

'WAGING WAR' AGAINST A VIRUS IS NOT WHAT WE NEED TO BE DOING

Using the language of wartime during pandemics does more harm than good. While one can argue that it leads us to think in terms of a struggle that requires contribution from all, it is the only positive one can take from drawing parallels between pandemic and war. Wartime imagery can breed fear which can in turn drive anxiety and panic. It is evident from the surge in panic buying that has made newly precious commodities such as hand sanitizer, face masks, toilet papers etc. scarce. Gun sellers across U.S. are reporting major spikes in firearm and bullet purchases. There's an overall feeling of fear of being stranded or having to be isolated to protect their home if, god forbid, supplies become limited and people start looting. This is the amount of panic which usage of wartime language has created in some parts of the world.

Wartime language suits political leaders as they exemplify political leadership. Politicians rather seeing this as a health crisis are seeking this as an opportunity to build a strong image, project themselves as robust and dutiful administrators and use it for their own political agenda later on.

War itself by its very nature is divisive, which is not particularly helpful amid a crisis that requires global cooperation. These divisions have already begun playing out with the rise of Xenophobia against East Asian communities with powerful leaders such as Trump referring to covid19 as 'the Chinese virus' which is only worsening the crisis.

This is why, we should veer away from the language of conflict, not sending people into panic and think in terms of cooperation in a global effort. Instead of framing the response to COVID19 in military language one could just as much pitch the crisis about medicine, health workers and human communities across the globe. We could just as much favor analyzing the situation in scientific and medical terms. This instead of reinforcing statist and military thinking would explain the crisis in liberal internationalist terms.