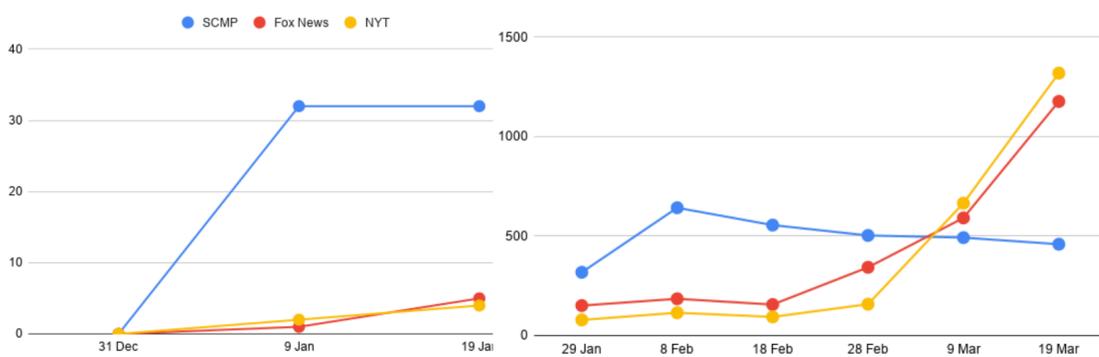


# English Media Portrayal of COVID-19 in Hong Kong and the US

- > COVID-19 is a novel contagious disease first detected in China in late 2019. It has since spread throughout the world and caused more than 100,000 deaths (WHO, 2020a). A pandemic was declared on 11 March 2020 (WHO, 2020b).
- > News outlets analyzed: US-based Fox News and New York Times (NYT), and Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post (SCMP).
- > COVID-19 was largely confined to Asia in January and early February, but has spread to the US by mid-March.

## Number of Headlines on COVID-19

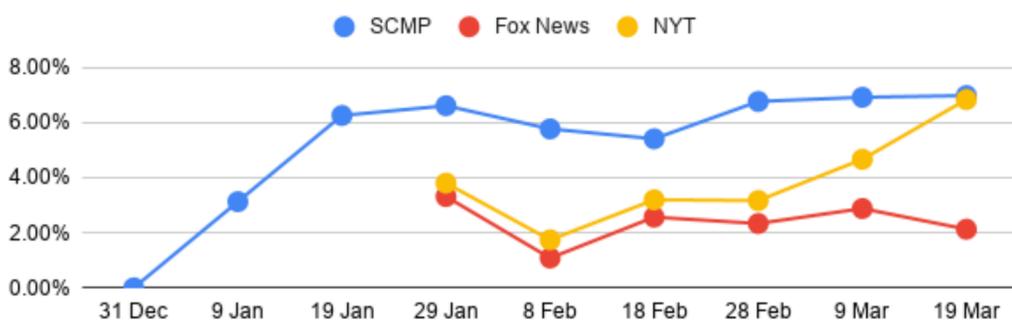
Number of Headlines on COVID-19  
Aggregate of Every 10 Days



- > Number of headlines coincides with each region's outbreak.
- > **SCMP** (31 Dec to 28 Feb): More headlines when the outbreak was mostly in Asia.
- > **Fox & NYT** (9 Mar): More headlines as COVID-19 cases in the US started to rise rapidly.

## Killer Metaphors "the deadly virus"

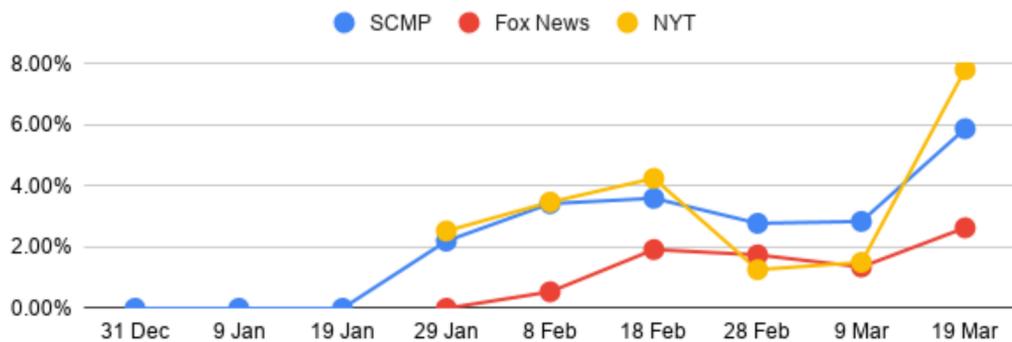
Percentage of Headlines using Killer Metaphors



- > **NYT** (9 Mar): Killer metaphors increased when COVID-19 started to spread in the US.
- > **Fox** (19 Mar): Decrease in killer metaphors. May be due to alignment with Republican President Donald Trump's portrayal of the virus, e.g. "view [COVID-19 as] the same as the flu" (Washington Post, 2020).
- > **Fox** is being accused of "downplaying" the virus (e.g. Pleat, 2020; Journalists and Teachers of Journalism, 2020).

## War Metaphors "the coronavirus battle"

Percentage of Headlines using War Metaphors



- > Changes in war metaphor usage likely due to changes in the perceived severity of the pandemic.
- > **SCMP & NYT** (18 Feb to 9 Mar): Epidemic in China appears under control.
- > **Fox** (19 Mar): War metaphor usage is notably lower than NYT's, likely due to political concerns again.

## Comparison with the Portrayal of SARS

### Circumstances at the Beginning of Outbreak for Western Media

	SARS	COVID-19
Effect on Western Citizens	Limited cases outside of Asia (Joye, 2010)	Limited cases in the US in the beginning
Competing News on Western Interests	War in Iraq (Joye, 2010)	Iranian General Soleimani's assassination US Presidential Election
Expectation that non-Western Gov'ts would Mismanage Crises (Joye, 2010)	Cover-up of the extent of the epidemic revealed by whistleblower Dr. Jiang Yanyong (Pan, 2004)	Whistleblowers admonished including Dr. Li Wenliang

Belgian (Joye, 2010) and UK (Wallis & Nerlich, 2005) news had limited coverage on SARS and did not represent it in a severe manner. Joye (2010) argues this is because epidemics are seen by the West as an expected problem in developing countries arising from "poor governance" (e.g. from cover-ups), and that SARS had little effect on Western citizens and interests. Meanwhile, news in Hong Kong described its SARS epidemic as a war (Baehr, 2006).

A repeat of SARS's portrayal appeared in 31 Dec to 28 Feb with the lack of killer metaphors and limited coverage by Fox & NYT. By 19 Mar when COVID-19 was clearly spreading within the US, this is no longer the case.

