

Soccer as Mimic Warfare: A Conceptual Metaphoric Reading of Selected Football Commentary and Punditry

David Peter Nsungo
Department of English,
University of Uyo, Nigeria
Email: peterdavidnsungo@gmail.com
GSM: 080-6886-5891

Abstract

The evolution of the digital media, has hugely expanded the frontiers of coverage and viewership of soccer more than any other sporting events in history. Football reportage, with its militaristic language and overtones employed to highlight the reality of football, in and out of the pitch, has come to be one of the most entertaining and engaging parts of the game. In order to capture the terrific moments in soccer pitches, arrest the attention of spectators and reflect the nuances and seriousness of the business of soccer, football commentators and pundits borrow heavily words/metaphors from other domains such as war and military conflict. Despite this unparalleled popularity it enjoys through media coverage, the language of football commentary has received little academic attention. Thus, this paper adopts Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory to examine the use of conflict-related metaphors in football commentary and punditry. The duo propose that metaphor contains a cross domain mapping in the conceptual system to understand or think of one thing in terms of something else (Lakoff, 203). Data for the study were extracted from a corpus of the language of soccer as contained in British and Nigerian tabloids, as well as recorded matches and match reports. Content analysis was applied on 30 purposively selected military jargon often used in football commentary and punditry, to establish the fact that football is mimic warfare. The study thus recommends that careful consideration needs to be given to the language used in football reportage as heavy dependence on metaphors that seem to glorify violence and brutality might be detrimental to the welfare of the society by encouraging violence as a means of settling scores. It would be necessary for journalists to also use imagery from other domains in order to project a more balanced outlook of football game.

Keywords: Conceptual Metaphor, Soccer, Commentary, Punditry, Mimic Warfare

Introduction

The correlation between sports, especially soccer and warfare was first examined by George Orwell in his essay *"The Sporting Spirit"* (1945). In it, he argues that "Sport is frankly mimic warfare," and that spectators seriously believe at any rate for short periods that running, jumping and kicking a ball are tests of national virtue". He further asserts that serious sport has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence.

Published at the end of World War II, that is, at a time when many countries were still in shock after the recent World-wide hostilities and atrocities, Orwell's essay seems to pioneer the recognition of what has become an increasingly obvious parallel between two conceptual domains in our minds, namely those of war and football (or soccer, as the sport is sometimes called). While naturally, this parallel has interesting ramifications in many different disciplines and cultural contexts, its most noticeable effect is probably to be seen in the field of football, where both conceptualizations and linguistic expressions often take a militaristic turn (Danker, 123 and Seddon, 25). This is so, in particular, as commentators, pundits, journalists and others tend to depict the activities in and around the football pitch in terms of informal warfare. This is sparked, arguably, by the resemblance between the two conceptual domains and realized, typically, through the use of various forms of symbolic and dramatic language, including everything from clear-cut metaphorical expressions to more allusions to line-ups, strategies and general aggressive behavior in soccer.

In recent years, linguistic scholars have made recurrent note of the interesting cognitive parallel between military actions and football, often discussed in terms of conceptual blending (see: Facconnier & Turner, 2002). Beard (1998), for example, pointed out the structural similarities between war and different sports in general. Others like Seddon (2004) and Chapanga (2004), have outlined and drawn on the associations that can be made between activities in the two conceptual domains, in particular those of a metaphorical kind. Chapanga, for instance, maintains that "there is an undeniable theme of war in soccer... The sport is a physical contest making it almost inevitable for allusions to war metaphors of battle and strategy by professional commentators" (19). Football language is full of metaphors such as *attack, shot, shoot, defend, defeat, midfield, battle, victory*, among others. What this means, basically, is not only that the game of football tends to be portrayed in terms of warfare, but also that war and football show signs of having become intricately woven so much so that our understanding of the game of football nowadays even depends largely on that relationship. The frequent use of war metaphors in the media for soccer commentary, and aggressive tendencies by spectators who often have to be separated by barbed wire fencing or baton-wielding policemen, further highlight the argument. Football stadia, and in particular the playfields, are transformed into battlefields, and this makes it impossible for football commentators and pundits to avoid militarizing the language.

Football has been the spark that ignites conflicts. For example, in the 1986 World Cup semi-final match between England and Argentina, England lost to Argentina on a goal aggregate of 2:1 after Diego Maradona scored spectacularly by the "Infamous Hand of God". There were vociferous protests by the English side, for, in their minds, it meant losing the second version of the War they had won in 1983. Soccer matches between Germany and England have also been

known to evoke emotions grounded in previous military clashes particularly the so-called World Wars. After losing to Germany in one of the epic clashes, England's Paul Gascoigne was so devastated that he remarked that the defeat would not have been painful if it had been *inflicted* by any other European country in the tournament than their enemy.

The Nigerian professional football League (NPFL) is no exception, as Akwa United and Enyimba of Aba matches have always been considered a reincarnation of the March 25, 2007 post-play *mayhem* which claimed several lives in Uyo Township Stadium. The match was disrupted in the 83rd minute after the centre referee awarded a penalty which was seen as undue by the home fans. This singular decision by the referee resulted in a brawl between the fans of the two teams which claimed lives. The centre referee was beaten to the point of death if not for the quick intervention of men of the Nigeria Police. This crisis has continue to remain in the minds of spectators anytime these two teams *clash*; hence, the high emotions and tension that greet matches between the two sides.

Similarly, in a 1993 Inter-village Clan Cup Football League of the people of Itu Mbonuso [the author's Clan], a certain team in one of the matches between two villages sang: "Asabo enyene nsim abak nsim, unam efen fiok do o ke enwan ke edi" [translated as: When a python is afraid of its own tail, then other animals should beware that war/danger is approaching]. This song reechoes Orwell's view of soccer as mimic warfare. And, when that match final was eventually won by the side which had earlier sang the war song, the goal was not contestable/contested; however, violent protest erupted from the other team which alleged some fetish powers against the winning team. The violence, nay, free-for-all fight was so intense that it almost degenerated into a full-blown communal clash between the two villages, courtesy of the war metaphors used in an otherwise motivational song during the game.

Derby soccer matches deal with contests between fans and players of clubs occupying the same geographical halves of the city or location, and these are naturally explosive and breath-taking. Martial terminology is prevalent in Derby matches that take place around the globe. Some of the most famous derbies are the North London derby between Arsenal and Tottenham, the Manchester derby between Manchester City and Manchester United, Barcelona and Espanyol in the Spanish league and the legendary Milan derby between Ac Milan and Internazionale, among others. Indeed, teams often use their past military conflicts as inspiration to beat their rivals and this demonstrates the close connection between football and war. To illustrate this inherent principle, let us look briefly at some typical examples

- a. Argentina 2018 World cup *Squad*: who join Aguero and Messi in Russia? *Goal.com*
- b. Messi joins Argentina's World Cup *training camp*. *Goal.com*
- c. Liverpool beat Arsenal after a *titanic battle*. *The Sporting Morning Herald*

As can be seen from the italicized parts, these examples purport the view that the game of football is often seen as an event (a battle) which has active participants (captain and squad) trying to defeat each other (through beating). In other words, by referring to just a handful examples, we immediately sense the underlying war scenario on which these vivid football descriptions are built. It would, in fact, be hard to imagine such a football reportage without the use of war-implied terminologies of the type quoted above due to the fact that such expressions have become an indispensable verbal tool for pundits and commentators to spice up the game,

boost the morale of players and influence the psyche of spectators, comprehend the target domain and arrest the interests of spectators.

Data for this study were extracted from a corpus of the language of soccer as contained in British and Nigerian tabloids. The British Newspapers used included *Daily Mail*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Times* and *BBC Sports*. Also, Nigerian newspapers such as *Sporting Sun* and *Sporting Life*, were also used. The reason for using these Newspapers was that they are the most widely circulated sports-related newspapers in Great Britain and Nigeria respectively. Data were also extracted from recorded matches, match reports, as well as from soccer-related websites, such as *Sky Sport*, *Goal.com* and *ESPN*. In terms of coverage and credibility, these online sources are the most reputable and popular sport portals. Being a descriptive analytical model, Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor theory will be applied in the content analysis of 30purposively-selected war metaphors used in soccer.

Theoretical Framework

To achieve a fairly comprehensive review of the framework upon which this study is based, it is pertinent to, first, attempt a conceptual clarification of the key terms.

Commentary: In this paper, the term 'Commentary' will be taken after *Cambridge English Dictionary* definition of the concept as "a spoken accounts or description of events on the radio or television while the events are actually taking place" (Crystal and Davy, 125).

Punditry: The term originates from the Sanskrit word *pundit*, meaning "knowledge owner", or "learned man". Thus, punditry is the expression of expertise or opinion on a particular subject or field (most typically political analysis, social issues, technology or sport) on which one is knowledgeable, or considered a scholar in.

Metaphor: Eyoh and Maduka describe metaphor as an analogy between two things which although dissimilar in form share certain attributes in common when subjected to comparison (12). Thus, this study will apply metaphor in tandem with the concepts of *tenor*, *vehicle* and *ground* developed by I. A. Richards. By *tenor*, he means what the poet sets out to express; *vehicle* is the mental picture he evokes to communicate it; and *ground*, denotes the attribute which the tenor shares with the vehicle which makes the comparison possible (cited in Ricoeurs, 38). In other words, *tenor* is what is said or thought about. What is compared to, becomes the *vehicle*. The *ground* is the basis for comparison of the tenor with the vehicle; what they have in common which justifies the comparison.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

In the cognitive linguistic views, metaphor is a conceptual phenomenon which basically relates to what happens in the mind. Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) was propounded by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their (1980) publication entitled *Metaphors We Live By*. According to Lackoff and Johnson (8), our conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical in nature, that is, metaphors are an intrinsic and inescapable part of the way we think. They propose that metaphor contains a cross domain mapping in the conceptual system to understand or think of one thing in terms of something else (Lakoff, 203).

The concept of metaphor is further defined by Kovecses. To him, conceptual metaphor means that conceptual domain (A) is conceptual domain (B) (Kovecses,4). The two domains

involved in conceptual metaphor are called source domain and target domain respectively. Source domain refers to the conceptual domain used to help one understand another conceptual domain. Target domain refers to the conceptual domain which we try to understand *via* source domain (Kovecses, 12).

In their analogy, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) talk about "Argument as War". For instance, "They attacked every weak point in my argument". His criticisms were right on target" (Lakoff and Johnson, 9). Most English speakers use these linguistic expressions conventionally to talk about argument, because understanding the abstract concept of argument is facilitated by the concept of war. Conceptual metaphors can be classified into different types in terms of conventionality, function, nature and level of generality of metaphor (Kovecses, 29). Conceptual metaphors are classified into three types on the basis of its cognitive functions: structural metaphors, ontological metaphors and orientation metaphors. Since this paper focuses primarily on the war metaphors, only the concept of structural metaphor will be discussed and applied in the study.

Structural Metaphor: The cognitive function of structural metaphor is to make people to understand target A *via* the structure of target B. In other words, source domain usually provides rich background for the understanding of the target concept. Many mapping between element A and element B are involved in structural metaphors, to help the reader understand abstract target domains. According to Kovecses, mappings are significant because they explain why particular expressions are used to understand the target domain (33).

Lakoff and Johnson state that structural metaphors are culturally grounded in our experience. They take *Argument Is War* metaphor as an example to illustrate how argument is conceptualized in terms of physical conflict. Humans usually do not carry out physical conflict to get what they want. More often than not, they resort to verbal arguments to get what they want. In this case, verbal battles are comprehended in the same terms as physical battles (Lakoff and Johnson, 62).

The duo maintain that our conceptual system is "fundamentally metaphorical in nature", that is, metaphors are intrinsic and inescapable pan of the way we think. Structural metaphor in their terminology is a metaphor "where one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another" (Lakoff and Johnson, 14). This means that vocabulary from one domain, called the source domain, is used to describe another domain, called the target domain. Lakoff and Johnson's prototypical example is "Argument is War" (4), a structural metaphor where vocabulary from the source domain, war, is used to describe an argument in the target domain. Utterances such as "Your claims are indefensible" or "they shot down all of my arguments" (Lakoff and Johnson, 4) are examples of structural metaphor.

As a basic cognitive structure, metaphor helps us to understand a relatively abstract concept by means of a more concrete concept. Metaphors are therefore not merely linguistic expressions but also important tools that relate our experiences of different concepts, making all metaphors a result of how we view the world. Analyzing news coverage of football reporting, as in this research, provides a way of understanding metaphors and consequently, the society in which they are prevalent. As argued in Creswell (21), a theoretical model [a theory] is chosen based on appropriateness and relevance. Thus the Conceptual Metaphor theory, with a spur on Structural Metaphor, was found relevant to this study since it provides

the basis for discussion on war metaphors prevalent in football reportage, and how these war metaphors shape and influence the attitude of the soccer-viewing community.

War Metaphors *vis-à-vis* Football

Although football and real war are totally different phenomena, they exhibit an interesting relationship in terms of the shared vocabulary, notions and expressions. Football structure and reporting has heavily borrowed from the military language, where, as Seddon reports, “its conceptualization and linguistic expression often take a militaristic turn” (5). Lewandowski says that “there is a conviction that the language of sport is permeated with war metaphors, probably because sport such as football, is perceived as a substitute for war especially in the time of peace” (6).

The dialogue that relates sports and war was initiated by George Orwell who, in 1945, wrote in the *Tribune* that sport “has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence; in other words, it is war minus the shooting” (46). Characteris-Black supports this view when he maintains that:

both domains typically entails control of territory (with potential gains and losses), and require physical and mental strength as well as training and that at least in theory, both are governed by rules and generate worldwide interest (9).

From the above assertion, one can observe systematic correspondences between the target domain of soccer and the source domain of the military conflict. In this connection, the players are the soldiers, the teams are the armies, the soccer tactics and strategies are the military tactics and strategies, the match is the battle; the match formations are the battle formations, among other possible correlations.

Gunnar notes that the permeation of military jargon into football is sparked, arguably by the resemblance between the two conceptual domains and realized, typically, through the use of various forms of symbolic and dramatic language, including everything from clear-cut metaphorical expression to mere allusions to line-ups, strategies and general aggressive behaviour (10). Lakoff further avers that “football, like war, is a competitive sport where there is normally a clear winner and loser, strategic thinking, team work, preparedness, spectator behaviour, glory of winning and shame of defeat” (19). In Chepanga's view, there is an undeniable theme of war in soccer and, reporting on the physical contest of football makes it almost inevitable for reporters to use allusions to war, metaphors of battle and strategy (14).

Vierkant also agrees with this view and adds that terms such as “shot”, “midfield”, “enemy” or “battle” among others, denote war and seem to be unavoidable when talking about football. To him, it is this militaristic language that defines our understanding of the game. Lewandowski, observing the frequent overlapping between the two domains, notes that “it is relatively easy to recreate the mappings that hold between the domains of war and football since the soccer match itself corresponds to a battle, a clash, an encounter or war” (16). He further adds that it would hypothetically, be possible to construct a match report in

predominantly military rhetoric. Reporters, he notes, consciously do this in order to build fan excitement, especially in the previews of games between teams whose countries used to fight real wars (e.g. Germany vs England).

To Gunnar, it would be hard to imagine football reporting without the use of war-inspired terminology because the use of such expressions do not only help commentators to master a fighting-spirit concept, but they also seem to reflect a literal description of the actions in the game or the psychological state of some of its players. This, for example, is seen in the (brutal, cruel, ferocious) character of a tackle and the (desperate, frantic) state of an injured victim. Seddon maintains that:

Just as war has to do with political conflict that takes place in a battle field, football is concerned with sports competition that occurs in an arena. The participants in war consist of armies of soldiers mastering both aggression and ability to handle their weapons and ammunition, just as footballers are organized in teams of players who challenge their opponents on the basis of skillful treatment of the ball using various parts of their body. For soldiers the aim is to hit, kill and defeat the enemy in order to win the war and achieve political supremacy, just as the objective of football players is to trick the opponents, score goals and beat them, thereby winning the game and the title of the competition (91).

The above description, by Seddon, confirms the notion that football is a ritualized war, a stylized territorial battle, complete with casualties, which can only be resolved with the victory and defeat that produce winners and losers. Thus, achieving an understanding of the correlation between football and war, would call for an invocation of the simplicity and straightforwardness of war metaphor as a means of facilitating understanding by conceiving of one thing in terms of another.

Terminologies (Metaphor) used	Day Used	Source	Context of Use	Volume	Number
Defeat (v)	June 7, 2018	Sporting Life	Eagles suffer another warm-up defeat	Vol. 2	No. 0158
Beat (v)	June 7, 2018	Sporting Life	Enyimba beat Lobi in Calabar		
Rival (v)	June 7, 2018	Sporting Life	Napoli to rival Juventus for Darmian	Vol. 2	No. 0158
Battle (v)	June 18, 2018	Sporting Life	Iceland battle ready for Nigeria	Vol. 2	No. 166
Sword	September 8, 2018	The Telegraph Online	Scotland put to the sword by Belgium		

Captain	September 20, 2018	The Telegraph Online	Paul Pogba emphasizes his class with captain's performance to ease Young Boys aside	Vol. 3	No. 41
Raid	Saturday June 2, 2018	Sporting Sun	Reds Plot 145M, Lemar, Talisca raid	Vol. 3	No. 41
Clash (n)	Saturday June 2, 2018	Sporting Sun	Ahead of Eagles clash: England goes Indian for Eagles	Vol. 3	No. 41
Tactics	Friday June 15, 2018	Sporting Sun	Better tactics will give us victory	Vol. 2	No. 265
Trigger (v)	Friday May 4, 2018	Sporting Sun	Chelsea to trigger 7M Sarri Clause	Vol. 2	No. 235
Shoots	Friday April 20, 2018	Sporting Life	Moses shoots down clarets	Vol. 7	No. 00108

Hit	FIFA World Cup (2018)	Good hit from the skipper	Costa Rica vs Serbia
Win (v)	FIFA World Cup (2018)	It was a good fir ro win any game	Costa Rica vs Serbia
Fire (v)	FIFA World Cup (2018)	And it's fire in...	Serbia vs Switzerland
Strike	FIFA World Cup (2018)	What a strike that is!	Serbia vs Switzerland
Challenge (n)	FIFA World Cup (2018)	Vital challenge by Boateng...	Germany vs Sweden
Counter (n)	FIFA World Cup (2018)	Pressing so hard they have been caught on the counter	Germany vs Sweden
Punches	FIFA World Cup (2018)	Scheichel punches	Denmark vs Frnace
Battle line	FIFA World Cup (2018)	Battle lines are drawn	Germany vs Mexico
Defense	FIFA World Cup (2018)	Today they face an intriguing opening match to begin their defense	Germany vs Mexico
Attack	FIFA World Cup (2018)	Most of the attacking had come from Germany so far...	Germany vs Mexico
Fight (n)	FIFA World Cup (2018)	Excellent fight back from 10 man Colombia	Colombia vs Japan
Escape (v)	FIFA World Cup (2018)	And Croatia escape...	Argentina vs Croatia
Unleash	FIFA World Cup (2018)	Now he unleash one...	Argentina vs Croatia
Buried	FIFA World Cup (2018)	Colombia are leveled and Quinterro is buried beneath	Colombia vs Japan

Strike (v)	FIFA World Cup (2018)	Which leaves Ivan Rakitic with the opportunity to strike the turning blow	Russia vs Croatia
Fire (v)	FIFA World Cup (2018)	Fired home by Perisic ...	Croatia vs England
Rule (v)	FIFA World Cup (2018)	Russia rules as one ...	Spain vs Russia
Breathes	FIFA World Cup (2018)	England breathes a collective and profound sigh of relief ...	England vs Croatia

The next segment of this study will, based on structural metaphor, a sub-set of Conceptual Metaphor theory, critically analyze the data presented above to ascertain the idea that football commentary is typically organized in accordance with the principles and parameters of warfare.

Analysis of Data and Discussion of Results

As is evident in the above, the football field is perceived as a war arena. Thus, War terms are borrowed from the source domain of war to explain events in the target domain of soccer. The aggressive tendency prevalent in football is seen in the use of words such as battle, hit, fight, challenge, tackle, beat and attack. The use of these war terms in soccer is to demonstrate an inherent military structural traits that is analogous to a miniature warfare whose aim is not to annihilate the enemy, but to conquer territory. This corroborates with George Orwell's view that "Sport is frankly mimic warfare and that serious sport has nothing to do with fair play" (18). War is cruel, dangerous and full of strategies. Football is like war, since strategies are needed and sometimes players might be injured.

The only reason players engage in sport activity, is to win the match. The goal of achieving or winning a match is similar to that of winning a war; as such, two teams will spare no effort to compete with each other, and hence, to achieve the ultimate goal which is victory. Both teams will have to *battle, fight, challenge, hit, tackle, beat and attack* each other in order to achieve this victory.

These mappings reflect the fact that the structural metaphor SPORT IS WAR does not come about at random; instead, it is grounded in systematic correlations within people's experience of war. Just as soldiers in a war fight for the interest of their countries, so do players participate in football to win trophies for their clubs or countries that they represent. As such, the roles of a player in a sport can be understood via the concepts of soldiers in a war.

In soccer, the act of scoring a goal is the peak, the climax and the reward of hard work by the players. As such, it attracts the most colourful military vocabulary possible. As can be seen in the Table above, commentators use different terms from the domain of war to express an act of scoring in football. For instance, to score a goal is describes as to strike, shoot and trigger. Scoring is the legal way of eliminating the threat posed by the rival team. In this case, the footballer's action is directly compared with the military use of guns to kill or destroy an enemy in combat. While the soldiers use guns to shoot, the players' body parts basically the legs and heads are the weapons employed to attack and 'destroy' their contenders. The use of

terminologies such as *fire*, *strike* and *trigger* by pundits and commentators reveals an underlying ideology that relates football action to the use of excessive force, especially through the use of military weaponry. The headline from the *Telegraph* of September 8, 2018 captures this:

Scotland put to the sword by Belgium. *The telegraph online*

These kinds of comments further elucidate the fact that scoring is widely viewed as an active and aggressive use of weaponry against rivals, and that the teams are perceived as military entities engaged in bitter battles for supremacy and dominance. The act of scoring also correlates the use of guns to kill or eliminate an enemy, as in:

Colombia are leveled and Quintero is *buried beneath*.

As can be seen in the above reportage, scoring the culmination of expectations that each team's supporters have over any given match here is equated with an action that is often carried out in real warfare. The use of the term *buried* confirms the imagined hostility, mercilessness and hatred prevalent in football competition as in war. This demonstrates the fact that football is conceptualized as real warfare, thus agreeing with the view in that "football is a ritualized war, a stylized territorial battle complete with causalities which can only be resolved with the victory and defeat that produces winners and losers" (Seddon 30).

Newspaper reporters explore different terms in an attempt to capture in the best possible way the reality of events that happen in the field during a competitive football engagement. For instance, to play is to clash.

"Ahead of Eagles *clash*: England goes Indian for Eagles. *Sporting Sun*, Saturday June 2, 2018.

The competition is here seen as a quarrel, a fight, collision, disagreement, dispute or a conflict that must be resolved in the field by either a defeat or a victory of one team over the other. Toughness is projected as a prerequisite for a team to defeat their rivals. To render a team harmless is to incapacitate their competitive ability thereby ending the dispute. In essence, a clash or a fight is necessary to settle the competitive football dispute, just as in warfare. Here, England is faced with an uphill task of beating Nigeria if they are to advance to the round of 16 in the competition; and to achieve this feat, just as soldiers seek supernatural support before engaging in a war, they seek supernatural support and this is captured in the use of *go Indian*.

The study also reveals that several football clubs and countries have adopted militaristic names. The Scotland national team for instance is referred to as *The Tartan Army*.

Alex Mcleish says success will bring *Tartan Army* back ahead of Albana match. *The Telegraph Online* September 7, 2018.

The above report shows that footballers are not only considered as players but also as a group of soldiers or an army out to fight a cause. Thus, the term "Tartan Army" is used to refer to the team as well as the fans or supporters of the country, both of which are in military uniform. Here again, the correlation between war and football is further illustrated in the use of the term *army*.

In soccer composition, some players are referred to as *attackers*, and others, *defenders*; or a team is often saddled with the task of defending a trophy they previously won. Thus, reports from the *Sporting Sun* newspaper and Germany's opening 2018 World Cup match against Mexico captures this:

It'll be difficult to *defend* our title. *Sporting Sun* June 14, 2018
 Today Germany face an intriguing opening match to begin their
defense. FIFA 2018 World Cup: Germany vs Mexico.

Like real warfare where soldiers ably *defend* their territory, Germany here faces an uphill task of *defending* the trophy they had won four years ago. They could do this by neutralizing any threat or danger and preventing an ambush against their ultimate fortress the goal post. To achieve this, they have to be in control and must eliminate the chances of the other teams scoring against them. Thus, the field is partitioned in a way that each of the teams have their own territory to fight for or to defend. As in real warfare, if one team turns out stronger or more skillful, they can overpower and defeat the other. The mandate of the players, just as that of soldiers, is to try to keep the rivals far off, but when they cross the line into the other's territory, the effort is consequently geared towards pushing back to their positions or territory thus neutralizing the threat their opponents pose.

The pre-match commentary: "It will be a *do or die affair* Kelechi Iheanacho", reveals the metaphorical violent perspective of football encounters. The football match in this case is viewed as a clash, a battle that will have to be fought intensely one that requires mental preparation for brutal violence. Just as surviving in a war is an unpredictable affair, the outcome of a football match is equally hard to tell. Thus, the players must engage in a do-or-die battle so that they can survive the other team's aggressive tactics in the field in order to avoid being ridiculed.

Reporters also uses war metaphors to describe draw situations. For instance,
 Chelsea 2: 2 West Ham: midfielder Cesc Fabregas converts late
 penalty to bag his side a *share of the spoils*.

It can be seen here that where the defeat of the opponent is not possible owing to equal strength or skills of the combatant (players), the teams are reported to have shared the spoils or that the match has ended in a stalemate.

As in warfare, there is also a chain of command in the soccer field led by a captain to whom other players, like soldiers, look for directions, inspiration and coordination. As the ultimate voice in the conflict resolution, the Captain is expected to be highly skilled to provide directions and motivation to the rest of the team:

Paul Pogba emphasizes his class with *captain* performance to ease young
 Boys aside *The Telegraph* September 20, 2018.

Football encounter is thus seen as a military event where "soldiers" (footballers) meet at a "war" zone (football field) and a battle fought by highly skilled personnel with the aim of obtaining ultimate victory over the enemy.

A team of soccer players are also regarded as a squad, a name for military grouping:
 Leicester prospects Ben Chilwell and Demarai Gragg called into
 English *squad* ahead of Switzerland *clash*. *Mail Online* September 9,
 2018.

These views are in tandem with those of Gunnar, who observes that by using such militaristic terms, the game of football can be seen as an event (a battle) which has active participants (Captains and Squads) trying to defeat each other (through beating) using weapons (heavy artillery) to bring about certain consequences, casualties and perhaps even revolutions(27). Just as military engagements require strategies and tactics, coaches in football deploy strategies and tactics which are simply referred to as formations. *Sporting Sun* newspaper reportage captures this:

Better *tactics* will give us *victory*. Friday June 15. 2015.

Soccer formations include, 4-4-2, 4-3-3, 3-5-2, etc., showing the arrangement of defenders, midfielders and strikers respectively in the pitch. For instance, in the first formation, four players are reportedly marshalling the defense with midfielders and two outright strikers. The adoption of wrong strategy or tactics by a team is frequently cited as reason for failure.

The approach of a rival team is also reported as a raid which is consistent with the theme of military action.

Reds plot 145m, Lemar, Talisca *raid*.

A raid often implies ambushing and overpowering the opponents in their territory to make plunder. A military raid would require systematic planning and meticulous execution of the strategy. Similarly, a football raid implies thorough planning, superior tactics and courage required to break into the territory of the opponents. As an army's aim in a raid is to defeat enemies and take control of a region, so also the aim of football raid is to score and take glory from the other team.

Rivals in football are teams that share the same geographical location and matches between such teams are always tense and aggressive. Rivalry in football also connotes fight just as it does in war. As can be seen in *Sporting Life* report of June 7, 2018:

Napoli to *rival* Juventus for Darmian

Similarly, just as military engagements require strategic positioning and official launching, football is also presented as having its own territory with drawn lines, crossing of which calls for 'war':

Scotland vs England: Terry Butcher says *battle lines are drawn*.

The Telegraph November 7, 2014

As can be seen in the report above, drawing battle lines is a distinct way of declaring preparedness for an imminent fight. Drawing lines implies that the battle is not spontaneous but a preplanned activity. There is mental preparedness for brutality, violence and pain; in essence, the battle is not for faint hearted, it is bound to leave a player hurt in an attempt to attain ultimate victory.

In a war scenario, some countries are regarded as giant due their personnel and sophisticated experience in war. This correspondence is also seen in football as some countries are perceived as giants:

...and the wounded *giants* have woken up and they are back alive:

Germany *vs* Sweden.

In the above report, Germany came from behind to defeat Sweden 2:1 in the 2018 FIFA World Cup. The fact that teams are regarded as giants give such teams a larger-than-life image and further intensifies the emotional expectations that will be carried into the field by both the players and spectators.

The conceptual metaphor FOOTBALL IS WAR structures the action footballers take by the use of the expression counter:

Germany pressing as hard and they have been caught as the *counter*.
2018 FIFA World Cup.

Counter attacking football is about absorbing the opposition pressure, allowing fullbacks and central midfielders, etc. to get into more advanced positions, while leaving a player or two in a more advanced position. Then when the counter attacking team wins the ball, they look to play the ball forward as quickly as possible while the opposition players are out of position. The example above shows that just as in war combat where soldiers advance or retreat for defense, football requires tactics, strategy, positioning and official launching.

In soccer, a win or victory is the only reason why teams meet. The players must outdo themselves; they would rather die than bear the embarrassing consequences of defeat.

It was a good fit to *win* any game. Costa Rica vs Serbia FIFA 2018
World Cup.

Victory for Serbia will see them through to the round of 16. Serbia vs
Switzerland. FIFA 2018 World Cup.

As can be seen above, the heightened desire for a win or victory over other teams explains the occasional real hostility that is experienced in the field among players as well as among the football fans who at times engage in both verbal and physical fight.

Commentators and football analysts also depict the emotional tension players go through before and during a match.

England breathes a collective and profound *sigh of relief*. England vs
Croatia. FIFA 2018 World Cup.

The above statement foregrounds the aggression and hostility which the teams meted on each other when they met in the field. Breathing hard implies mental or emotional provocation to aggression. Each team in football is perceived as an enemy that must be fought and forcefully ejected from their territory or beaten to eliminate threat. A team that wins a match or a sporting competition rules or conquers as captured in Russia's win over Spain in the 2018 FIFA World Cup.

Russia *rules* as one, Spain vs Russia
Four years ago Germany *conquered* all. Germany vs Mexico.

It can be deduced from the analyses above that just as war has to do with political conflict that takes place in a battle field, football is concerned with sports competition that occurs in an arena called pitch. The participants in war consist of armies of soldiers mustering both

aggression and ability to handle their weapons and ammunition, just as footballers are organized in teams of players who challenge their opponents on the basis of skillful treatment of the ball using various parts of their body. For soldiers, the aim is to hit, kill and defeat the enemy in order to win the war and achieve political supremacy, just as the objective of football players is to trick opponents, score goals and beat them, thereby winning the game and the title of the competition. These epitomize the impression maintained by some anthropologists that "football is ritualized warfare..." (Sevdon, 26).

As seen in different stages of the analysis, there is a clear conceptual connection between war and football than meremetaphorical expression. This is revealed in the fact that football commentary and punditry contain a wide selection of vocabulary which are not only marginally relevant to the war domain, but also have vital roles to play in adding pace and suspense to the game of soccer. Interestingly, this frequent overlapping of domains lend credence to the fact that war-inspired vocabulary has become partly indistinguishable in the minds of today's commentators (and fans) and an unavoidable feature in current football reportage, just as it is an indispensable tool for journalists who are set to provide soccer reports.

Summary and Conclusion

This study has presented a nexus between soccer and warfare, using the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, and reclining specifically on its sub-type, the structural metaphor. The undeniable theme of war in football is attributed to the intense competitive spirit between the contestants which leads to one side triumphing over the other. The impression created and fostered by the commentators, alongside pundits is that soccer is a formalized war on a small scale. The findings highlight the fact that sport mimic fighting and that onlookers truly believe, at any rate, that running, bouncing and kicking a ball are trial of national ideals. Soccer pundits thus portray the exercises in and around the football pitch in terms of a casual combat zone, sparked, seemingly, by the likeness between the two conceptual domains.

Through the detailed discussion of football commentary and punditry, it can be concluded that the entire process of football, from organization, setting and actual competition compares heavily with military conflicts and warfare. This reliance on military concepts exemplifies creativity in writing of football news. Based on our brief x-ray on war metaphors and soccer, therefore, it is recommended that careful attention be paid to the language of football reportage, as heavy dependence on metaphors that seem to glorify violence and brutality might be detrimental to the overall welfare of the society by encouraging violence as a means of settling scores. It would be necessary for journalists to also explore imagery from other domains in order to project a more balanced outlook of football game.

Works Cited

- Aristotle. *Rhetoric Vol. 22*. Edited by J. H. Freese. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926. Print.
- Black, Max. More about metaphor. In *metaphor and thought*. 2nd ed. Edited by Andrew Ortony. England: Cambridge University Press, 1993: 19-41. Print.
- Chapanga, Evans. "An analysis of war metaphors used in spoken commentaries of the 200k edition of the preview soccer league (PSC) matches in Zimbabwe". *Zanbezia31*, 2004: 62-79.

- Charteris-Black, Jonathan. *Corpus approaches to critical metaphor analysis*. Palgrave. Macmillan 2004. Print
- Creswell, John. *Research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches, 2nd ed.* Sage, 2003. Print
- Crystal, David and Derek Davy. *Prosodic systems and intonations in English*. Cambridge: University Press, 1969. Print
- Fauconnier, Gilles. *Mental spaces*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Print
- Goatley, Andrew. *The language of Metaphors*. London: Routledge, 1997. Print
- Gunnar, Birkeland. "Football is war": A case study of minute by Minute football commentary. *Vereda (Brazil)* 15, 2011: 83-93. Online
- Kovecses, Zoltan. *Metaphor: A practical introduction*. Oxford: OUP, 2002. Print
- Kovecses, Zoltan. *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction, 2nd ed.* New York: OUP, 2010. Print
- Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980. Print
- _____. Conceptual Metaphor in Everyday Language. *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 77, No. 8, pp. 453-486, 1989. Online
- Lakoff, George. "The contemporary Theory of Metaphor", in Lakoff George and Mark Turner *More Than a Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993. Online
- _____. The Contemporary theory of metaphor. In Ortony, A., *Metaphor and Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Print
- Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. Revised edition *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003. Print
- Lewandowski, Robert. The rhetoric of violence in Polish and English soccer reporting. *Language, Communication, Information Journal*. I. Koutny, P. Nowak (eds): 17-89, 2010. Print
- Maduka, Chidi Thomas and Luke Eyoh. *Fundamentals of Poetry*. Scholar Press, 2002. Print
- Muller, Cornelia. *Metaphors dead and alive, sleeping and waking: A dynamic view*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008. Print
- Orwell, George. "The sporting spirit". *The London Tribune*, December 14, 1945.
- Richard, Ivor Armstrong. *The Philosophy of Rhetoric, 2nd ed.* London: Routledge, 2001. Print
- Ricoeur, Paul. *The Rule of Metaphor. The creation of meaning in Language*. London: Routledge, 2003. Print
- Seddon, Peter. *Football Talk*. London: Robson Books, 2004. Print
- Turner, Mark and Gilles. Fauconnier. *The way we think: Conceptual blending and the mind's hidden complexities*. New York: Basic Books, 2002. Print
- Vierkant S. "Metaphor in German live Radio football commentaries, 2008. Available at <http://www.uni-leipzig.de/~gcla08/upload/abstr63>. Web