty, political identity, and collective interests. Within ISPR discourse, security institutions are consequently represented as essential agents in maintaining peace, protecting citizens, and countering terrorism.

4.9. Perpetuating acts of Terrorism

The expression perpetuating acts of terrorism constructs terrorism as a continuous and self-reinforcing process of violence and instability. The source domain of perpetuating

refers to the continuation or reproduction of an existing condition, whereas the target domain represents the repeated activities of militant organizations that threaten public safety and national security. This metaphor emphasizes the persistent character of terrorism rather than presenting it as an isolated incident. It also highlights the interconnected consequences of violence, insecurity, and institutional disruption. Within the context of ISPR press releases, the expression establishes the need for sustained counterterrorism measures, intelligence coordination, and institutional preparedness. The metaphor therefore frames terrorism as a recurring security challenge requiring continuous strategic attention.

4.10. Strengthen our resolve

The expression strengthen our resolve constructs national determination as an entity that possesses the capacity to increase or decrease in strength. The source domain of strength draws upon physical power, resilience, and resistance, whereas the target domain of resolve represents psychological determination, institutional commitment, and collective willingness to confront security challenges. This metaphor maps physical strength onto an abstract psychological and political condition. It suggests that national security requires more than military resources and operational capabilities; it also depends upon public confidence, institutional cohesion, and political commitment. Within ISPR discourse, the metaphor contributes to the construction of national resilience and collective resistance against terrorism and regional instability.

4.11. Analysis of metaphors in Pakistani print media

The second part of the analysis examines metaphorical representations in the two widely circulated English-language newspapers, Dawn and The Express Tribune. Using AntConc version 4.3.1, the newspaper corpus was explored to identify recurring metaphorical expressions associated with peace, security, terrorism, and geopolitical conflict.

Unlike the institutional discourse of ISPR, newspaper discourse provides an additional perspective through which military developments, diplomatic relations, and regional security challenges are represented. The identified metaphors demonstrate how linguistic choices contribute to the construction of public understanding, political interpretations, and evaluations of contemporary security situations.

4.12. Destabilize the Country

The expression destabilize the country constructs the state as an organized political and institutional structure that can be weakened or disrupted. The source domain of destabilization draws upon physical instability, structural weakness, and the loss of balance, whereas the target domain refers to the disruption of political institutions, national security, economic activities, and social harmony. The metaphor conceptualizes the country as a structured entity whose stability depends upon the effective functioning of its

institutions. In the context of terrorism and regional conflict, the expression highlights the potential consequences of militant activities and political instability for national sovereignty. It also establishes a relationship between internal security challenges and the broader functioning of the state. Through this framing, national stability becomes a central condition for economic development, institutional continuity, and public welfare.

4.13. Peace in the Region

The expression peace in the region represents peace as a desirable condition that requires collective political, diplomatic, and institutional efforts. The source domain of peace draws upon harmony, tranquillity, cooperation, and the absence of hostility, whereas the target domain refers to a stable regional environment involving neighbouring countries and their political relationships. The metaphor conceptualizes regional peace as a shared condition rather than an achievement restricted to an individual state. It highlights the interdependence of neighbouring countries in addressing terrorism, border insecurity, political tensions, and cross-border militant activities. Within the geopolitical context of Pakistan and Afghanistan, the expression also emphasizes the significance of diplomatic engagement and coordinated security measures. Consequently, regional peace is framed as a collective responsibility essential for economic cooperation, social development, and international stability.

4.14. Armed forces of Pakistan

The expression armed forces of Pakistan constructs the military as a protective institution responsible for safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity. The source domain of armed forces draws upon physical strength, organized defence, protection, and resistance against external threats, whereas the target domain represents the institutional role of the military in maintaining national security and responding to geopolitical challenges. In military and newspaper discourse, the armed forces are frequently conceptualized through protective imagery, particularly as a shield or defensive barrier against hostile activities. This metaphor establishes a relationship between military preparedness and national stability. It also emphasizes the institutional responsibility of the armed forces in responding to terrorism, border tensions, and other emerging security challenges. Through this representation, military capabilities become associated with the broader objectives of national protection and regional peace.

4.15. Search operation by Law Enforcement Agencies

The expression search operation by Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) constructs security operations as systematic processes of identifying and locating potential threats. The source domain of search draws upon investigation, exploration, detection, and the identification of concealed objects, whereas the target domain refers to intelligence-led security activities conducted to identify militant networks, recover illegal weapons, and prevent terrorist incidents. The metaphorical framing transforms the process of security

enforcement into an organized investigative activity. It emphasizes the importance of institutional coordination, information gathering, and operational preparedness in addressing security challenges. Furthermore, the expression positions LEAs as active institutional agents responsible for maintaining public safety and protecting national interests. In the broader context of peace and conflict, search operations are represented as preventive security measures intended to reduce the potential for violence and instability.

4.16. Kabul is unwilling

The expression Kabul is unwilling represents the Afghan capital as an active political agent possessing human characteristics, intentions, and decision-making abilities. The source domain of unwillingness draws upon human psychological attitudes and deliberate refusal, whereas the target domain refers to the political position and diplomatic conduct of the Afghan authorities regarding regional security concerns, particularly cross-border terrorism. This metaphor employs personification by attributing the political intentions of governmental institutions to the geographical entity of Kabul. It consequently simplifies complex diplomatic relationships into a recognizable expression of political reluctance. Within Pakistani geopolitical discourse, this representation may construct diplomatic disagreement as an obstacle to regional cooperation and counterterrorism efforts. It also highlights the significance of bilateral engagement, mutual responsibility, and coordinated responses to emerging security challenges. Importantly, the expression represents a particular newspaper framing and should not automatically be interpreted as an objective assessment of the intentions of the Afghan population.

4.17. Fight against terrorism

The expression fight against terrorism conceptualizes counterterrorism through the source domain of physical confrontation and organized combat. The source domain of fight draws upon aggression, resistance, struggle, and the mobilization of resources against an opponent, whereas the target domain refers to the political, institutional, and security-related efforts undertaken to counter terrorism. This metaphor transforms a complex socio-political phenomenon into an identifiable struggle between opposing forces. It presents terrorism as an adversarial threat that requires collective resistance, strategic planning, and institutional coordination. Within the Pakistani security context, the expression extends beyond direct military engagements to include intelligence gathering, law enforcement, diplomatic engagement, and public cooperation. It also reinforces the perception that counterterrorism is a continuous process requiring national commitment and regional collaboration.

4.18. Integrated classification of the identified metaphors

The following table consolidates the metaphorical expressions according to their dominant source domains, target domains, and broader discursive functions.

Metaphorical expression	Source domain	Target domain	Metaphorical framing
Khawarij sent to hell	Religious punishment	Ideological condemnation and military defeat	Moral and religious framing
Intelligence-based operation	Knowledge and intelligence	Strategic military operations	Precision and operational effectiveness
Menace of terrorism	Danger and threat	Terrorism and insecurity	Threat-oriented framing
Elimination of Khawarij	Physical removal	Neutralization of militant threats	Eradication and national security
Ideals of global peace	Principles and aspirations	International peace	Peacebuilding and cooperation
Defending their motherland	Physical protection	National sovereignty	Patriotic and protective framing
Nation remains determined	Human psychological strength	Collective national resilience	National solidarity
Security forces of Pakistan	Protection and institutional power	National security institutions	Institutional legitimacy
Perpetuating acts of terrorism	Continuation and reproduction	Persistent terrorist activities	Conflict persistence
Strengthen our resolve	Physical strength	Psychological and institutional determination	Collective resilience
Destabilize the country	Structural instability	Political and institutional disruption	National vulnerability
Peace in the region	Harmony and tranquillity	Regional stability	Regional peacebuilding
Armed forces of Pakistan	Defence and physical strength	Military protection	Defensive security
Search operation by LEAs	Investigation and detection	Intelligence-led security activities	Preventive security

Kabul is unwilling	Human intention and refusal	Diplomatic and political reluctance	Geopolitical personification
Fight against terrorism	Physical confrontation	Counterterrorism efforts	Conflict and resistance

4.19. Overall Interpretation of Metaphorical Framing

The combined analysis of ISPR press releases and Pakistani English-language newspapers demonstrates that metaphorical expressions play a significant role in constructing the meanings of contemporary peace, security, and conflict situations. The identified expressions are not merely stylistic choices; rather, they provide conceptual frameworks through which military operations, terrorism, national resilience, diplomatic relationships, and regional stability are represented and interpreted.

Three dominant metaphorical patterns emerge from the analysis:

1. Conflict and threat-oriented framing: Expressions such as menace of terrorism, fight against terrorism, perpetuating acts of terrorism, and destabilize the country construct terrorism and regional instability as persistent threats to national sovereignty and public security. These metaphors emphasize the destructive consequences of conflict and establish the need for sustained counterterrorism measures.

2. Peace and security-oriented framing: Expressions such as ideals of global peace, peace in the region, defending their motherland, and security forces of Pakistan construct national security and regional peace as interconnected objectives. These metaphors emphasize institutional responsibility, territorial protection, diplomatic cooperation, and collective stability.

3. National resilience and ideological framing: Expressions such as Khawarij sent to hell, nation remains determined, strengthen our resolve, and elimination of Khawarij establish ideological, religious, and emotional dimensions of national security discourse. They construct counterterrorism as a matter of national commitment, moral responsibility, and collective determination.

An important distinction also emerges between the two sources of data. ISPR press releases predominantly employ institutional, operational, patriotic, and security-oriented metaphors to communicate military developments and construct the legitimacy of counterterrorism efforts. In contrast, newspaper discourse provides a broader representation of geopolitical developments, diplomatic relationships, regional instability, and public security concerns. The comparison therefore illustrates how different institutional and journalistic contexts employ metaphorical language to construct interpretations of the same or related security developments. These metaphorical mappings contribute to the construction of national identity, public perceptions of security threats, and understandings of the relationship between military intervention and regional peace.

5. Discussion of Findings

The qualitative analysis of ISPR press releases and Pakistani English-language newspapers, particularly Dawn and The Express Tribune, revealed the significant role of conceptual metaphors in constructing and communicating contemporary realities of peace, security, and conflict. The findings demonstrate that metaphors extend beyond their conventional linguistic and cognitive functions and serve as important discursive resources for interpreting military operations, terrorism, geopolitical developments, national security, and regional instability. These findings are consistent with previous research highlighting the significance of metaphorical constructions in political, institutional, and conflict-related discourse (Blankshain et al., 2023; Chigbu et al., 2025; Hartmann-Mahmud, 2002). Furthermore, the study confirms that metaphorical interpretation is strongly influenced by local contexts, socio-political circumstances, and the ideological environment in which expressions are produced (De Saint Preux & Blanco, 2021; Lakoff, 2003; Lapka, 2021). Following Charteris-Black's (2004) Critical Metaphor Analysis framework and Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory, the study identified recurring metaphorical expressions and examined their source and target domain mappings to establish their underlying meanings and discursive functions.

A prominent finding concerns the institution-specific and ideologically oriented nature of metaphors in ISPR press releases. Expressions such as Khawarij, hell, terrorism, resolve, armed forces, intelligence, and operations demonstrate how military discourse draws upon religious, institutional, psychological, and security-related domains to construct interpretations of contemporary security challenges. Particularly, the expression Khawarij sent to hell establishes a strong moral distinction between anti-state militant elements and the ideological values associated with national and religious identity. The religious source domain of hell invokes punishment, condemnation, and moral accountability, thereby framing counterterrorism operations within a broader ideological and religious context. Similarly, expressions such as defending the motherland, strengthen our resolve, and nation remains determined construct national security as a collective responsibility involving patriotism, institutional commitment, and public resilience. These findings suggest that military discourse employs metaphors not only to communicate operational developments but also to establish connections between national identity, religious values, and security responsibilities.

Another significant finding concerns the threat-oriented representation of terrorism and regional insecurity. Expressions such as the menace of terrorism, perpetuating acts of terrorism, destabilize the country, and fight against terrorism construct terrorism as a persistent and multidimensional challenge to national sovereignty, public safety, and institutional stability. The source domain of menace evokes danger, fear, and destruction, while its target domain represents terrorism as an ongoing socio-political threat. Similarly,

destabilize the country draws upon physical and structural instability to conceptualize the weakening of political institutions, national cohesion, and economic security. Through these metaphorical mappings, complex geopolitical developments are translated into familiar conceptual experiences, making abstract security concerns more accessible to readers. The findings consequently demonstrate that threat-oriented metaphors contribute to the representation of terrorism as a continuous security challenge requiring coordinated institutional responses.

The analysis also identified the significant role of metaphors in constructing institutional agency and responsibility. Expressions such as security forces of Pakistan, armed forces of Pakistan, intelligence-based operation, and search operation by LEAs establish conceptual relationships between institutional capabilities and the protection of national interests. These expressions represent security institutions as active agents responsible for identifying threats, coordinating responses, protecting citizens, and maintaining territorial integrity. In particular, intelligence-based operations associate knowledge, information, and analytical expertise with strategic military action. This framing constructs counterterrorism activities as systematic and strategically coordinated rather than arbitrary exercises of force. Similarly, the metaphorical representation of armed forces through protective and defensive imagery emphasizes their institutional role in safeguarding national sovereignty and responding to emerging security challenges. Consequently, national security is presented as a collective institutional objective involving military organizations, intelligence agencies, law enforcement institutions, and the wider public.

Peace-oriented metaphors constitute another important dimension of the findings. Expressions such as ideals of global peace and peace in the region construct peace as an aspirational condition associated with political stability, diplomatic cooperation, international harmony, and collective security. These expressions extend the conceptualization of security beyond national boundaries and emphasize the interdependence of neighbouring countries in addressing terrorism, political tensions, and cross-border security challenges. The metaphorical representation of regional peace is particularly relevant to Pakistan's geopolitical environment, where diplomatic relations and security developments involving neighbouring countries influence broader regional stability. The findings indicate that peace-oriented metaphors complement threat-oriented representations by shifting the discourse from immediate security challenges towards long-term objectives of cooperation, stability, and peaceful coexistence.

The comparative analysis of ISPR press releases and newspaper discourse further revealed differences in metaphorical representation and communicative purposes. ISPR predominantly employs institutionally oriented, operational, patriotic, and security-related expressions to communicate military developments and represent the responsibilities of

security institutions. In contrast, Dawn and The Express Tribune provide broader geopolitical and journalistic perspectives through expressions such as Kabul is unwilling, destabilize the country, peace in the region, and fight against terrorism. For instance, the personification of Kabul attributes human intentions and political attitudes to a geographical and institutional entity, thereby simplifying complex diplomatic relationships into an expression of political reluctance. Such metaphorical representations demonstrate how journalistic discourse frames diplomatic disagreements, regional instability, and counterterrorism developments through familiar conceptual domains. The comparison therefore establishes that metaphorical choices are influenced by institutional positioning, communicative purposes, and the broader socio-political context of discourse production.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that conceptual metaphors contribute to the construction of public perceptions by establishing relationships between security threats, institutional responses, and national interests. The recurring association of terrorism with danger, military operations with precision, the nation with determination, and the motherland with emotional attachment creates a discursive environment in which security, patriotism, and collective responsibility become interconnected. These metaphorical constructions provide interpretative frameworks through which readers may understand and evaluate military activities, geopolitical developments, and institutional responsibilities. However, their potential influence on public opinion should be distinguished from measurable changes in audience attitudes, which would require independent audience-response research.

The study also contributes to the theoretical understanding of Conceptual Metaphor Theory by demonstrating its relevance to contemporary Pakistani military and print media discourse. The identification of source and target domains illustrates how abstract geopolitical concepts are understood through familiar experiences involving physical protection, confrontation, danger, religious morality, and psychological strength. The application of Charteris-Black's (2004) Critical Metaphor Analysis further demonstrates that these expressions carry evaluative and ideological meanings shaped by specific institutional and political contexts. The integration of cognitive and critical perspectives consequently provides a comprehensive understanding of metaphorical language at linguistic, cognitive, and ideological levels.

Overall, the findings establish that metaphorical representations of peace, security, and conflict are significant discursive resources in Pakistani military and print media. The identified metaphors construct terrorism as a persistent threat, security institutions as agents of protection, national determination as a source of resilience, and regional peace as a collective aspiration. The comparison between institutional and journalistic discourse further illustrates how different communicative contexts employ metaphorical resources

to represent geopolitical developments and assign agency and responsibility to political and social actors. The study therefore contributes to critical metaphor analysis, political communication, and media representations of security by demonstrating that metaphors are not merely decorative linguistic devices but meaningful conceptual resources through which complex realities of national security, military intervention, and regional peace are interpreted and communicated.

6. Conclusion

The current study investigated conceptual metaphors in the ISPR press releases and Pakistani print media using Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory (1980) and Charteris-Black's Critical Metaphor Analysis (2004). AntConc version 4.3.1 was employed for corpus-based keyword identification and contextual exploration of metaphorical expressions. The analysis identified recurring conceptual metaphors and examined their source and target domain mappings to interpret their underlying cognitive, ideological, and socio-political meanings. The findings demonstrate the significance of metaphorical language in constructing representations of peace, security, terrorism, national identity, and geopolitical developments.

The study offers important theoretical contributions to cognitive linguistics, stylistics, and discourse analysis by extending conceptual metaphor analysis to institutional and military communication. It provides a methodological foundation for investigating press releases issued by military, diplomatic, governmental, and administrative institutions. In particular, the integration of corpus-assisted analysis with Critical Metaphor Analysis offers future researchers a systematic approach to identifying, classifying, and interpreting metaphorical expressions within their institutional and socio-political contexts. The research also demonstrates the importance of considering religious, cultural, ideological, and socio-economic dimensions when interpreting metaphorical constructions.

From a practical perspective, the findings are relevant to military spokespersons, defence analysts, journalists, media organizations, and communication professionals. Understanding conceptual metaphors provides insights into how institutional messages are constructed, how complex security developments are communicated, and how particular linguistic choices establish relationships between national identity, public security, and institutional responsibility. The study also highlights the significance of metaphorical framing in presenting military operations and geopolitical developments to diverse audiences. However, its potential contribution to public perceptions and national harmony should be understood as a discursive possibility rather than a directly measured audience effect.

The research further offers pedagogical implications for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). Faculty members, curriculum developers, and policymakers may incorporate authentic military, diplomatic, and governmental press releases into professional language-learning materials. Such content can expose learners to specialized vocabulary, institutional communication practices, metaphorical expressions, and context-sensitive interpretations. It can also improve professional writing, reading comprehension, critical discourse awareness, and the ability to interpret underlying meanings in specialized texts. Furthermore, the findings provide opportunities to introduce corpus-assisted activities and conceptual metaphor analysis into advanced linguistics and professional communication courses.

Another important implication concerns future research on sensitive institutional communication. The present study provides a context-sensitive methodological approach for examining press releases while maintaining institutional decorum and respecting the communicative conventions of military and governmental organizations. Future researchers may extend this approach to diplomatic statements, defence briefings, government announcements, and electronic media discourse to investigate the construction of national and international narratives.

Overall, the study contributes to theoretical development, corpus-based research, and professional language education by demonstrating the significance of conceptual metaphors in institutional and media communication. It provides a foundation for future investigations into the cognitive, ideological, and communicative functions of metaphorical language. By exploring how military and print media discourse represents national security, regional peace, and geopolitical developments, the research also offers insights into the communication of Pakistan's institutional identity, national interests, and international image.

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