

Media International Relations And The Epistemology Of Conflict Transformation

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Abstract

This paper focused on: 1) the epistemology of conflict and its multidimensional nature, 2) the paradigms defining conflict, 3) the conflict cycle and phases; a) Pre-conflict, b) during, and c) post-conflict phase. Media entry-point focused on 4) the changing role of the media in international relations and their contributions to the “crisis of expectations” 5) the media in the Middle Eastern conflict; 6) the media’s preference of the reconciliation model, and 7) the implications of the media adoption of the conflict transformation model. The premise is that media practitioners needed to transcend the given as given by offering alternative journalistic models for early warning and objective as well as impartial conflict coverage today.

Keywords: *conflict, media, epistemology, multidimensional, paradigms, strategist, peace research, conflict research, conflict cycle, conflict phases, peace agreements, peace timelines, international relations, crisis of expectations, conflict transformation, early warning, media diplomacy, shuttle diplomacy, objectivity, impartiality, leaks.*

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I. Background: The Epistemology Of Conflict

The term conflict has been conceptualized in Peace and Conflict studies at two levels. Etymologically, the concept conflict is derived from the latin word, *confligere*, which means to ‘strike together’. Functionally, conflict arises when two or more parties have incompatible goals, either perceived or actual. This ranges from a simple conflict between two people, who may have different perceptions and ideas or visions about how to achieve certain goals, triggered by either inability and unwillingness of one part to see the other party’s point of view, to a more complex set of conflicts including international ones. At the international level you could be dealing with various questions of values that are fundamentally complex like the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Conflict could be manifest, recognizable through action or latent in which case it remains dormant for sometime as incompatibilities are unarticulated or are built into systems such as institutional arrangements oppressive to the people. Suffice to say, not all conflicts are overt. There are conflicts that built into structures, especially political and economic systems, which may remain latent for a long time awaiting triggers to explode. In *Positive Approaches to Contemporary Violence*, Adam Curle argues that a society may not be necessarily violent or at war to be in conflict. People may be dissatisfied with the structures of power at the time, but because they fail to realise the consequences or due to fear, they choose to remain silent. This is negative and destructive conflict with far reaching implications for conflict management. In most cases conflicts in Africa have been destructive. Challenges tearing contemporary Africa apart include the tendency of manipulating ethnic identities for private interests, discrimination based on ethnic affiliation, and ethno-political conflict (Tarimo & Manwelo, 2009, p.9.). Most importantly is the fact that conflicts are multi-causal hence multidimensional and therefore require multidisciplinary approach in resolving, managing and transforming them into sustainable peace.

II. Paradigms In Conflict Studies

There are several schools of thought, paradigms and perspectives that govern how we think about conflict. Each of the paradigms presents a specific view of an international society. Within conflict studies there are three main paradigms: Strategist, Peace Research and Conflict Research.

Strategist Paradigm

The Strategist paradigm is inspired by realist conception of international relations. Realist see international politics as power struggle and actors as autonomous states engaged in power competition and

maximization and nonstate actors as less powerful and marginal. Realists see national security as ultimate and overriding goal and force as a major instrument of both domestic and foreign policy. It champions benign hegemony, an arrangement which is a recipe for perpetual conflict, and the existing peace is only but temporary.

The conflict component of this paradigm is called strategist. Strategists believe that aggression is central and inherent in international relations. That states are inherently aggressive and this nature could not be eliminated but only managed. However, there are ongoing debates from other schools of thought which have challenged the relevance of strategist conception of contemporary conflict suggesting that it could no longer hold, but conversely post-Cold War polarity type of international system confirms that international conflicts continue being orchestrated by the balance of power politics reminiscent of the 19th as well as 20th centuries respectively.

This is a classical doctrine of strategic studies which has been modified in recent times. Since the end of Cold War, interstate conflicts have been largely replaced by intrastate conflicts such as tribal clashes, guerrilla warfare, coup d'état etc. In modern day thinking, strategic studies embody both inter and intra state conflicts. In their internationalized character, intrastate conflicts have far reaching implications for international relations, peace and conflict studies.

Peace research paradigm

Another school of thought is peace research. This is associated with structuralist theories of international relations. In international relations, structuralist theory has been the basis for center-periphery theory which sought to explain the character of international system especially the relationship between rich and poor states. That there are incompatible interests which were built into the very structures of international system (In recent years this has been referred to as *Dependency theory*-1960s).

Peace Research is the conflict component of structuralist theory. It is interested in structures that give rise to relationship in society that lead to conflict within society. With his main thesis of structural violence, Johan Galtung is the main scholar behind this paradigm. Galtung has maintained that peace research challenges the basic tenets of conventional analysis of violence and offers critical alternative (Galtung, 1990, pp. 291-305). The primary motivation of peace research is improve human conditions subverted by unjust socio-political, economic and cultural structures by emphasizing justice and human dignity as its criteria.

Central concern is the role that structural violence plays in stunting development and undermining justice. Conflict is not merely in its overt manifestation, but could also be structural violence, where violence is embedded in structural relationships and interactions in society. When the underlying structures are unjust and unequitable, they breed violence where the weaker party suffers. In this case, individuals within that society are constrained from certain behavior and aspirations, for instance developing their interests and talents. Individuals may not realise that it is possible to promote their talents and appear to be quite satisfied with the structures by seeing no need to challenge the excesses in government. They are in a position of "*a happy slave*." A situation of slavery is where a slave works daily hard to enrich the master. The master grows rich from the sweat and hard labour of the slave who does not even realise the inherent injustice within the structure of the system s(he) is working for.

On the other hand, the master does everything to maintain the structure and even rationalise it to the slave. The slave internalizes this rationalization and begins to be proud of the situation and feels better off than those on the streets. This is a fundamental assumption this paradigm makes. The understanding here is that the idea of conflict is an objective phenomenon, in that actors within the society do not have to perceive the conflict for it to exist. Conflict, for the peace research, emerges from real clash of real interests. The peace research and structuralist believe that conflict can only be resolved by changing the structures, and specifically by taking sides in conflict against the forces of oppression. In this context the Peace research is seen as being revolutionary and activist, as s(he) believes that sometimes structural change could only be effected by revolutionary use of force, build new structures to replace the overthrown ones. Critics of this school fault it on the grounds that it fails to provide concrete alternative structures to replace the oppressive ones. The importance of Peace research increased with the end of the Cold War as the definition of security broadened to embrace non-traditionalist notions like environmental degradation and human rights violation.

Conflict research

Conflict Research paradigm has as its conceptual basis, the world society paradigm of international relations. Burton (1990) the founder and champion of this school of thought argues that imperative to war does not come from the nature of a state, but from the way in which the environment acts on the individual. In the strategist paradigm aggression is inherent in the state while world society aggression is from outside. While world society is not state-centric, strategist paradigm takes the state as the central in international relations. World society focuses more on multilateralism. It recognizes other actors and their influence on the state or an individual.

According to conflict research, conflict is not inherent since the values which satisfy human needs are not in short supply, because there is always enough for everyone. Hence limitation to satisfy the needs is a mere perception since conflict in this case is subjective. It is therefore possible to have all actors' needs satisfied within a system in the same society. A major way of conflict management is to change actor's perception. In other words goals and values could be assessed in the light of the changing circumstances. Each actor could change his or her perception through negotiation and analysis of the situation of the conflict. Conflict research therefore tries to create a structure whereby all parties can achieve satisfaction. Ultimately were environment to change especially the way people perceive each other, then conflict would cease to occur.

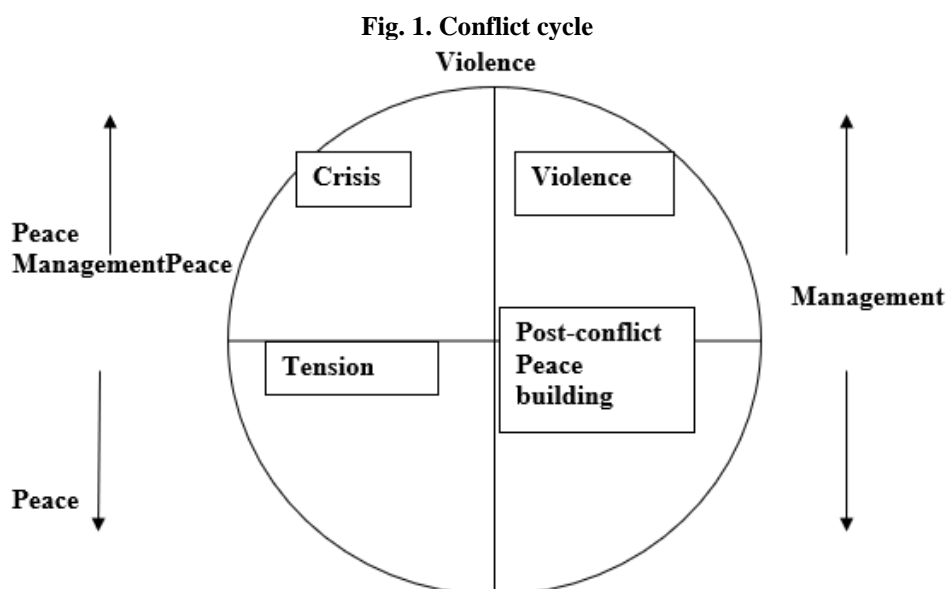
Attaching radical importance on the part rather than the whole, conflict research advocates for compromises for the sake of the other, because it does not believe in the inherence of values in humans, but that given the chance people are subject to change for the good. It assumes that different parallel parties, diametrically opposed to each other ideologically could strike a compromise on important issues, focusing on the main tenets. The fundamental assumption here is that each party has the potential to achieve the good, and that therefore with sacrifice the good could be achieved authentically. The objective validity of this paradigm presupposes by necessity the existence of the good despite the difference in human values or ideological disparity of the actors.

Unlike the strategist, a conflict researcher argues that it is possible to go beyond settlement and achieve a resolution, where relationships are legitimized and therefore self-sustaining. In terms of management, unlike Peace researcher, this conceptual approach takes "a bird's eye view" of the conflict, because it does not take sides when constructing supportive frameworks in which parties to a conflict could move towards a resolution. A conflict researcher does not have an outcome that is pre-determined or prec-conceived in mind, and is only interested in the outcome arrived at by the two parties.

III. Conflict Cycle And Phases

Conflict cycle

Conflict cycle sees conflict in terms of a life cycle which it goes through. It challenges the traditional approach whereby conflict was seen in terms of a linear analysis of the relationship between peace and conflict. The idea of conflict cycle emphasizes that conflict and peace have complex relationship and tries to capture the points a long the way where peace develops into violence. This can be illustrated as follows in **figure 1**:



Source of the model: See article on conflict transformation by Vayvynen

As the figure shows the beginning point in understanding the life cycle of conflict is at the point of peace. In conditions of peace there is no violence and fighting. However, if the conditions of peace are left unattended, tension begin to develop in the community. These tensions begin in a small way and sometimes they may not be noticed. However, the little tension may accumulate and eventually lead to crises.

If the crises are ignored they will increase greatly to the level of no containment and break into violence. Once violence breaks out it needs to be contained and this can be done through conflict management activities. If management activities work well to the point of reaching an agreement to stop violence it will then lead to the post-conflict stage. During this stage, violence has stopped but there cannot yet be said to be peace, since only after peace building are consolidated in this stage can peace be reached. At this stage conflict cycle begins again.

The idea of conflict cycle was a revolutionary one in conflict analysis and is now recognized as one of the most powerful tools in peace and conflict studies. And this is due to the following reasons:

First, conflict cycle emphasizes that within each stage of conflict cycle, there are certain conflict prevention and management activities going on, which done well could prevent the degeneration of a situation into violence. Indeed conflict cycle suggest that it is possible for effective conflict managers to reverse the cycle of conflict.

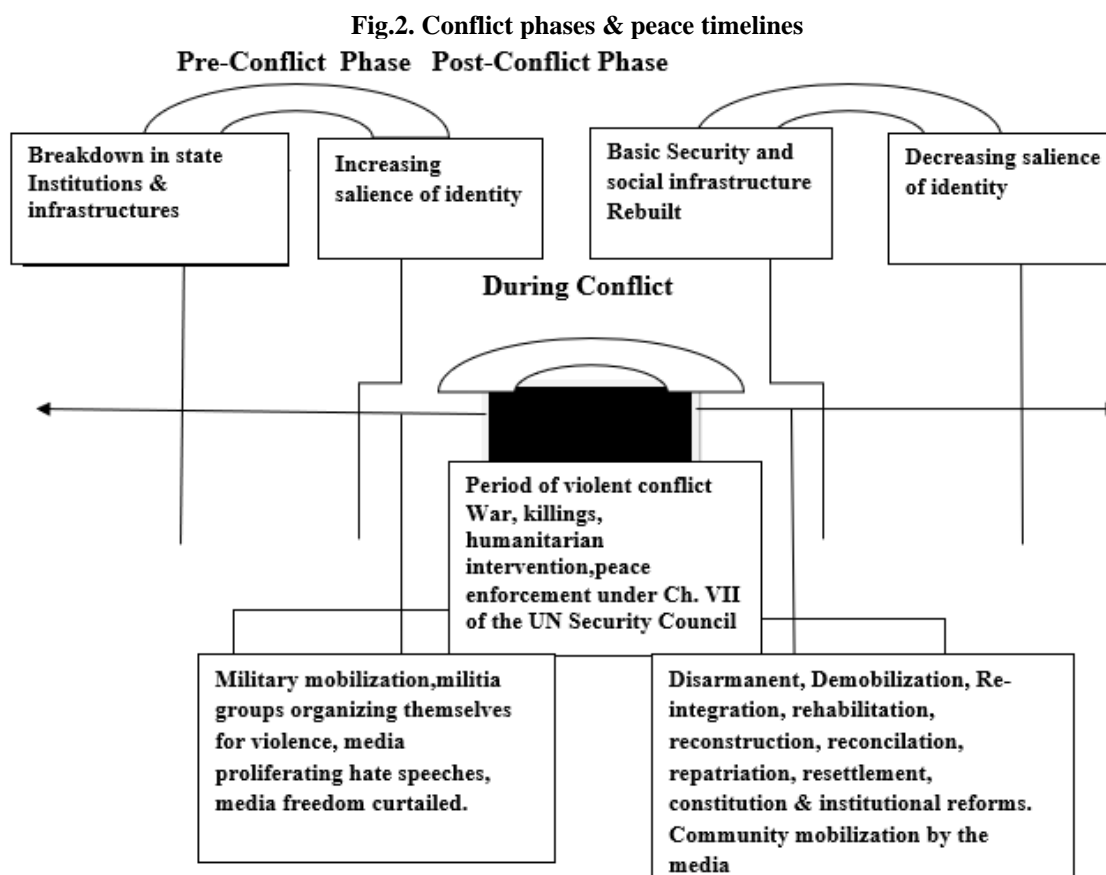
Second, conflict cycle recognizes and indeed illustrates the idea of structural conflict. It does it by showing that there are certain periods in the life cycle of a conflict which are not violent but which nevertheless contain tensions in the relationship involved, and which while outwardly peaceful height the developments of violent conflict.

Third, conflict cycle also emphasizes one of the most important segments of conflict which is that conflict is dynamic and is constantly changing and transforming- a dimension critical for effective conflict management process. Perhaps the greatest contribution of conflict cycle to the understanding of conflict and its management, is the underlying assumption that the management of conflict could not be successful exclusive of peace management. The lesson learned from this cycle is that peace equally needs to be managed the same way conflict is managed, because failure to manage and sustain peace could easily lead to conflict.

Conflict cycle also emphasizes the importance of post-conflict peace building. In traditional thinking, it was thought that once a conflict manager such as a mediator, helped the parties to a peace framework, then his or her job came to an end as soon as the peace agreement was signed. The cycle however, helps to show that this is not the case, and that even after peace negotiation, peace may not endure unless nurtured and managed carefully.

Conflict phases

Conflict analysis has been understood along three major phases identified as pre-conflict, during conflict and post-conflict. In order to resolve, manage or transform conflict effectively, it is important to understand the complex relationship that exist between these phases, actors, issues and interests. **Figure 2** below illustrates this process showing how complex it could be for management and resolution efforts.



Source: Caroline Hartzell: "Peace in stages: The Role of an implementation Regime in Nicaragua."

As figure 2 shows, conflict process could be understood from three main perspectives known as conflict phases. Pre-conflict phase is characterized by discontent manifested in various forms. An overview of this phase presents a situation of disorder with indicators of failing and failed states. These indicators include: mounting demographic pressures, where the government is unable to control population growth; legacy of vengeance; chronic and sustained human flight in the form of economic refugees running away from their countries in pursuit of good life elsewhere e.g. Somalis. Other indicators include uneven economic development along group lines. Discrimination in governance and economic activities; criminalization and deligitimization of state organs, whereby the police become a threat to national security, in other words, security apparatus operate as state within a state with the police assuming duties of both the police and the judiciary amid gross violation of human rights. Also critical to this phase is the rising of factionalised elites, whereby the ruling class has no clear national objective and policy agenda on the direction the country should be taking.

Extreme poverty is one of the indicators of failed states. Militia groups may take advantage of this situation to harass innocent civilians by extorting money, looting and killings to make a living. Witnessed also is massive civilian displacements for religious and ethnic reasons. It could be for economic reasons that people are moved from ancestral lands to pave way for foreign investors who may only benefit a few government cliches. The whole situation may see the media becoming a major casualty of archaic draconian legislations meant to curtail free speech. But the media too could become catalysts of violence, especially in ethnically polarized countries such Kenya, Rwanda and DR Congo.

Recent histories attest to the fact that the media have escalated conflict to massive scale through manipulated agenda setting with heightened ethnic dimensions. The Kenyan situation witnessed highly charged political campaigns in 2007 taken up by vernacular media peddling division among ethnic communities that had lived peacefully together for decades in areas that were until then originally heterogeneous.

At the global level, during pre-conflict period one would witness international diplomacy coupled by threats of sanctions in the case of interstate conflicts. The stand-off between the West and the Arab world is case in point. During the run-up to Gulf War I in the 1990s, the Bush senior administration prevailed over the UN Security Council through a resolution to force Iraq out Kuwait through military action. There was therefore heightened military mobilization of US allies into the Middle east landing in Saudi Arabia. Using a very powerful international media Kuwait was liberated from illegal occupation by Saddam Hussein. The Western media became strong instruments of militarized foreign policy agenda that were meant to name and shame those deemed enemies of the global north.

During conflict period, the situation is overt and what is witnessed ranges from widespread killings and displacement, rape, refugees acrossing the borders into neighbouring countries. This follows heightened campaigns especially during political rallies perpetuated by partisan media coverage. In the case of intrastate conflict triggered by flawed electoral processes, where losers refuse to leave office, the immediate option may be peace enforcement authorised by the UN Security Council for purposes of disarming and demobilizing combatants. The Kenyan case study saw internal efforts to bring the two parties at conflict to negotiate failing. The first step by the Kenyan military was to stop the violence by disarming the militia groups belonging to both parties followed by international mediation through AU which brokered a peace deal. The Peace Accord signed in February, 2008 restored relative peace leaving the practical problem at the implementation level.

Following violent conflict that left massive destruction, in post-conflict period reconciliation of the affected communities become critical. Peace agreements signed during conflict through negotiation and mediation proceses are implemented. Procedural components of those agreements are respected and peace timelines set. There must be guidelines and deadlines for the implementation of the agreement. Short term and long term procedures clearly stipulated. The figure above illustrates a simplified timeline of conflict agreement stages. On the left are the beginning states of conflict emergence and escalation into violence. But most conflicts descalate, and settlement is reached. However, that may not be the end of the conflict-but only as the chart shows, the midpoint.

Remember as shown above, the first stage of most peace agreements involves disarmament and demobilization. Procedural provisions should designate who is to be disarmed and de-mobilized into the peaceful societies. Re-integration is key, because without it, former combatants may feel that they were better off during the period of conflict than they are during peace. They could become obstacle to the implementation of the peace agreement so as to go back to conflict which benefited them more.

Next urgent thing is the provision of basic security and rebuilding of social infrastructure. In the short term, security must be guaranteed by outside third party. Since economic and physical security are the foundations of successful reconciliation, they must be dealt with before any successful address of the moral and cultural substance of an intractable conflict. A lasting peace is built upon continued acceptance of the terms of the peace agreement. At the sametime, the peace agreement must be flexible enough to deal with changing circumstances. Some components need to be long lasting: dispute-resolution systems and nation-building programs must have long-term effects. Ultimately the goal is reconciliation, and the decreasing "salience" of identity as shown above.

Agreement monitoring and election monitoring, on the other hand, are short term: they may only be relevant shortly after the peace agreement has been negotiated.

Countries recovering from civil war, the lack of basic security and infrastructure invariably leads to the failure of peace agreements. When parties reach agreement, but unable to enforce it, a third party come in. Third parties are able to enforce the terms of peace agreement that the combatant parties would agree to. Procedural components for peace agreements revolve around creating the centralized control that characterizes successful states. The challenge for third parties in failed states is to try and support initial process. Agreement monitoring involves peacekeeping operations by major or regional powers. In less-developed states, election monitoring may play a crucial role in a stable peace. If the underlying problems in a civil war come down to the distributional justice of the political system, then the elections that determine who controls those decisions become crucial. In the Kenyan situation of 2008 required various approaches including three critical ones: power-based approach, rights-based approach and finally interest-based approach. All these approaches were objectively debated on by experts through the media. The media therefore become necessary not only to jump-start the peace process, but also setting proper agenda for sustainable peace in the post-conflict phase.

IV. Media Entry-Point

How are the media involved in these processes? What is their share in creating crises of expectations, and how can they contribute to easing them and to promoting realistic peace processes? We now turn to these questions. International communications in recent decades can be described along two major axes: the first is a modification of media functions; the second is media preference for war and violence rather than peace coverage.

Modification of Functions

The roles of the media in international relations have changed. The traditional tasks of gathering and selecting facts, and of constructing, encoding, and representing realities (Tuchman, 1978; Hall, 1980) have been expanded. Journalists are no longer expected to simply present the news “fairly and without bias in language....unambiguous, undistorting...” (Fowler, 1991, p.1). In recent decades, the media have assumed new roles. The 1970s’ Kissinger media diplomacy, elaborated in academic detail two decades later (Kissinger, 1995), confirms Abba Eban’s (1983) diagnosis of the impact open media diplomacy has had on the collapse of traditional diplomatic reticence. Media organizations and professionals now participate in international relations, both at-large and as catalysts and ‘diplomatic brokers’ (Larson, 1986; Gilboa, 1998).

As participants-at-large, the media take part in exchanges between journalists, policy-makers, and field staff (Larson, 1988), as illustrated by the TV sets in decision-makers’ offices and ‘situation rooms’; by briefings in official airplanes or in sealed compounds, such as in Grenada, Panama, and the Gulf War (Andersen, 1991; Servaes, 1991); and by media-monitored ‘secret negotiations’ such as in Camp David (1979); Dayton, Ohio (1995); Stormont Castle (1997, 1998); and Wye River (1998). As catalysts, the media provide arenas and resources for international dialogue. They include shuttle diplomacy (Kissinger, 1995); ‘tomahawk diplomacy’ used in the 1998 Kosovo and Iraq crises (TIME, October 19, 1998); media exchanges (Clinton-Saddam, Rabin/Netanyahu-Arafat/Assad); and media events, such as summit meetings and the signing of peace agreements (Dayan and Katz, 1992; Gilboa, 1998).

As diplomatic brokers, the media conduct and sometimes initiate international mediation, in ways that often blur the distinctions between the roles of reporters and diplomats. This is illustrated by the participation of the media in diplomatic processes, such as Walter Cronkite’s claim to having inspired Awar Sadt’s 1977 visit to Jerusalem (Cronkite, 1996; Gilboa, 1998); or ABC’s Ted Koppel’s live-on-air Jerusalem ‘town meeting’, conducted during the intifada in 1988, and featuring unprecedented face-to-face Israeli- Palestinian negotiations (ABC News, 1988); and by work behind enemy lines, such as CNN’s Peter Arnett’s reporting from Baghdad during the Gulf War (Arnett, 1991), Christian Ammanpour’s in Iraq, during Operation ‘Desert Fox’ in 1998, and Al-Jazeera’s coverage of the war in Afghanistan in 2001.

Media preference for war and violence

Professional and historical reasons explain the preference for war as media subject matter and symbolic inspiration. War is more compatible than peace with media professional standards, conventional discourse and economic structures. War provides visuals and images of action. It is associated with heroism and conflict, focuses on the emotional rather than on the rational, and satisfies news-value demands: the present, the unusual, the dramatic, simplicity, action, personalization, and results (Galtung and Ruge, 1970; Bird and Dardenne, 1988). This preference is magnified by the vivid color, clear-cut polarities, unexpected features, and primordial sentiments typical of cultural conflict; and its variety of images and voices exceeds that of conventional warfare, conveying Aristotle’s “pity and fear” at their “best.” The typical peace coverage of press conferences, “talking heads” and airport scenes, has much lower news value. The history of international journalism adds weight to this preference.

Political constraints—mostly the Cold War’s – caused the media to adopt the governmental rhetoric of power and violence in their “official discourse.” “Peace talk” was labeled “communist” in the 1950s and 1960s, and “challenger discourse” until the late 1980s, with low popularity and entry into the general-audience media (Gamson,1988;Meyer, 1995). This is also typical of communications research, where revisionist historians have been documenting the claim that the development of media research coincides with research done for official agencies since World War II. The work of some “focusing fathers” was sponsored and funded by the Radio Bureau of the Office of War Information, the Information Division of the War Department, the US Air Force, and the CIA (Robinson,1988,Bruck,1989, Simpson,1994).

Although there is no conclusive evidence of a direct and causal relation between warfare and research approaches, one cannot ignore that most of these researchers founded or joined leading communication departments and institutes (Rowland,1983); that research on the media coverage of Vietnam and the Middle East deals only briefly with peace talks; and that, compared with the multitude of media studies on Middle Eastern wars, there are only few studies of the media in the peace process.

A new media environment

The new power of the media as actors in international processes have made a significant contribution to the crisis of expectations that has typified the peace process in the Middle East. The clarification of this argument calls for a discussion of the media climate since the end of the Cold War. The features of this new climate – concerted peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts, together with the revival of radical and sometimes violent separatist movements demands (Ignatieff, 1993; Barber, 1995)- have posed significant normative and practical challenges to the media.

One question is whether the media should use their new powers to promote peace. Conservative objections to a peace oriented media on the grounds of loss of objectivity can be countered with the argument that the changing functions of the media in international relations are part of an ongoing erosion of mythical “objectivity” and of the acceptance of subjective reality-construction concepts. The question of “whose version of peace should be promoted?” can be answered by demanding that free expression, professional integrity and ethics should be guaranteed, just as in the coverage of conventional crime.

Even considering the differences in the new value of war and peace, professional integrity and ethic demand that, together with legitimate considerations of sales and ratings, the media orient themselves to values that match their critical stand on crime and drugs; and that in accord with the code-of- conduct which calls for media responsiveness to social changes, they should join current peacemaking efforts. Finally, if this position is accepted in general, it should certainly be adopted with regard to cultural conflict, because of both its frightening dimensions and the media potential to help in its transformation. In this sense, the media should be required to produce persuasive symbols of security, alternatives to those of war; to construct credible realities of change in the roles played by rich-enemies, once they become peacemaking partners; and to act as participants, catalysts, and brokers in the psychological adjustment- including in the reduction of dissonance, paranoid feelings, etc- to the unknown environment created by peace processes, that dramatically differs from a long-term climate of war.

V. The Media In The Middle Eastern Conflict.

The central question here is how can and how should the media be involved in the new international climate. The performance of local and foreign media in the Middle Eastern conflict can provide considerable insight into this topic. Since the Oslo process became public, the media had been dealing with the dilemma of how function in peacemaking era, and of choosing a model to guide coverage. Two phases were characteristic of this dilemma.

In the first, between the mid-1990s and September 2000, the end-of-conflict and reconciliation model inspired coverage. However, like the leaders and politicians who adopted this model, the media had difficulty in explaining the violence which had been accompanying the process from as early as 1996, after which the peace camp began to lose momentum. In the second phase, starting in September 2000, the media have been forced, together with Israeli and other leaders and in the face of changing public opinion, to abandon the reconciliation model, at least in order to resolve the contradictions between the peace process and the ongoing violence.

VI. The Media’s Preference Of The Reconciliation Model

Public opinion on the peace process, led by the Oslo negotiators and by the media- at least until September 2000- had shown a preference for reconciliation, negotiation and mutual concessions. In *Media and Peace*, Wolfsfeld,G had argued that,also the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin served to fortify the consensus around the Oslo agreement (Wolfsfeld,2004).

On the other hand, there were serious doubts about the belief, cherished by the Israeli right wing, that the open and full media mobilization behind the Oslo agreements resulted in a brainwashing process in which public opinion would be captured. Wolfsfeld’s contention that many critical positions were expressed by and in

the media indeed reduced the validity of this argument. Nevertheless, it is equally acceptable to claim that the professional style and the general direction of the process was at work. This had been expressed, for example, in the wide coverage and in the tone of wondering admiration attached by the media to the main actors in the process, to the signing of the agreements, and to events such as the awarding of the Nobel Prize for Peace to Arafat, Peres and Rabin. Wolfsfeld found that the public and political environments and social consensual expectations had influenced the positions taken by the media, particularly the overall optimistic tone that had obscured imminent dangers. Other studies (Dente Ross,2002; Mandelzis,2002) point to the favorable discourse and framing of the Oslo process in the international press and the legitimacy given by the Israeli media to the parties in the process, particularly Yasser Arafat and his PLO movement. This was rather surprising, since it contradicted the traditional preference of the media for the action and drama of war and violence.

Background factors and professional reasons can provide at least some clarification. Background factors include the emotional openness of the public towards peace; the symbiotic relations between the media and governments; and inference from earlier peace processes.

Emotional Openness of the public: When the Oslo negotiations became public, a climate developed characterized by emotional openness and psychological readiness to see the agreements in terms of reconciliation, particularly among the agreements' supporters. In this sense, it is interesting to note that the Israeli extreme right was more realistic than the left and than the media, with its reservations against interpreting Oslo in terms of reconciliation. Right-wing activists and parties had supported and promoted the notion that the conflict had deep cultural roots. Even those who reejected their radical conclusions had to respond to the accuracy of this diagnosis.

Media-Government symbiotic relations: The tendency of the media to adopt official views in return for an open flow of information is well known. In the wake of the Cold War, particularly after Oslo, the Israeli and international media could not afford to ignore the manifestations of governmental and public opinion supporting the peace process.

Inferences from earlier peace processes: The peace processes with Egypt and Jordan gave the media and the public an idea of what peace should be. The inferences from these agreements to the Palestinian case seemed even more plausible with the recognition by the media that even though the former agreements had not developed into full normal relations, they had included gestures of reconciliation on the part of Anwar Sadat, King Hussein, Menahem Begin, and Yitzhak Rabin; and an "acceptable" amount of violence.

Professional reasons derive from the paradox that reconciliation has news value, particularly against a background of violence. A good example is the ample coverage given to King Hussein's visit to the Israeli town of Beth Shemesh in 1994 and the humble and conciliatory stance he took in apologizing to the families of young women killed by a Jordanian soldier in a border incident. Thus the media could not ignore the developing climate in favor of reconciliation. The professional factors related to this dynamics include some aspects of news value: polarization and contrast; and media events.

First, polarization and contrast increase the news value of an item. In the reconciliation model, these practices seem to convert the coverage of violence into exception that proves the rule. Examples include the massacre committed by Baruch Goldstein in Hebron's Cave of the Patriarch in 1994; the violence which accompanied the opening of the Wailing Wall tunnel in 1996, and even the first stages of the Intifada. These were covered by the media in an alternating style, in which stories of violence were contrasted with coverage of the ongoing peace process, a factor that enhanced the news value of both types of stories.

Second, media events: Dayan and Katz's media event theory (1985,1992) illustrates the emphasis on reconciliation in peace coverage. The perception of newsworthy reconciliation is evident in various types of media events coverage: The signing of peace agreements, in pre-planned highly performative and widely-covered rituals of new or renewed friendship, could be identified as "coronation event": "ceremonial parades.... ritual transformation of the hero from one status to the next..." (Katz and Dayan,1985,p.306).

VII. The Implications Of The Media Adoption Of The Conflict Transformation Model

Another vision is that peace processes in political, cultural economic or religious conflicts do not lead to reconciliation but rather to a transformation of the conflict (Burgess et al., 1997; Lederach, 1995; Vayrinen,1991). The terms "conflict resolution" and "conflict management" serve to clarify this vision. The former implies the possibility and need to end conflict. This implication assumes that conflict is a short-term processes that often cannot be quickly resolved. But the notion of "management" suggests that people in conflict can be guided or controlled. In addition "management" suggests that the goal is to reduce or control conflict volatility rather than to deal with the real source of conflict.

"Conflict transformation" does not suggest simply eliminating or containing conflict, but recognizez the complex nature of some conflicts, in which relationships are changed, communication and patterns of social organization are altered, and images of the self and of the other are transformed. Conflict transformation is also a prescriptive concept. It suggests that while conflict is destructive, it can be transformed, and that self-images, relationships, and social structures can be improved. This involves transforming perceptions of issues, actions,

and people or groups. Since conflict usually transforms perceptions by accentuating the differences between people and positions, effective conflict transformation can improve mutual understanding.

Even when interests, values, and needs appear to be irreconcilable, progress can be made if groups engaged in conflict can achieve a fairly accurate understanding of each other. Thus, the presidents, governments ministers, politicians, diplomats, and journalists who took part in the celebrations of the Israeli-Palestinian peace agreements were undoubtedly participating in historic events. Together with millions of TV spectators around the globe, they witnessed the end of one era and the beginning of another. However, the optimism of the agreements, and the less euphoric reality of ongoing violence, did not signify conventional post-war peacemaking. They represent, at best, a changing pattern in the relations of long-standing warring parties. Instead of a direct confrontation, this new structure has featured an interaction of two coalitions, new in their transnational orientation, and rare in their intercultural composition.

VIII. Conclusion

In this paper we have discussed the general understanding of conflict, arguing that in fact conflict is multi-causal, hence multi-dimensional. And because of that, any resolution, management and transformational progress must adopt a multi-disciplinary approach. Always conflict co-exist with peace. As conflict cycle indicates, conditions of peace must always be attended to and well nurtured before escalating into tension, crises and finally violence. The role of the media in the three phases of conflict: pre-conflict, during conflict and post-conflict periods is emphasized as collaborative and facilitative. By using these practices, the media have contributed to the arousal of hope before and disappointment of expectations after the failure of the process. The Intifada forced the media to abandon the discourse of reconciliation. Frustrated by the collapse of the process, along with the majority of the public, the media returned to focusing on the escalating violence rather than to stop it.

The point is that, in any given phase, the media must take the crucial and necessary step in full: to internalize the meaning of conflict; to transmit these meanings to the public, in order to raise the consciousness of their significance and consequences; and to encourage public debate, first on peacemaking under constraining conditions; and secondly, on the choice between an interminable violent feud and a great but acceptable burden imposed by the transformation of conflict.

Adopting this strategy can pose a dilemma, calling upon the media to make a choice between the ideology of contributing to peacemaking and the professional demands of efficiency and news value. Confronting this dilemma might help the media deal with the idiosyncracies of the transformation model and the professionally uncomfortable dimensions of conflict coverage. The satisfaction of these demands is difficult, because it means departing from current norms and standards. But this is the real test of an ethics and morality that goes beyond the technical levels of media professionalism.

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