

Mariano Aguirre, Francisco Ferrándiz, José Manuel Pureza

# Before Emergency: Conflict Prevention and the Media



Humanitarian**Net**

Thematic Network on Humanitarian  
Development Studies



# Before Emergency: Conflict Prevention and the Media



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Edited by

**Mariano Aguirre**  
**Francisco Ferrándiz**  
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I

## **Debates on Conflict Prevention**



## **Conflict Prevention and the Role of the Media**

Mariano Aguirre, Francisco Ferrándiz and  
José Manuel Pureza

A series of wars over the last decade have produced complex emergencies that have led to various combinations of genocide, famine, destruction of infrastructure, enforced displacement of populations and regional destabilisation. There are now violent situations in around 30 countries, which produce over a thousand victims per year in battles over political power or territory. The leading actors in these conflicts are very often corrupt and repressive States and non-state armed groups. These wars are part of, and instrumental to, illegal economies based on resources such as diamonds, oil, timber, and on illicit trades of weapons and drugs.

There is an ever-stronger connection between violent groups such as drug traffickers, paramilitary organisations and mercenaries. These conflicts usually have a strong regional impact, which manifests itself in refugee flows, illegal arms sales and environmental destruction. In the last 20 years academics, political actors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been exploring the roots and characteristics of these conflicts. And the Media has increasingly focused its attention on them.

Most of the knowledge that we have about these conflicts, their victims and their characteristics is obtained through the media. With the exception of political actors and NGOs with relevant activity in the field or academics that conduct research in these countries, international society constructs its knowledge about modern peace and war based on the messages that the media offer every day. This fact gives journalists and the media great power over the life and death of millions of people. If television shows the dramatic situation of some social group, and if influential mainstream newspapers lobby in favour of «doing something», then the victims have more chance of being protected by

the international community. On the other hand, if the media doesn't play a critical role, certain Governments can prepare the scenario for an unjust war or simply do nothing. In the field of conflict prevention, the media can play an important role by providing reliable and credible information, and alerting society and decision makers about dangerous situations.

Present-day armed conflicts tend to break out within States that are fragile and lack legitimate, structured institutions. The difference between the civil population and military forces is unclear, and State and non-State protagonists wage war with no regard for humanitarian law. From the Balkans to Colombia, via Somalia, Sudan, Rwanda, the former Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and East Timor, the phenomenon of armed conflicts in fragile states is one of the twenty-first century's crucial problems. Foreign reaction varies according to the protagonists involved—states, multilateral organisations and NGOs—and their standing in the international system.

The *powerful states* with global interests have wavered between empowering the United Nations to manage these conflicts, and directly tackling them themselves, either unilaterally or together with other states that share common interests.

During the 1990's, *multilateral organisations* have fought for political space (that should be delegated by powerful states), economic support and even for the military power of coercion. The proposal by the former UN General Secretary UN, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, to create a standby peace force which can act for prevention has not been adopted by states because it would grant the Secretary-General power over them and enable him to act coercively. During the last 14 years the position of the United States and the European states changed from a cautious delegation of power to the UN for universal interventions to a reinforcement of selected interventions led by regional powers or by NATO.

For their part, *NGOs* have the prestige, social support and the political and economic backing from societies, States and institutions such as the European Union (EU) that support them to manage the most dramatic consequences of humanitarian crises. But currently, NGOs face two problems. First, some complex emergencies are beyond their capacities and they are not getting enough support from States and multilateral organisations. Second, some States are using them as secondary actors after they have fought their wars, as in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq.

These three groups, together with academics, peace and security research institutions and journalists, have debated the response to wars, violations of human rights and complex emergencies. The debate

lies in the tension between the Realist concept based on the singular interest of the nation-state, and the cooperative ideal which seeks the common good of international society, furthered by the so-called Liberal school of thought. This tension will be crucial for the current century. A possible solution lies in a cosmopolitan approach to the victims and the responses: it means to consider that massive violations of human rights and the massive exclusion of millions of people are issues that must be addressed by the international community of States. Human rights, their implementation, and conflict prevention policies are common goods and there is a responsibility to protect them.

### **The concept of conflict prevention**

Modern wars have their origins in different internal causes. As they tend to take place in countries on the periphery of the global system, there is a strong link between the economic policies directed at them and their domestic reality. Rapid modernisation, for example, linked with integration into the global market can increase inequalities and social tensions. Therefore decisions taken in central countries or international financial institutions on prices of raw materials, arms sales or credit policies affect these countries owing to their dependency and weakness. This weakness can be a trump card in conflict prevention.

Conflict prevention aims to stop tensions from escalating into violence by means of short-, medium- and long-term. Theoretically, the more effective the preventive action the less tension there will be and the greater the distancing of violence. No single measure excludes the others. Prevention can include coercive diplomacy (e.g. arms embargos); institutional incentives (e.g. aid in exchange for peace); co-operative management (e.g. easing mediation); and systematic transformations (e.g. constructing a legal system). The wider the perspective, the more dynamic the response will be.

Just as there is no mechanical relationship between factors that generate conflicts, there cannot be a mathematical summation of action that will halt violent escalation. Conflicts are in the hands of people and the results are always unpredictable. Furthermore, prevention should be carried out cautiously (in order to avoid producing the opposite effect) but without trusting in its results.

Lund says that prevention should signify immediate diplomatic or military interventions so as to bring about an immediate halt to violence and towards political and socio-economic structural changes, which improve people's standard of living. Therefore prevention includes:

- 1) Actions, policies or institutions which are used in order to avoid a significant and constant escalation of violence; internal or international disputes at times or places which are particularly vulnerable («vertical escalation»);
- 2) The promotion of activities that bring about non-violent reconciliation of the interests in dispute;
- 3) This reconciliation includes helping to prevent the conflict from starting up again once attention is turned to avoiding other conflicts («horizontal escalation»).

The Carnegie Commission on the Prevention of Deadly Conflicts studied the question for three years and has come up with an important final study. Its definition is based on avoiding vertical and horizontal escalation and preventing a renewed breakout of violence in conflicts that have ended. The strategies for prevention are set down in three principles:

- a) Act rapidly on the earliest signs of the problem (this implies possessing prior knowledge of the ethnic, linguistic and socio-economic, national and religious roots of conflict);
- b) Act from the outside using political, economic, social and military measures to relieve the pressure that has sparked the violence;
- c) Activate policies that resolve the underlying problems lying at the roots of the violence.

The Commission groups the strategies for prevention under *operational prevention* and *structural prevention*. In the former, an external protagonist (state, multilateral organisations, a prestigious personality) sets in motion a political-military and humanitarian strategy aimed at halting the escalation of violence and restoring the internal politics of the state affected. Operational prevention includes having the capacity to anticipate and analyse potential conflicts (early warning), acting on opportunities that arise unexpectedly, putting the problem in the hands of the UN Security Council and the relevant regional organisations, and encouraging preventive diplomacy, both public and secret. It also involves using economic measures such as sanctions, the exchange of specific measures for commercial profits, and making aid and investment conditional.

The degree of force employed has to be in proportion with the goals to be achieved and should be utilised within the framework of the UN Charter. It is interesting to note that, according to this Charter, force is not merely to be used as a last resort. Governments who commit genocide should realise that certain behaviour is unacceptable to the



international community, and force can also be applied for preventive deployment (such as in Macedonia since 1992). The application of international law and mechanisms to resolve disputes, as well as strategies to satisfy the economic, social, political, cultural and humanitarian needs of those affected by conflicts and post-war reconstruction are included to prevent the outbreak of conflict. The Carnegie Commission believes that no matter the type of society, the pillars of peace are security, social welfare and justice.

With regard to security, the Commission includes the non-proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and the control of conventional ones, with attention to the small arms that are most often used in today's wars. Another dimension is the security within a state that comes from having laws, a legitimate police force and impartial judicial and penal systems. Welfare implies access to basic personal needs: drinking water, health service, education, home and equal employment opportunities. To reach these goals a redefinition of the concept of development is required, together with aid and foreign investment that favour sustainable development, as well as a reevaluation of the role of the state, which must be run openly and efficiently. In addition, the OECD emphasises long-term development and sees a single continuous process of conflict prevention, humanitarian emergency operations, institutionalisation and reconciliation in peace processes.

Also in recent years, the European Commission and the Parliament have produced several documents and debates over conflict prevention. Initially the Commission was reluctant to commit itself to a structural concept of conflict prevention and chose to work on the development of Early Warning. However, in later documents the approach has changed and the Commission is planning to use different instruments, including:

- a. Promoting regional integration and trade links;
- b. Introducing the concept of conflict prevention in its development programmes;
- c. Supporting democracy, the rule of law and civil society
- d. Reforming the security sector;
- e. Post-conflict demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration programmes;
- f. Addressing issues as drug trafficking, small arms, scarcity of natural resources; and migration;
- g. Use the Community's instruments, such as diplomacy, the Rapid Reaction Mechanism, sanctions, crisis-management machinery;
- h. Cooperation with other international organizations, such as the United Nations and the World Bank.

## **A positive role for the media?**

As Cecilia Bruhn explains in her chapter, the relation between conflict prevention and the media is still an unexplored issue. We know that bad journalism can promote violence, but we do not know how good journalism may have a positive influence and impact on the prevention of armed conflicts. There is a need also to explore how the domestic and the international media operate in some particular cases, and the interfaces with international institutions and Governments. In Rwanda in 1994, some domestic media openly promoted genocide, while international media mostly ignored the situation. At the same time, some Belgium military officials alerted the UN and the Western Governments of a dangerous situation that was going to erupt at any given moment, but the US, some European Governments and the bureaucratic machine of the UN did not react at all.

In his chapter, José Manuel Pureza proposes the creation of a new journalistic paradigm, one that efficiently contributes to the human combat against genocidal culture. In fact, as some of the papers in this volume suggest, the very idea and practice of conflict prevention can be the main axis for the articulation of new forms of journalism. For Jean-Paul Marthoz, to develop this conflict prevention journalism, or early warning journalism, media needs to show a renewed flexibility to cope with shifting situations, developing new information-gathering and dissemination strategies that avoid the short-circuits of conventional reporting. Expressions such as “empathy exhaustion”, “outrage fatigue” or “catastrophe excess” were frequently heard in the working sessions at the Coimbra conference, and point to the saturation of the main patterns in which information on Human Rights, war and disaster have been managed in recent decades. To be of any use, the new preventive journalism has to be able to do away with this emerging feeling of powerlessness and find imaginative ways to reconnect with audiences at all levels. Suggestions such as the training of local, national and international media staff in a “conflict prevention culture”, or the search for ways to make conflict prevention newsworthy in all media formats were raised in the debates. How to go about it should be permanently open to debate, and the different contributions in this book offer some suggestions in this direction.

One important issue to start with is to analyse and deconstruct the ways in which the media liberally assume ready-to-use plots to represent the different parties in conflict situations. Instead of creating narratives that portray the ‘other’ as a threat, as fanatical and irrational, which is a too common feature of mainstream reporting, the media

could contribute to constructing a fair representation of different countries, cultures and people. For example, Robert Hudson analyses in his chapter how the people of the Balkans have been misrepresented by some famous academics and journalists, such as Robert Kaplan, who with emphasized historical essentialisms that added little to peace building. We have more recent examples of this process in Afghanistan or Irak, where the massive construction of a dangerous “enemy” of the West and the world, to which the mainstream media was a privileged accomplice, erased all possible avenues for conflict prevention. These essentialisms contribute more to gross misinterpretations than to a nuanced, preventive analysis that cuts across stereotypes and provides more realistic portrayals of the situation on the ground.

Beyond the avoidance of simplifying and, often stigmatizing plots, the media can also play a positive role in many of the prevention activities described. Journalists can provide information for the implementation of early warning policies, and can contribute knowledge and indications about situations, actors and their aims, and can also help to promote those actors that are active in peace policies. On the other hand, the media can contribute to hate or ignorance. Frivolous, bad and unethical journalism could generate more harm than bias journalism. Unfortunately, the rules of high tech and fast information promote a type of reporting and analysis (or lack thereof) that provide a very superficial and very often erroneous perspective of conflicts, their roots and their actors.

Journalists can also help to explain the international context of conflicts, and the way in which these fragile States are linked to legal and illegal networks, and the multinational corporations and international financial institutions toward them. The media also has the power to explain the links between two apparently different areas: development and conflicts. Through their reports some journalists present examples of how poverty, inequality and exploitation are at the roots of social and armed conflicts.

According to Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen, development cooperation should be a “process of opening up real freedoms that the people can enjoy”. Development as a process of freedom depends upon a series of factors such as social agreements for education, access to healthcare and recognised political and civil rights. Sen supports a concept of development that links freedom, democracy and information in order to increase the quality of life of people and to help promote more stable societies. The Media could be a tool for the construction of freedom, social agreements, participation and recognition and protection of rights.

Conflict prevention policies are finding many difficulties. Since 11 September 2001, most cooperation policies have passed to the

backstage. Force is replacing negotiations. Unilateralism is displacing multilateralism. The war against global terrorism is occupying the place of development and humanitarian policies. The US government is manipulating even the concept of prevention by using the idea of *pre-emptive war* —something that has been accepted by Javier Solana, head of European Security and Foreign Policy.

Conflict prevention policies confront a situation in which there are several trends:

- a) The pre-eminence of the national interests of global and regional powers over common interests. Multilateralism is losing ground and the idea of regional hegemonic leaders is returning;
- b) The global economy is based on low-risk investment with high gains in the short term. Structural prevention implies investment, which carries a risk with a possible indirect gain in the long term. Analysis is needed which investigates if it is more profitable to prevent than manage crises and collaborate in reconstruction;
- c) Immediate prevention can be capitalised on politically by those governments or institutions that propose it (if it proves efficient). But public opinion and the media comprehend better a war or a breakdown in negotiations than the process that avoids it. The media have a responsibility to give sufficient coverage to the preventive and diplomatic processes.

The modern international system is a mix of State and non-State actors, of State-centric and multi-centric approaches, and non-territorial networks. On the one hand, these changes must be understood by International Law. But on the other, the media must try to reflect and understand the different aspects and trends of this complex world. To develop this task the media should work on the reconceptualisation of concepts such as security and Human Rights as well as the importance of multilateralism. The social practice of journalism must be redefined as a contributor to conflict prevention and conflict resolution.

Multilateralism is a crucial factor for conflict prevention policies. And an open perspective that would include State and Non State actors is a necessity. To tackle problems such as poverty or war there is a need to coordinate policies among States, the EU, UN, the G-8 and civil societies from inside and outside the affected States. The work should be done at different levels: development, humanitarian action, human rights, world trade, among others. The responsible media should work from and inside the approach of the needs of the people (human security) and the needs of the international system (multilateralism). Those two concepts should be their guidelines.

Conflict prevention is a concept to be developed. It is also a concept to be protected from being pre-empted by spurious interests that might transform it into just another empty buzz-word. It receives its nourishment from human rights, international law, economic development, theories of the State and democracy, and the verification that modern armed conflicts carry consequences to be avoided because, in the end, prevention can be simpler, cheaper and less brutal than cure.

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## **To Give Sense to Solidarity We Need to Give Meaning to Reality**

Jean-Paul Marthoz

The first mandate of human rights organizations is not to prevent conflict; it is to prevent abuses against human rights. History shows that sometimes conflicts, popular rebellions or military-humanitarian interventions have helped to topple brutal regimes and improve the situation of human rights. Increasingly, writes Ken Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch, "the human rights movement recognizes that military force can not only be good for human rights, but, in fact, is an essential component of the protection of human rights"<sup>1</sup>. The call for a military intervention to stop the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 came to epitomize the relationship of human rights organizations to the issue of armed intervention to stop the commission of the most serious crimes.

However, human rights organizations don't close their eyes to the issue of preventing violent conflicts, since most of these erupt because of blatant abuses of human rights and often lead to an increase in brutal violations of both human rights law and the "laws of war". Indeed, the new "nasty little wars" of the last decade have changed the face and soul of human rights reporting. The ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, the genocide in Rwanda, the wars in Kosovo and Chechnya, the brutal confrontation in Israel/Palestine have given a new sense of urgency to the documentation and dissemination of human rights abuses and have changed the way human rights organizations have traditionally looked at violent conflicts. Unlike the "urgent actions" of the 1960s and '70s which were meant to save a prisoner of conscience threatened by an abusive regime, today's "calls for action"

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<sup>1</sup> See Human Rights.

launched by human rights organizations confronted with mass murder cover entire populations and groups in danger. The new trends in warfare and the scope of human rights abuses have raised essential questions related to both the understanding of these evolutions and the efficiency of the proposed remedies.

## **A new context**

The challenge is made more difficult by the increased role of the media in international affairs. The horrendous brutalities and political manipulation of imagined ethnic identities have merged with the immediacy of live television coverage and on-line news to exacerbate either the need “to do something” or the temptation to zap away from these distant horrors. If the new media scene has increased the capacity to denounce and to mobilize, it has also put immense pressure on human rights organizations and even distorted carefully planned priorities.

There is a dark side to journalism. If we ponder the role of the media in the most atrocious crimes of the past decade (former Yugoslavia, Rwanda), some media have been guilty of fanning the flames of ethnic hatred and even of coordinating the dirty work of the ethnic cleansers and the *génocidaires*. If we study the “banality of evil” (ethnic violence in Nigeria, communal violence in Indonesia, religious clashes in India), the media or at least many of them have been guilty of resorting to damaging clichés and stereotypes of the “other”, of recklessly simplifying complex issues and just looking for drama, blood and violence.

There is a bright side too. Although badly criticized for their “bang-bang” coverage of the new conflicts and their proclivity to being used by the new “spin doctors” of global politics, the media, and certainly the best of them, have also played a distinguished role in disseminating information on human rights and violations of international humanitarian law. Over the last ten years the media have been sharply increasing their coverage of human rights violations and conflicts. Key indicators are the increasing number of human-rights-related stories, the appointment of human-rights editors in a few media, and also the increasing knowledge and expertise in international human rights and humanitarian law.

On the bright side also, in countries of the South, the so-called “hate media” that are usually characterized by their dependence on the state or on influential economic or group actors have been challenged by a growing corps of daring independent journalists who have striven to contradict and debunk the false assertions circulated by dependent



media. Indeed the quality of the media, their ethical approach, and their adherence to the highest standards of the profession are key criteria in their capacity to defuse tensions. It was best illustrated in the April-May 1989 conflict between Mauritania and Senegal when *Sud Hebdo* and *Wal Fadjri* both played an important pacifying role in refusing to get engulfed in the jingoistic campaign<sup>2</sup>.

### Reporting “live”

The reality, however, is also that in recent years the “foreign beat” has taken a beating in many news organizations, especially in the US. This “downsizing” of foreign news has taken place while the face of war was itself changing. Despite all the talk of “live TV” coverage and the globalization of information, more and more conflicts have become invisible, either because they take place in areas that are too dangerous to cover or because armies seal off the battleground and only allow well-controlled expeditions into previously sanitized areas. The military seem to have learnt the lessons of Vietnam where free-riding journalists were allowed to the battle scenes and to report freely back home. Now strict control of the media corps is the rule, from the Gulf War to the War in Iraq and the Israeli incursions into the Occupied Territories.

In years past, human rights organizations had tended to come late, after the fact, and to act as recorders of history. However, they have become aware that their pace is too slow for the whirlwind of human rights emergencies. Human Rights Watch has taken stock of this and realized the need to take a different approach in order to stop human rights abuses NOW. Our investigators have been forced to fill in the news media gaps, acting no longer as historians painstakingly digging up the evidence for later reports, but also as proxy war correspondents reporting “live” from the lawless corners of the world. This was done mostly in Kosovo, before and during the NATO intervention, from Ingushetia during the second Chechnya war, in the warlord-ruled rural areas of Afghanistan and in Iraq before, during and after the American-led offensive.

Human Rights Watch therefore has had to develop new methods of gathering and distributing information to respond to this sense of urgency. It has had to develop a new brand of investigators, the “emergency researchers” trained to blend the skills of high-paced journalism and slow-lane human rights investigations. HRW has had to equip itself

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<sup>2</sup> See Moussa, Boubakar, 1994.

with new technological capacities and to create new communications systems in order to provide as quickly as possible an accurate description of the situation on the ground. It has had to rely on careful interviews of traumatized refugees arriving *en masse* across the borders to try to reconstitute the cases of human rights violations.

### **CNNization and the “right to intervene”**

Human rights organizations have entered warily into this *CNNization* of human rights reporting. Although most of the information collected through refugees’ interviews has been proven right by researchers finally being allowed access to the killing fields, we know the risks involved in terms of accuracy, impartiality and vulnerability to manipulation when our researchers have to go into the “fog of war”: Reporting “live” introduces deadline pressures; posting an investigator in a specific location—a decision often linked to the lack of access to the war zones—has its inevitable consequences in terms of what kind of abuses are being reported, and by whom.

Human rights monitoring is therefore thrown into the middle of the unfolding drama and its denunciations increasingly become an integral part of the decision-making process and of the governments’ determination to act, or to pretend to act. In a world where the denunciation of egregious crimes can lead to economic sanctions, military intervention and war crimes trials, human rights investigators on the ground have become key actors on the international political scene. Their information will be used for good or bad, it will be manipulated, quoted out of context, brandished as justification for actions that might look humanitarian but are essentially political. Their information will be brushed aside, deconstructed, accused of irrelevance or immaturity, when *realpolitik*, from Chechnya to Afghanistan, justifies waltzing with the mass killers and the “dirty warriors”.

Human rights documentation is also taking a new turn thanks to landmark victories in the field of international justice. The arrest of Augusto Pinochet in London in October 1999 was “a wake-up call for tyrants” as much as the transfer of Slobodan Milosevic to The Hague. Indeed, from now on, leaders commanding gangs of rapists and mass murderers know that the information collected on their crimes may lead them to the dock. This increases the risks of physical aggression for both human rights investigators and for journalists and the recourse to “no-access” or “free-fire” zones.

## **Framing the agenda**

The centrality of the theme of human rights in new complex crises has produced an increased risk of “instrumentalization” which in turn has acutely put to the test the impartiality of international human rights monitoring. In this new context, human rights organizations, as established in most Codes of Journalistic Practices, are pledged not only to be impartial but also to avoid the appearance of being partial. “A false idea is a fact”, as French philosopher Raymond Aron used to say. Perceptions have become paramount: gaps in country monitoring, most often attributable to issues of staffing turnover and resource constraints, imbalances in the number and targets of press releases, threaten to be seen or denounced as deliberate decisions and a sign of taking sides.

Impartiality means applying the same human rights standards to all actors in a conflict, to official armed forces and guerrilla groups, to our supposed friends and our declared enemies. However it does not mean neutrality in the face of evil. Human rights organizations practise indeed a form of committed journalism, based on the three ethical pillars of the profession: truth-seeking, independence and minimizing harm. Impartiality is tested in the investigation methodology as well in the NGOs’ readiness to denounce human rights abusers from all sides, even if one side seems to provide most of the civilian victims. It is also demonstrated in their determination to keep distance from the “breaking news” and big powers’ agendas as well as in their commitment to cover human rights violations far away from media frenzies and diplomatic priorities. Human rights investigators must report “live” but they must also be where journalists are not, they must speak up when everyone keeps silent, they must stay when journalists pack up, they must come back when the soldiers have decamped.

This is where human rights reporting joins conflict prevention. Our objective at HRW is to promote some form of “preventive” or “early warning journalism” knowing that a story in a leading paper or a major TV news programme has often more chance to raise political leaders’ attention than a memo sent by an intelligence service or an embassy. By investigating countries that are not at the top of the news cycle, human rights organizations can be part of an early warning system. The violation of human rights is indeed a key indicator in the road towards conflict. Abusive governments stifle the expression of plurality, exclude or discriminate against members of other ethnic, religious, linguistic groups, therefore radicalizing the most active members of these groups and feeding their claims that violent protests are inevitable and necessary. This kind of work has been done by HRW researchers on many

communal conflicts, on the Montagnards in Vietnam or in countries of Central Asia, years before they were suddenly thrown into the arc of crisis. This “early warning” work is complemented by doing follow-up research in countries that have been the scene of major human rights disasters and suddenly fade away from the news agenda.

NGOs, and particularly development and medical groups, are particularly well equipped to assume that work. Like missionary outposts a century ago their coverage of the world is often much more extensive than the correspondents’ network of the biggest global news organizations. There are also often the only ones present in a zone of emerging conflict and the only ones to stay after the first wave of “bang bang” journalists has left. Besides, the availability of instant communications has increased the autonomy and information power of NGO’s vis-à-vis both journalists and decision-makers. And many have learned to go beyond communication and public relations to provide factually accurate and urgent information to the media.

### **“Outrage fatigue”**

Human rights organizations have scored major gains in the last decade, pushing through a treaty banning landmines, forcing sceptical diplomats to sign a treaty establishing an International Criminal Court, sending tens of war-crimes indictees to national and international courts, and reopening cases of murder and disappearance in Latin America.

The new “dirty little wars” have also demonstrated the NGOs’ capacity to document and publicize abuses but they have also bitterly tested their capacity to influence the international community and force it to take meaningful actions to stop the killing. In Croatia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Chechnya, they have proved themselves able to quickly document and denounce the true nature of what was happening but they have failed to convince or shame the world to intervene.

Why? Was the world not supposedly ruled by the CNN effect? Did it not suffice to show the shocking images of wounded or dead civilians to trigger compassion and action? The human rights movement has generally overestimated the power of the image and confused the public opinion’s positive and generous reaction to the depiction of suffering with its readiness to stomach decisive and sometimes bloody intervention.

As French political scientist Samy Cohen has shown in his study of public opinion and war<sup>3</sup>, there is a distance between interest and

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<sup>3</sup> See La Balme, Natalie, 2002.

mobilization. If the media can easily trigger humanitarian responses, they are a lot less influential in leading governments to take tough political decisions. The Rwandan genocide is certainly the most blatant example of this dual track. Despite precise information on the preparation and the execution of the genocide, journalists were unable to move either international public opinion or democratic governments to send troops and stop the killing. A few months later, however, images of hundreds of thousands of Hutu refugees mixed with *génocidaires* fleeing the victorious Tutsi army and flocking into the camps of Goma triggered a swelling wave of humanitarian emotions and financial generosity.

The avalanche of horror pictures and grisly descriptions of unlimited human suffering and brutality has confronted human rights organizations with “outrage fatigue”, changing moral disgust and emotional revulsion into a sense of powerlessness and even, at the end, into indifference. More fundamentally, this focus on images and emotion has left the field wide open for new interpretations of the world that to a large extent have been providing a rationale for cynicism and passivity. “The TV spectacle of corpses encourages a retreat from the attempt to understand,” writes Canadian pundit Michael Ignatief. “...It is a fallacy to suppose that global media automatically create these narratives of engagement. Our engagement depends critically on what narrative is provided for us by the mediators—the writers, journalists, politicians, eyewitnesses—who make the horror of the world available to us”<sup>4</sup>.

## Interpreting the world

To a large extent the human rights movement has failed, not unlike many other progressive groups, to provide a “meaning” to a senseless world, leaving the space wide open for theoreticians of doom and for the concept of The New Barbarism developed in best selling books like *The Coming Anarchy* (Robert Kaplan) or *The Empire and the New Barbarians* (Jean-Christophe Rufin). Percolating in thousands of press articles and TV reports, these interpretations have debunked the trust that many had placed in the mobilizing power of moral outrage and they have provided an intellectual framework for a New Realist school in international politics, which has no real patience for an activist human rights policy.

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<sup>4</sup> *The Warrior's Honor*, p. 23 and p. 97.

This is where the conventional way of reporting human rights abuses appears insufficient and in some cases even becomes counter-productive. Therefore human rights organizations have to work on two intellectual fronts:

- 1) They have to demonstrate beyond the moral arguments that human rights are not a contingent and subsidiary element of international politics but one of its essential dimensions: that there is a realpolitik of human rights.
- 2) They have to go beyond the strict documentation of human rights abuses and provide the wider context and linkages that will show that these “dirty little wars” have a meaning and an impact close to home and therefore that citizens can be engaged in the rolling-back of the “New Barbarism”.

The proclaimed “ancestral” brutality and apparent irrationality of post-modern civil wars beg a more forceful effort at explanation and interpretation. The mass murder with machetes of hundreds of thousands of Tutsis in Rwanda, the large-scale mutilations in Sierra Leone, appear literally incomprehensible. The reflex therefore is to simplify and to evoke tribal hatreds and historical analogies—the “heart of darkness”—that further blur the vision under the pretence of enlightening it.

## Reporting complexity

In its book *Slaughter among Neighbors*, published in 1995, Human Rights Watch already emphasized the need to identify the “facts behind the facts”: “The international community’s ability to respond effectively to communal violence—violence among ethnic, religious and racial groups—is hindered by a failure to understand its causes.” All too often, age-old hatreds are blamed. Yet the origins of many of these conflicts lie less in abiding animosities than in contemporary politics, for communal violence frequently occurs when a government is losing popularity or legitimacy and finds it convenient to wrap itself in a cloak of ethnic, racist, or religious rhetoric. *Slaughter among Neighbors* aims to foster an understanding of contemporary causes of conflict and build the foundation on which to construct sound strategies to prevent or contain the violence”<sup>5</sup>.

The reporting of complexity has to take the lead on the reporting of outrage: what can we do in the face of “centuries of hatred” as many presented the genocide in Rwanda, except close the door, pull down

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<sup>5</sup> See *The Political...*, 1995.

the shutters and barricade ourselves far from the maddened and murderous/murdered masses? Whereas we can do something if this hatred is described for what it really is: a programmed murder machine in the hands of a government under siege. Whereas we can do something if the violence in Sierra Leone or Angola or RDC is linked to new trends in the extractive and arms industries and to the criminalization of the world economy.

"The images presented of African conflicts as primitive and backward reinforce existing prejudices and limit further examination of their causes and impact," writes Philippa Atkinson. "Conclusions are drawn, based on this imperfect analysis, that the West can play no positive role to help Africans with their local and historical conflicts, with disengagement seen as the only sensible strategy and that perhaps humanitarian aid can be offered through the non-committal channel of NGOs".<sup>6</sup>

### **Exposing the worldwide "circle of abuse"**

To be relevant human rights organizations have to open the scope of their investigations and better contextualize violations. That means going beyond the "primary actors". "Conflicts, writes *International Alert*, are often camouflaged: only the primary parties, the antagonists, are visible (through media coverage, military actions, making statements, signing agreements) while secondary parties may play an important role behind the scenes (providing the money, weapons and other infrastructures for the conflict)<sup>7</sup>. Limiting the documentation of human rights abuses to the primary actors—the victims' testimonies and their accusations against abusers— can be counter-productive. The accumulation of images and denunciations of sheer and "senseless" atrocities can "turn off" both journalists and the public.

We experienced such reactions towards many African conflicts when our reports fell on deaf ears and did not trigger a strong outrage. We had to go beyond the mere description of human rights abuses and find out how to reconnect these abuses with other, closer, issues and actors. That's why HRW has developed other research projects to give a meaning to the information on abuses, to find the "chain of command" in these abuses, to describe the full context. We have investigated arms trafficking, minerals smuggling, the role of the oil industry, etc.

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<sup>6</sup> See Atkinson, Philippa, 1999.

<sup>7</sup> See *International Alert*, 1994.

The “qualification” of a conflict, its definition, is not gratuitous. It induces the form of the response. “Barbarism” justifies disengagement while the contextualization, the deep interpretation of causes, the identification of the local and transnational networks of interests and responsibilities, brush aside pretexts for inaction and lead to a rational discussion of policy options. The priority for human rights organizations is to give a meaning to the senseless whirl of the world in wild places of mayhem and furore. To give meaning to solidarity, we need to give meaning to reality.

### **Harnessing academic power**

The academic community could provide the “missing link” in this urgent need of context. Studies that integrate all factors of a conflict and try to provide a wider interpretation than just the legal and human-rights approach would prove particularly useful not only in understanding the context but also in drafting relevant and realistic recommendations that not only talk to policy-makers or international actors but also make sense at the grassroots level, by taking into account complex cultural and historical factors.

Universities and research centres could also orient their media studies to understanding the role that the media and journalists play or do not play in conflicts. Two pitfalls have to be avoided. First, “media bashing”: as the discussion on the Gulf or the Iraq wars have shown, media criticism tends to be heavily tainted by ideological agendas that undermine the rigor of the research. Second, academic mistrust of “chaotic” journalistic practices: understanding the pressures journalists are under, how decisions are made, the complexity of news flows, would require more cooperative research between academics, NGOs information officers and journalists.

Little is known for instance of the interplay between local and international media or the interaction between global TV, international radio stations, diaspora media and more informal modes of communication, from the pre-modern traders’ networks to the post-modern Internet.

There is another field of cooperation: the schools of journalism. Introducing human rights reporting in the curriculum of schools of journalism, teaching international journalism in a way that emphasizes contextualization and “glocalisation”, i.e. the links between local and global events, is certainly an area of huge potential.

Human rights organizations have another responsibility in helping to define the extent and the limits of freedom of speech. Although international standards, like the famous Article 19 of the UN Declaration



of Human Rights, are well-known and clear, the reality is that a leading media power, the United States, and many US-based organizations, adhere to another free speech tradition, the First Amendment, that allows hate speech quite generously. The balance between freedom of speech and the right to non-discrimination, the definition of "hate speech", "hate crimes", and of the concept of "incitement" should be key research assignments for the international human rights and conflict prevention communities.

## Understanding journalism

Finally, human rights organizations have to accept the autonomy of journalism and understand that the role of journalism is neither human rights promotion nor conflict prevention. It is about reporting the facts, analysing them and putting them into a context that makes them relevant and understandable. The role of the media is also to present a real diversity of opinions that covers the full spectrum of voices.

In this context, can we oppose war journalism to peace journalism? I would rather say that the dividing line is between good and bad journalism. Peace activists tend to label as war journalism a kind of journalism that works in slogans, indulges in stereotypes, seeks drama and chases shocking pictures, that is, a journalism that would be considered faulty by most journalism schools. If we define peace media as "presenting issues fairly, offering alternative sources of information and broadcast nullifying or mitigating the messages of hate media"<sup>8</sup>, it sounds just like another name for good journalism.

A distinction however can be made between news-oriented journalism and "conflict-resolution/prevention" media that aim concretely to contribute to the solution of a crisis. This latter form involves a lengthy, pedagogical and cautious process that goes beyond straight news reporting and tries to solve conflicts by making available space or airtime for the expression of grievances, by empowering people that have been voiceless. They deserve the respect of the more "rugged old hacks" that tend to see the practitioners of this form of journalism as "do-gooders" too ready to compromise the hard facts on the altar of peace-building and community-bridging.

News-oriented journalism works at another level. If it requires a strong mastering of professional practises and a healthy distance from

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<sup>8</sup> See Gardner, Ellen, 2001.

all actors, even the well-intentioned ones, it has also to understand the many ethical dilemmas that might arise during a conflict. As the key duties of journalism are the search for truth, independence and the need to minimize harm, the “ethical triangle” is particularly difficult to establish in many conflicts and journalists should prepare themselves for the kind of predicament when they will be confronted, for instance, with the decision to release, or not, a story that might be inflammatory, or to testify as a witness in an international criminal court.

Journalism’s main imperative is its commitment to the truth, its role in finding and validating information. This duty is particularly crucial in the “fog of war” atmosphere where propaganda, intimidation, appeals to patriotism or solidarity with the victims, are a constant pressure on journalists’ professionalism and integrity.

It is by carrying out this mission without fear or favour that journalists can really play their role and converge with human rights organizations.

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## **The Media, New Wars and New Challenges for the Twenty-First Century**

Pedro Caldeira Rodrigues

On 29 March 2002, one day after the beginning of the Israeli Defence Forces' massive military offensive against the autonomous territories of the Palestinian Authority, CNN journalist Chistine Amanpour was able to get into contact with Yasser Arafat by phone. The Palestinian leader was surrounded by over 70 tanks at his headquarters which lay in ruins. Amanpour asked him whether he "could do more in order to stop the violence", in an obvious reference to the Palestinian suicide bombing attacks. Arafat got angry, accused her of concealing the "crimes of Israelis" with that question, and that was the end of the conversation. "What a great journalist you turned out to be, you should have more respect for your profession...", said Arafat to the astonished Amanpour.

Previously, in 1998, during the Kosovo conflict, about one year before the beginning of the NATO attacks, a CNN team also led by Amanpour went into Pristina for just two or three days. With amazing technical support, the sole objective of the large team was to interview a leader of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), the Albanian armed group fighting the Serb forces. The report was made. A few days later, the then US Special Representative Richard Holbrooke visited the region and also had a meeting with the KLA's leadership, which translated into the movement's legitimisation by the US. The negotiated solution gave place to the military solution.

These two examples disclosure a specific and persistent way of doing journalism, where a tendency towards simplification and Manichaeism is revealed: the tendency to blame, almost exclusively, one of the sides in a conflict for the worsening of the situation, and to juggle the information on the possibilities of negotiable solutions.

These are examples that keep on repeating themselves, as in the Middle East. In early April, *Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting* (FAIR), a

US observatory on the media, released, a study on the use of the word “retaliation”, and its derivations, on ABC, CBS and NBS’s main nightly news between the beginning of the second Intifada, in September 2000, until 17 March 2002.

The study concluded that 79 percent of those references were related to Israeli “retaliation” against the Palestinians. Only 9 percent referred to Palestinian “retaliation” against Israeli. With both parts justifying their attacks as retaliation for past actions, US’s main TV channels chose to characterise Israel’s violence as “retaliation”, far more often than it did violent Palestinian actions.

Why this example? Because the term “retaliation” suggests a defensive attitude, a response to a specific aggression. It also implicitly places responsibility for the cycle of violence on the side that is suffering retaliation; notwithstanding the fact that the number of Palestinian civilian casualties was always higher than those of the Israelis.

As such, FAIR concluded that the disproportionate use of the word “retaliation” —79 percent against 9 percent— reveals a tendency to define Israel’s action as defensive, and the Palestinian one as aggressive. Once more, the main US broadcast media were able to “simplify” a rather complex conflict.

In the face of a very radicalised situation, where both parts have several propaganda weapons, the media, mainly the US televisions, rarely broadcast information on how to solve the long-time contentions in the Middle East area. Peace proposals or plans that were, or still are, under discussion are omitted, and the consequential is privileged by comparison with the essential. To make things worse, the media are deliberately excluded, often through violence, from areas where human rights abuses occur.

In this scenario, it’s not surprising that an “invisible war” has been settled in the editorial offices.

In the US, as revealed by several media observatories, signs of conflict radicalisation were never explained, which makes it possible to easily manipulate people and reach simplistic conclusions, such that Israel wants peace and Arafat doesn’t. Or the other way around.

The most balanced opinions are disregarded, and the entire story is focused on the main actors. The “peace field” is marginalised and almost reduced to silence, in the same way as were the voices criticising the specificity of the “war against terrorism”, declared after 11 September 2001 by the Bush administration, in an overall atmosphere of “reinforced national security”.

In fact, very few critical voices had access to television time, including in the debates. And many media, by allowing governments to be the

ones to define what is in stake, have promoted the worst possible scenarios. When people don't know what the alternatives are, they don't fight for them. Mainly, because they are not revealed.

### **On the media's usefulness**

Ever since 11 September 2001 the media have had to seriously examine their role, their usefulness. This, despite fact that the events in Timisoara, Romania, in 1989, on the eve of the collapse of Nicolae Ceausescu's regime, or the Gulf War, had already called the function of journalism into question.

But in this new international scenario following the devastating attacks on New York and Washington and therise of the so-called "new threats", did the media really reflect about the "past lessons" and undertake a more cautious role, equidistant from the several powers, pledging themselves to conflict prevention, instead of its proliferation?

Is it possible to understand how the world we live in works, based on the information provided to us by the mass media? Or is it that the dissimulated language, the omissions, after all characterise an illusion called the 'media era', while power continues to have its own agenda: an unalterable power, which serves to protect its own interests, no matter what?

### **The media and the war in Afghanistan**

According to several experts on the media phenomenon, the covering of the so-called "war against terrorism" declared by President George W. Bush altered the traditional relationship between the media and the military. Contrary to what happened, for example, during the Vietnam War, the intense criticism of the past was abandoned and the media became the vanguard of publicising military successes.

US political and military leaders conveyed a clear message: the war in Afghanistan was merely the prelude for other military actions, while even in Afghan territory itself, conflict was far from over. By contrast, the media, mainly American, did not hide their exuberance over the war's progress.

Reporting this war means a new era of American "war journalism". In the Second World War, in Korea, in Vietnam, military public affairs departments had orders to expose the most positive scenario possible. Among the myths of the Second World War is the idea that the media were far more positive in their work than they were in Vietnam. In part

that was so, because the media were engaged with the strategic aims of the war, as were the military. In Vietnam, the media ended up becoming critical of the war itself.

Especially in the US, the media and the military leaders seem to have now completely different tasks. The cautious tone is ignored, and the obsession with Afghanistan led the media to focus their attention in that field and to interpret the events as a “magnificent victory” for the US. It was a victory indeed, but far from being a definite one.

In general terms, the media reported the Taliban’s withdrawal from the power structures and the cities as the end of the Taliban, and the end of the war—in contrast to military leaders, who continued to emphasize the limits to that victory. Roles were reversed, and it was the media that started to draw a picture full of victories and successes. The media were once more unable to understand the war, and approached the conflict a kind of a “personal issue”.

The “why” continued to be much less important than what was happening, and the media kept on seeing victories where the military saw “battles in progress”, with inevitable consequences for public perception of the war.

In a way, the media now did the opposite of what was done in the Vietnam War, but they could potentially create an identical situation: people expect a swift end to the war, and start to get anxious when this doesn’t happen.

The attacks on New York and Washington and the declaration of the “war against terrorism” also meant the beginning of tremendous pressure on the media, so that US actions and politics were presented in the most convenient way for the administration. Numerous cases of censorship, and even more self-censorship, occurred, and many independent initiatives were mistaken for “absence of patriotism”.

## **The Anthrax Scare**

But another problem is that the obsession with terrorism might make the media accomplices of terrorism, when they appoint themselves as “messengers of terror”. In this aspect, the case of anthrax is exemplary. Worldwide hysteria about anthrax, disseminated by the media, made people believe that it was a scourge that could attack anyone.

And yet, there were only a few dozen people infected, some of whom died. The coverage was absolutely disproportional to the real threat. And other threats, other much more serious diseases, other deadlier phenomena, were consigned to the back pages.

Then other alarms showed up: terrorist attacks on the San Francisco bridges, possible attacks during Easter, in a spiral of mistrusts, fears, suspicions: by now every threat seemed probable. In this sense, the media proved not to be very provident as they propagated exaggerated fears which may eventually turn insignificant terrorist actions into major public phenomenon.

## **The Pentagon and the war**

Despite changes in the relationship between the media and the military, the Pentagon's propaganda machine improved, with the collaboration of several departments. Restrictive policies were reinforced and last February, Washington Post reporter Doug Struck said that the American soldiers in Afghanistan threatened to fire against him if he kept trying to investigate a place where civilians had been killed. "Why doesn't the Pentagon allow journalists access to investigate what is going on in Afghanistan?" he asked. Israeli soldiers showed the same attitude a few months later towards the journalists that tried to cover "forbidden military areas".

In fact, democracy stops working if the public doesn't have access to complete and reliable information on government activities. In the Afghanistan war, journalists and humanitarian organisations in the field had restricted access to many areas, and the main US TV channels almost never questioned the legality of decisions that involved attacking civilians.

Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch have shown their concern over the loss of civilian lives in Afghanistan and have appealed for a moratorium against the use of cluster bombs, but ABC, CBS or NBC have made no reference to this question. Some media even justified attacks against civilians. And when civilian deaths were being reported, like in Tora Bora, where the number of victims rose to 100, a CBS reporter considered that "so far few Afghans object to the civilians killed by US air strikes".

Independent reports once more became the exception, and reports on civilian deaths were often blamed on "Taliban propaganda". Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld warned that "telling stories of civilians apparently killed by American bombs makes it more difficult to hunt terrorists".

The person most highlighted in the propaganda perspective was Jim Miklaszewski, NBC's Pentagon correspondent, who several times characterised the issue of Afghan victims as an "offence" to the US, or

that the Pentagon “was acting defensively” due to the fact that Taliban propaganda led occidental journalists to places allegedly destroyed by aviation.

Another study made by FAIR on the “New York Times” and the “Washington Post” dailies revealed that in the weeks following the September attacks, the space granted to the supporters of a military response was overwhelming, whilst opinions standing up for a diplomatic approach and respect for international law, as an alternative to military action, were practically non-existent.

But even if the polls revealed that the majority of the population defended a military answer, the media’s duty should be to remain independent, and to listen to the greatest possible number of opinions. The most respected, and most influent, newspapers should have the task of providing readers with a wide range of opinions on how to approach terrorism, its causes and solutions. But if the aim was to promote a serious and critical debate, then both American dailies failed.

Furthermore, as a White House spokesperson admitted, a need to “demand a suspension of freedoms and rights in a way never seen up to the present, at least since the Second World War” began to be theorised.

## **Monopoly questioned**

However, the Qatar-based Arab television channel Al-Jazira threw new dice, confirmed by recent events in the Middle East, where Arab satellite channels growingly impose themselves on CNN conflict coverage.

The answer to this new phenomenon revealed a lot of nervousness. Washington admitted to having directly challenged Qatar’s emir on what was called Al-Jazira’s “incendiary rhetoric”.

Beyond the intense pressures on this Arab TV channel, the Bush administration decided to severely limit “sensitive information” on Afghanistan’s military operations, at the same time as the main televisions revised their alignments.

Whilst the media were preparing for the war, some distinguished American journalists were suggesting military strategies that violated the laws of war and almost reflected terrorist strategies. For example, Billy O’Reilly, a Fox News Channel journalist, said in a programme that if the Afghan government did not give Bin Laden up “the US should bomb Afghan’s infrastructure to the limit —the airport, power stations, reservoirs and roads”. And he carried on: “The Germans were responsible



for Hitler. The Afghans are responsible for the Taliban. If they don't rise against a criminal government, they'll suffer hunger, full stop".

In this way, the context of the crisis, the circumstances that led to Taliban's seizure of power, the complicity of international powers in this process, all were concealed.

On 10 October 2001, the executive directors of ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox and CNN gathered with National Security secretary Condoleezza Rice, and accepted the suggestion that future declarations of Bin Laden's Al Qaeda group would be condensed and "inflammatory language" would be suppressed. A bad example, in which the government tells the journalists how they should transmit information. To Rice, and according to what was revealed, the main fear consisted in Bin Laden "being a charismatic speaker who could propagate the anti-American feeling to spread hate and incite his followers to kill Americans if he had 20 minutes on TV".

The point here is not that Bin Laden or Al Qaeda were entitled to "equal time" in the broadcast media, but the government's disturbing attitude to shaping or influencing the content of information. This in a climate of massive radicalisation, exacerbated patriotism, rising intolerance and attacks on civic and individual freedoms.

## **Support and criticism**

Instead of keeping its distance, the media started to "support" government. However, there has been a rise of American media criticism towards the Pentagon, which tended to consider several newspapers or television channels as its exclusive spokesmen.

It was the growing number of incidents in the Afghan war, contrary to the official version, which gave birth to this small insurrection. Last March, the Washington Post dared to write "the explanations of [US Secretary of Defence] Rumsfeld and his commanders on the deaths of innocents caused by American attacks are filled with contradictions".

The main factor leading to the exchange of bitter words between the media and the US government was the International Press Institute's accusation of the Pentagon's engagement with the Office of Strategic Influence, an organ with the task of producing worldwide disinformation in name of western interests, and particularly American ones.

But this decrease in the nationalist-patriotism fervour that was installed in the media right after 11 September 2001, did not prevent Time magazine (online) in early March from electing General Tommy Franks, chief of military operations in Afghanistan, as "figure of the

week for his work in waging a war that became more and more difficult", even considering him a "war hero".

Thus, room for dissidents against the "military line" became very reduced. For some media, civilian casualties were simply not news. And the well-known journalism technique of "burning the lead" was revealed: the story begins with what everyone knows, while the real news, the surprising and significant, is "pulled" down, where there is less chance of its being read and commented on.

## **Lessons from the Gulf**

In 1991, in the Gulf War, the fact that the public opinion was cudgeled with the "miraculously small number of casualties" on the great coalition side, surely motivated by the triumph of recent technology, and with the 250 thousand or more Iraqis annihilated, greatly contributed to the recurrence of new situations, such as in the Balkan wars, in particular the Yugoslavia bombings.

When it was decided to attack Saddam Hussein's regime in 1991, the now US vice-president, Dick Cheney, was Secretary of Defence. A strategy was delineated to "face the media", in collaboration with the then General Chief of Staff of the US Armed Forces, Colin Powell, now responsible for the Department of State. Information would only be released if it favoured the operation's political aims. Military censors vetted newspaper articles and reporters were confined to the pool systems, always under escort. At that time, Powell justified these restrictions to prevent "security failures".

Newspaper directors were now called to the Defence Ministers' offices to receive "suggestions" and instructions. In the Gulf, or in the so-called "Kosovo war", BBC and ITV field journalists were invited to behave in the same way. The Economist then considered that "the truth about the Gulf war must wait for the end of the conflict". And when some journalists announced some of the terrible "collateral effects", their patriotism was immediately questioned, and their reports were considered a "disgrace for their country".

In Kosovo, the ghosts of Second World War, the Nazis and the Holocaust were even invoked by the media to describe the situation in the field and to justify the attack against Milosevic's Yugoslavia. And one must remember the way the media reported the decisive Rambouillet conference, a negotiation initiative meant to attempt to halt the conflict, which sank due to the general media-fed belief in the inevitability of the attack on Yugoslavia.

One must also emphasize that during the Bosnian war, which exclusively grabbed media attention, news in Rwanda emerged, suggesting the beginning of a large-scale genocide. For weeks, the media kept silent, though they knew what was happening.

## Still Afghanistan

As Noam Chomsky highlighted, in the two decisive months prior to the beginning of the Gulf War, the tendency amongst the most powerful American media was practically to ignore the diplomatic initiatives trying to avoid the conflict, placing an emphasis rather on the inevitability of the military action. Journalism definitely wore a military uniform.

Simplification instead of analysis, omission instead of information: the crisis in research journalism also determined the parameters in which the media work, and the perfection or imperfection of what they transmit, of the "truth" they transmit.

In the Gulf War, in the former Yugoslavia conflicts and especially in the Afghan war, a substantial change in "patterns of conformity" occurred. As the journalist and writer Baptista-Bastos warned in a recent article, the concept of "truth" conveyed by the main, respected political leaders becomes a "unilateral truth", seen as total. In this aspect, the anti-terrorist pretext allows for a "dramatic mental simulation", which recognises any other armed intervention as legitimate, anywhere in the world, whenever there is suspicion of "terrorism".

The field reporters would not have been able to perceive the problem's specificity due to several deficiencies. But they served an "ideology", in a logic of metaphorical reasoning that accepts as right and just what is seen as "retaliation". The power system outlined after 11 September 2001 wasn't determined by the information transmitted by the media. And so, the "information consumer" is unable to build formulae for personal reflection and analysis, and is more vulnerable to the "inevitable" scenarios.

In the case of the war in Afghanistan, the key Portuguese media also lined up with the "war against terrorism" slogan, pushed by the London and Washington governments. But *El Mundo* (Spain) called it an "offensive", and *The Guardian* (Britain) an "attack on Afghanistan".

But in general, the most powerful media showed little *concern in approaching the roots of conflict*, their nature, the characteristics of the regimes involved, the various diplomatic initiatives.

It is important in this context to recall the impact of the Vietnam War on the American public opinion, mainly due to the presence of

reporters at the frontline, which brought to perplexed citizens images of increasing defeat, loss of American lives, discontent and demoralization, leading to pressure for the end of the conflict.

In contrast, the Gulf War meant the beginning of the “clean, controlled” war, without images or with staged ones —a war without casualties, without blood, at least on the “right side”: a tendency that continued to increase and to become more sophisticated.

## The end of an era?

One may ask, as information professionals do, where are the brilliant international reporters of decades ago? Can we speak about the decadence of a noble cause, as the word “moral” continues to prevail, in an attempt to “win the hearts and souls”?

The Australian journalist John Pilger recalls that during the First World War, the British Prime Minister David Lloyd George told C. P. Scott, editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, “If people really knew the truth, the war would end tomorrow. But of course they don’t know and cannot know”. At the same time the impartial correspondent of *The Times*, Sir Philip Gibbs, swore “truth had been told, beyond the hard realism of horrors and casualties, and of facts and criticisms...”

Robert Miller, United Press correspondent during the Korea War in 1952, revealed himself as less subtle. He said: “There are certain ‘facts’ and stories on Korea published by editors and directors that were simply made up ... Many of us who sent stories knew they were false, but we had to write them because they were official communications from headquarters and they were sent for publishing even if those responsible knew they were false”.

But there are other stories. William Howard Russell, *The Times* envoy to the Crimean War, a conflict that happened over 150 years ago, says in his diaries that the articles he sent by horse and steamboat to his London newspaper, took over a week to reach the editorial office. “Should I say these things or should I restrain my words?”, asked Russell of his editor. And he would reply: “continue to say as many truthful things as possible”. They were both accused of treason, until Russell’s brave reports forced the Government to resign.

So, all journalists must be confronted with the challenge of examining their work in war promotion, propaganda and its myths, in the pressures used by several organisms, including media administrations, which like to claim for themselves the monopoly on morality and credibility.

These references remind the young Swedish journalist and writer Stig Dagerman who, in occupied Germany during the "German Autumn" after the Second World War, sent great reports about real-life conditions and the humiliations to which the German population was subjected by the victorious Allies, relating, after all, some hidden truths. But no matter how unpopular or disturbing reality is, the rest isn't journalism.

Many of these testimonies could indeed be applied to today's wars, such as the 1991 Gulf War, NATO's bombings of Yugoslavia in 1999, the war in Afghanistan of 2001-02, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. When an American radio station systematically omits the number of Palestinian deaths and emphasises the Israeli victims, what is it doing? Trying to prevent conflict, suggesting that there is a possible negotiable way out, or justifying the Israelite army's military attacks in the name of the "fight against terrorism"?

Propaganda journalism, serving power, has hardly been importunated by the huge technological advances in the media. The media, the "fifth element" as Ignacio Ramonet calls it, still has a short memory, and the same "truth recipe" is still pursued without many obstacles. And a kind of insensible, undetectable and unrecognisable censorship seems to prevail, often hidden behind false principles of objectivity, with the aim of minimising or denying responsibility of the world's great powers for their extremely violent actions. Or the supremacy of a more or less conscious self-censorship, fed by disinterest, that predominates in so many editorial offices.

### **The media and the invasion of Iraq in March 2003**

The successful Anglo-American military attack against Iraq, begun in March 20, 2003 and ended one month later with the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime, has determined a new and hitherto unknown relationship between the media and political-military power, whose main feature until now has been tension.

As a result of the selective invitation made to several media, mainly British and North American, to join the military units that invaded Iraq, the concept of the embedded journalist has arisen.

This phenomenon, by which the media were able to accompany the military in a new version of "live war", seemed to be the proof of a new "friendship and approximation" policy of the military towards the media, notwithstanding the several questions that immediately arose regarding the limits of journalists' performance and their freedom to inform.

According to the expression used by Professor Mário Mesquita, the condition of “integrated” or “embedded correspondent”, forced to comply with certain rules of conduct, did not however prevent some journalists from escaping the censorship of the commander of the military unit where they were working and of reporting some of the war’s horrors.

Despite the continuation of the Al-Jazira phenomenon, the “creation machine” of the great media spectacle has only improved and adapted itself to the new realities. The innovation of “embedded” journalists doesn’t appear to have implied any noteworthy change in the possibility of a better understanding regarding this war.

However, as underlined by Professor Telmo Gonçalves in an article published by the Portuguese daily “Público” in early April 2003, and beyond the restrictions imposed on journalists, the Pentagon’s promised “war without censorship” did not translate into more than an adaptation of media rules to the new televised dynamics.

Initially, the rules forced on journalists by the Pentagon received particular criticisms. Hundreds of journalists from all over the world entering Kuwait were obliged to sign a two-page, fifty-article document, drawn up by the Pentagon as an effort to allow the media access to the battlefield unprecedented since the Vietnam War. But suspicions remained high.

In Telmo Gonçalves’s opinion, while the invasion’s outcome remained uncertain, the long expectations war in previous months had created a climate of anxiety in audiences and the media, which would inevitably lead to excessive media coverage of the conflict.

When the “end of military operations” was announced, the Pentagon ended up by making a positive evaluation of the work of the “embedded” journalists, meaning that this new “friendship policy” towards the media might continue and develop.

### *Paradoxical situations*

In the specific case of the United States, media control by huge corporations and the problem with patriotism as a result of the 11 September attacks is once again conditioning journalist activity. It was considered that the objective of the “integrated reporters” system, within the so-called “Rumsfeld doctrine”, was to produce war reports with three characteristics: proud, positive and patriotic.

On the other hand, surely most American and British soldiers sent to military operations in Iraq were not informed on the political and financial support provided to Saddam by their governments during the darkest moments of his regime.

As in previous conflicts (like Afghanistan), the North American observatory FAIR noted that most American media ignored the bombing of Iraqi civilians, while several well-known journalists were once again under huge pressures due to their critical stances on the war.

NBC, Disney, News Corporation, AOL-Time-Warner, MGM and Universal Studios are some of the 13 North American companies that control the global communications network. Many of them have very close relationships with the Bush administration, which was translated into an almost total alignment with official stances regarding their approach to the conflict. News Corporation's "Fox News" was a particular example of this situation.

However, and when it came to written press, there was a somewhat paradoxical situation in Portugal. Unlike in most European countries, and despite the majority of the population's opposition to the war, the two major dailies in Portugal (*Público* and *Diário de Notícias*) and the main weekly one (*Expresso*) took a pro-conflict stance in their editorials. In the case of *Público*, this position was mainly expressed in the director's articles. And these stances were by no means shared by most of the respective staff of these papers.

Nevertheless, in the US, and for the first time in recent history, there was no enthusiastic adherence by most of the national newspapers, and only one third of the editorialists were clearly aligned with the administration. Newspapers with the tradition of non-signed editorials, such as the "New York Times", "Washington Post" or "Los Angeles Times", took an "officially" critical stand towards the White House's policy.

### *Real and virtual*

Notwithstanding this, the majority of American public opinion was supportive of Washington's policies towards Iraq. An influent conservative newspaper, the "Wall Street Journal", was even actively supporting George Bush's policy, inviting several European leaders to subscribe to a manifesto favourable to his stance, which justified the need for a military attack based on the danger placed by the Iraqi "weapons of mass destruction". Weapons that were never found, probably because they did not in fact exist.

A "New York Times" and CBS/News study revealed that 42 % of the American people believed that Saddam Hussein was directly responsible for the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, whilst an ABC opinion poll found that 55 % believed that the Iraqi leader directly supported Al-Qaeda.

Faced with the imposition of a belligerent logic that flew in the face of international legitimacy and led to an unprecedented division in the United Nations, NATO and even the European Union<sup>1</sup>, several analysts came back to the same question: what can media professionals in the field do, within a logic of peace journalism, that is, journalism that is meant to prevent or, as in this case, to transform conflicts? The answer: develop a good capacity of judgement, report events with honesty and admit to their audience the limitations of their work.

This is not what happened in the Jessica Lynch case. Private Jessica Lynch was a North American soldier who, according to the main western broadcast media, was injured and captured in an ambush, to be afterwards heroically rescued by her unit.

In a BBC investigation made public in May, reporter John Kampner uncovered the true story, sustaining that Lynch's rescue operation was nothing more than a huge media performance. The testimonies of Nassiriyah hospital's doctors, from where Lynch was rescued, revealed that there were no longer Iraqi soldiers there when US Special Forces entered the building. Private Lynch had been well looked after and the doctors had already unsuccessfully attempted to hand her in to the Americans a couple of days before.

### *Broadcast media primacy*

This disclosure is extremely significant and revealing of the media's current state. With the so-called "aesthetics of politics", as defended by several analysts and researchers, there is a tendency for information to disappear beyond mere images. In the era of media, the media create their own truth in a context of crisis —a crisis that affects mainly the written press and radio, not simply due to the "image dictatorship" but also related to the drastic reduction of advertising income.

In this way, broadcast media reinforced their position as a privileged means of channelling information. And investment in this sector remains a priority. In the end of April 2003, the United States government finally launched its satellite television station in Arabic for Muslim Iraq. It was produced in the Grace Digital Media (GDM) studio, controlled by fundamentalist and clearly pro-Israeli Christians.

GDM, as stated by Russel Mokhiber and Rober Weissman, is controlled by the fundamentalist Christian millionaire Cheryl Reagan, who assumed control from the Federal News Service last year and

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<sup>1</sup> In Europe, the public opinion of a large majority of countries, including Eastern European ones, was against the war.



whose role is to “transmit evidence of God’s presence in today’s world”.

This new “media offensive” coincided with the attacks on non-embedded journalists covering the war that caused three dead and four wounded, which according to FAIR seem to have been “deliberate”. In one of the incidents of 8 April 2003, on the eve of the famous overthrowing of Saddam Hussein’s statue with the marines’ help, a North American tank opened fire on the Palestine Hotel, where most of the “non-embedded” journalists were. In total, thirteen journalists died during the three weeks of war, until the military of the Anglo-American coalition entered Baghdad.

Soon before, American forces had started two separate, but almost simultaneous, attacks on the Arabic television stations Al-Jazira and Abu Dhabi’s offices in Baghdad. These two television stations spared no efforts in showing the huge human costs of this war. Both of them had informed the Pentagon of their exact location, but similarly to the incident at the hotel, Pentagon authorities stated that their troops were attacked from those buildings. The journalists in question immediately rejected these accusations.

These incidents may translate in the future into a continued fragile situation for all the media and journalists that choose not to accept the authorities’ invitation to “incorporation”. The lack of respect for the protection granted to journalists by the Geneva Convention is a new and extremely disturbing sign, because unbiased reports are fundamental to understanding all the realities of a war.

## **What to do?**

Then what can be done, as was recently asked by Danny Schechter, MediaChannel’s editor? At least, suggest a different proposal, give voice to other voices, to other alternatives, project independent analysts, and leaders of conflicting communities that affirm themselves as a credible alternative to the dominant, militarist and radical speech, that only fuels the conflict.

A decisive question can lie in an attempt to explain what is at stake, in the way the conflict’s motives are assimilated by the readers and the hearers. Although this approach depends of “subjective” factors, such as media’s direction availability to choose this way, or the journalists’ own choice in the field.

But, in practical terms, peace initiatives are usually ignored by journalists that rather seem to choose a “way ahead”. Do journalists

unavoidably contribute to perpetuating the circle of violence, or is it possible to do more, to help readers or viewers to understand the need to find fair and balanced solutions? These are questions that will remain in the frontline of our concern.

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## **The Role of the Media in Conflict Situations: The Media as Multinational Corporations**

María A. Siemens

Many conflicts producing refugees and forced population movements, could be avoided if public opinion and governments, alerted by the media, would intervene well before the outbreak of an internal or international crisis. The advantages of investing in preventive measures seem to be well understood, as the argument of socio-economic development makes sense. Much is being written and discussed on this theme—but in practice the majority of situations involving humanitarian crises nowadays reveal that international cooperation follows the electoral agenda of donor states; that is, actual investment in prevention does not fully consider the long-term efforts and the complex planning required to build up peaceful societies.

Sustainable development in the form of investments in infrastructure and services, which is a tangible form of cooperation, is very much welcomed by governments, but—more often than not—present the time-limitations mentioned above. On their part, International Organisations also rely on governmental funding on an annual basis, and have to comply with political preferences or “earmarking”. This means that many deserving proposals remain under-funded or are abandoned.

In today’s world, this practice may become, in the long term, cost-ineffective and have a boomerang effect on our own societies. There are many examples of disruption of peace and development processes, destruction and self-destruction affecting societies where basic human rights, particularly social, cultural and economic rights are non-existent or extremely precarious—societies which basically lack the opportunity to develop a peace culture.

In this context, information is a resource that should be used (in our developed societies) to strengthen and promote conflict prevention. The same can be said about “post-conflict” reconstruction and rehabilitation of war-torn societies.

Information should aim at creating public opinion support for the establishment of long-term projects to ensure peace and stability for human beings without distinction. And we should find the arguments to promote this idea in the same way as environmentalists have managed to put the preservation of environment high on the political agendas. In these somewhat invisible processes, the public-awareness role of the media is crucial.

From the perspective of the media, however, war, violence and bloodshed are stories worthwhile telling, as they attract the interest of audiences, while peace building—whether as prevention or as reconstruction—do not attract the same interest.

In the context of refugee situations, information has proved to be a most important tool for protection. In certain crises, good information leading to a reaction by the international community may prevent persecution and human displacement. If exodus and displacement nevertheless take place, media attention and a good information policy may contribute to stopping persecution or other human rights abuses and even to finding solutions to the crisis through an international response.

Ideally, the media could have different roles depending on their scope of influence:

- International media ought to influence politicians and civil society in donor countries or relevant institutions like the EU, prompting preventive responses wherever needed;
- National and local media in conflict areas ought to promote peace and reconciliation efforts. In most precarious situations, local media should be provided with the necessary tools, skills and training to support peacekeeping. Perhaps in an effort to respect media's independence, the "international community" has not paid enough attention to their potential in this field.

In the present world scenario, however, our perception of the role of the media is necessarily changing in view of the most recent developments.

The globalisation of communications over the past decade has meant that the media are assuming an increasing influential role in social and political processes. This increased power also expands their responsibility in denouncing situations of instability leading to conflict. The media could also be urged to deal with victims with fairness, as human beings without discrimination. This is not what we are seeing or what we are reading today, particularly after the events of 11 September 2001.

The so called "CNN effect", much criticised during the nineties, where the media only showed successive wars and crises without an explanation

of the background or any follow-up, has become over a short period of time just one aspect of a wider problem which involves the serious distortion of information.

For peacemakers, NGOs, and human-rights advocates, the situation has become dramatically worse in recent months. The media are not accomplices of humanitarian efforts. Beyond the level of individual sympathetic journalists, decision —and policy— makers behave as the Chief Executive Officers of any Transnational Corporation. It is an illusion to believe that the media are committed to the values of a human rights culture.

- First, they are led by economic indicators: they have to meet the desires and preferences of consumers to keep or raise their audience rates;
- Second, the various media groups compete with each other for those audiences: the concerns of CEOs are not about substance but about sales and shares.
- Third and most important, they have become, very visibly, politically biased.

In this context, if the media report on humanitarian issues, it is just because there is a “market” demanding such type of information. However, beneath an appearance of objectivity, we often find manipulation. The presentation of certain news as “reality shows” makes it impossible to deal with the information in a broader context. In certain cases, it is very clear that news is presented in a way that promotes and encourages a certain type of emotional response which matches the political interests of a certain state, group of states, lobbies or interest groups behind the media corporation.

Just to put an example, we are witnessing the systematic non-compliance by states with a system of international human rights and humanitarian law, which has been developed with enormous efforts over five decades and was —and still is— very fragile. *Op-eds*, reports and interviews critical to this situation are definitely published and broadcast by the media; however their repercussion is marginal as compared to the many reports containing the underlying message that violence is justified and justifiable. Realpolitik is winning an important battle with public opinion, to the detriment of rights, leaving many victims behind and also seriously damaging the important heritage of an emerging human rights culture.

The Internet, an alternative way of disseminating information, provides us with new information sources and elements for critical reflection and reaction. However, at this stage it does not have the power and repercussions, for example, of radio and television.

When the Secretary-General of the United Nations launched the “global compact” in 1999, he addressed multinational corporations to encourage them to comply with certain human rights standards, which are at the core of traditional “corporate misbehaviour”. Provisions concerning the right and duty to provide and receive objective, transparent and responsible information are, however, not included in the Global Compact. Therefore the media, as transnational corporations, are not bound by any covenant or code of conduct. This means that nobody can be held accountable for the consequences of undesirable events occurred with tangible or intangible media support, including unilateral declarations of war outside the boundaries of international law. This is of growing concern, especially in the international scenario, as we are witnessing how political decisions are made under the apparent legitimacy of opinion polls provided by media groups.

# **The Tools and Concepts of the Scale of Conflict Management**

Gulnur Aybet

The concepts associated with conflict management and what its scale entails have undergone a considerable change since the end of the Cold War. This is because of the changing nature of institutionalised intervention, collective security, humanitarian intervention and the roles played out by the military in peacekeeping operations. Although these changes have come about through practice, particularly when we look at institutionalised intervention in the Balkans from 1991 to the present, this has also affected the mainstream international relations literature in conflict management, which up till now generally focused on mediation techniques derived from quantitative methods and data analysis. In this sense, traditional conflict management literature remained largely theoretical.

The widening of the scope of conflict management and collective security since 1991 grew in parallel to the emphasis placed on institutional burden-sharing, creating a framework of 'interlocking institutions' with varying functions but forming an overarching structure for the implementation of collective security and conflict management.

One of the new concepts that have emerged in the literature is that of Collective Conflict Management. This is put forward in a study edited by Joseph Lepgold and Thomas Weiss. Collective Conflict Management not only incorporates traditional tasks of collective security such as peacekeeping and peace enforcement, but also other tasks such as monitoring a potentially explosive region, monitoring of elections, and establishing democratic regimes. Collective conflict management, according to Lepgold and Weiss, is also quite distinct from the Wilsonian twist of idealism in traditional collective security; in this sense, collective conflict management has also got a bite of reality in comparison to traditional collective security in that it takes into account the self-interests of states, and does not need to be regulated by an international

organisation or a charter. This brings us to the question as to what incentive and regulator could induce states to cooperate in collective conflict management tasks? The emerging answer seems to be, norms in the international system. This leads us to further questions as to what those norms are, what they ought to be, and whether they can be created by certain states or whether they evolve naturally in the international system. Furthermore another question that arises from this is whether international institutions can convey norms from one region to another, especially in the task of collective post-conflict peace building. Finally, this leads to the question over the legitimacy of international institutions in carrying out these tasks and the legitimacy of the norms they represent. In their study, Lepgold and Weiss do not go far enough in defining these norms. Norms are an issue that keeps coming up in relation to this topic and I shall return to them—particularly to the role of international institutions as regulators and implementers of norms and whether norms can acquire legitimacy in the international system with or without institutions.

### **The pre-conflict - latent crisis stage**

If one were to attempt to place the tools currently at the disposal of the international community on a scale of conflict management, the starting point would be when a crisis is still latent or when there is a pre-conflict stage. At this stage the function to be undertaken by third parties could constitute monitoring. The tools that can be utilized can range from preventative diplomacy—this can include special diplomatic missions, early warning mechanisms, CSBMs (Confidence and security building measures), preventive civilian and military deployments, fact finding missions, presence of international institutions in the field, and data collection, which involves not only obtaining correct information but also accurate analysis—to the threat to use military force, which can also be a tool of conflict management, albeit, unsuccessfully used by the Holbrooke mission to Milosevic before the commencement of NATO's air strikes against Yugoslavia.

One of the key factors determining the success of a mission at the pre-conflict stage is whether the mission is structural or preventive operational conflict prevention. *Structural conflict prevention* addresses the root causes of the conflict whereas *Operational Conflict Prevention* is undertaken when violence appears imminent. Unfortunately, in practice, conflict prevention in the post-cold-war era has been an example of the latter rather than the former. Addressing the root causes of the



conflict requires monitoring, data collection and analysis over a long period of time. The underlying factors that have to be monitored include political institutions, socio-economic factors, historical legacies, conditions which can lead to the emergence of a security dilemma, and a lack of information or distortion of information by local media and institutions.

Among the key challenges facing interveners<sup>1</sup> in the pre-conflict stage are, firstly, the early-warning problem, which is usually attributed to a *failure of intelligence*; and secondly, the warning-response gap which is usually attributed to the *failure to use intelligence*. Even if these two obstacles were overcome, the final hurdle at the pre-conflict stage is the required *political will to act*. At the pre-conflict stage, unless the crisis is imminent and has a direct bearing on the national interests of states, there may be less of a case to act, because there is no crisis in sight. In this, the role of the media is crucial in the pre-conflict stage, firstly by drawing attention to the imminent crisis, and secondly by influencing public opinion. The hurdle of political will to act is also influenced by the degree to which the sustenance of norms in the international system matters to states and the international institutions to which they belong. Again, the degree to which states value the norms they adhere to become the main inducement to act in conflict prevention. This is a neo-realist perspective on conflict prevention to which the author adheres.

Another factor that affects the success of conflict prevention is the leverage of the interveners. According to study undertaken by the Carnegie Commission for the Prevention of Deadly Conflict there are three types of leverage. **Subjective leverage** occurs when the intervener is able to alter the parties' perceptions of an issue or of each other. **Objective leverage** occurs when the intervener is able to alter the objective environment of the conflict. This can be done for example by providing peacekeepers, economic aid, and military or political retaliation against what the Carnegie study calls the 'spoilors'. 'Spoilors' refer to extremists within each party to the conflict who will never be amenable to conditions that may be 'ripe' for negotiating a peace. **Normative leverage** occurs when the intervener has the power to confer legitimacy on a party not included in negotiations or illegitimacy on a party that was included.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The term is used to refer to any third party intervention. This can be negotiators, mediators, peacekeepers, peace enforcers, fact-finding missions, and monitors. They can be individuals appointed as representatives of states, organizations, NGOs, IGOs and military establishments. In this paper the term intervener will refer to this broad spectrum of tasks across the scale of conflict management.

<sup>2</sup> See Greenberg, Melanie *et al.*

In the pre-conflict/latent-crisis stage, the alteration of the perceptions of the parties (subjective leverage) is the key to successful conflict prevention. The key to have successful subjective leverage is accurate information about the desires, motivations and perceptions of each party, but also an accurate analysis of this information to make it usable in selecting strategies for altering perceptions.

Also, the use of objective leverage, the deployment of a peacekeeping force, or a preventative deployment can also be very valuable at this stage. However, it is seldom that at this stage a third party intervener will have any legitimacy to control the normative environment (i.e. to decide who to deal with and who not to deal with). This is because no party can be excluded if conflict is about to erupt. In this case, the 'spoiler' mentality has to be taken account of and accommodated. This is one of the key challenges facing interveners at the pre-conflict stage.

All of the above tools used in the pre-conflict stage of conflict management fall under the concept of Collective Conflict Management put forward by Leggold and Weiss. Also at the pre-conflict stage there is another concept that is used and is associated with other tools of conflict management. This is the concept of **Cooperative Security**, which, unlike Collective Conflict Management, has been around for a while, actually ever since the birth of the CSCE. *Cooperative security* is not concerned with deterring war, as both *collective security* and *collective defence* are, but rather with preventing the emergence of conditions that make war likely. This is sought through the practice of building a community between states in political, economic, and cultural affairs, and the practice of arms control measures, including Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBMs) and increased military transparency. Under cooperative security, these mechanisms are also used in peaceful settlement of disputes and early warning of crisis situations. As can be seen, these measures constitute the traditional tasks of the CSCE ever since its inception in 1975. Therefore, the OSCE is essentially a cooperative security organisation.<sup>3</sup> But one of the key concepts behind cooperative security is the building of a 'security community'.

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<sup>3</sup> However, since its Helsinki summit of 1992, it has also been accorded with certain collective security functions, such as mandating peacekeeping missions (which, so far it has never done) and also initiating the 'consensus-minus-one' mechanism, i.e. the singling out of a 'wayward' state. On the other hand, NATO, which is a traditional collective defence organisation, has also embarked on cooperative security ventures such as the NACC, now replaced with the EAPC and the PEP. This is an example of how the traditional tasks of security institutions in Europe have become blurred since the end of the cold war.

The concept of **Security Community** was first put forward by Karl Deutsch<sup>4</sup> who, in 1957, proposed increasing communication and social links between NATO member states so that over time the transatlantic relationship between the US and western Europe would become a 'pluralistic security community' whereby there would exist long term expectations of 'peaceful change' amongst its members. In other words, war between these states should be unthinkable but they should also share common values and norms, therefore giving a social meaning to the underlying security interests that brought these countries together. Recently, the concept has enjoyed a revival with Emanuel Adler's edited volume on Security Communities. This study looks at the various theoretical approaches to explaining the absence of war amongst states and contends that constructivism comes closest to what Deutsch envisaged, as it accounts for social factors in the international system. It provides a geographic, historical and conceptual study of security community in the post-Cold War era by looking at different regions and different time periods.

Therefore, at the pre-conflict stage of a crisis, apart from traditional tools of early warning and preventive diplomacy and deployments, the building of security communities can also be a tool for conflict management. However, while the more traditional tools of conflict prevention such as preventive diplomacy constitute *operational conflict management*, the building of security communities under the concept of cooperative security constitutes *structural conflict management*, because these are long term interventions seeking to erase the root causes of a conflict, rather than intervening as a stop gap measure when things start to go wrong. The tools currently at the disposal of the international community to undertake tasks of cooperative security and building of security communities in the pre-conflict stage include regional economic aid and integration programmes (EU, Phare, Tacis, Stability Pact), Joint Peacekeeping exercises (NATO training exercises), and confidence-building measures (OSCE).

### **Crisis Evident Stage: the tools of Conflict Resolution**

The next stage across the scale of conflict management is the stage when the crisis is evident. This is the early stage of the conflict, somewhere in between full-scale armed conflict and the pre-conflict

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<sup>4</sup> See Deutsch, Karl, 1957.

stage. The tools utilised for conflict management at this stage are mediation, negotiation, 'good offices' and institutionalised conferences such as the ICFY (International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia). These tasks can either be carried out by institutions such as the EU troika missions to Yugoslavia in the early stages of the conflict. They can also be carried out by ad-hoc issue-based state groups, such as the Contact Group on Bosnia and Herzegovina, or by special envoys appointed as part of the unilateral shuttle diplomacy of states, such as the Holbrooke mission to Yugoslavia over the Kosovo crisis.

For the tools of shuttle diplomacy, negotiation, mediation and good offices to work, first there have to be certain qualities that the intervener has to possess. These are trust, accurate information, and moral leverage over the parties. Second, the intervener must have at its disposal the following strategies: coercion, inducements and reassurances. Particularly in the last strategy, the intervener must have the power to give reassurance to erode the security dilemma between the parties to the conflict. For this to work successfully, information about intentions and capabilities of each side is vital. The reliance on local sources for this kind of information means that most of the time information available to interveners will be distorted, which makes their task of eroding the unrealities of the security dilemma more difficult.

The type of mediation undertaken determines the qualities and strategies of the intervener. There are three types of mediation. The first is the **passive technical host** in which the intervener provides a neutral setting and disengages himself from the proceedings. (e.g. Switzerland's sponsorship of technical negotiations in Geneva, such as during the Cold War superpower summits). The second is the **interested mediator**: this is where the intervener is involved in the negotiations and is strategically interested in the negotiators' substantive positions. The intervener does not seek subjective leverage, meaning that it does not seek to alter the perceptions of the negotiators. The ICFY would again be a good example of this kind of negotiation. The third is the **active mediator**, in which the intervener provides a neutral setting but also ensures that parties develop personal and respectful relations with each other. The intervener also acts as a 'go-between' during breaks in negotiations. A good example would be the Norwegian foreign ministry and the Norwegian independent think-tank FAFO (Institute for Applied Social Science) during the Oslo back channel negotiations between the PLO and the Israel, which resulted in the Declaration of Principles, signed in September 1993.

The active mediator has to convince the parties that they are negotiating only for each party's interests. The active mediator does not have

a third party interest in the conflict. Active mediation also allows the parties to vent their frustrations to the third party rather than at each other. This also increases the moral leverage of the negotiator —convincing the sides to return to the negotiations for his sake rather than each other's, therefore gaining legitimacy amongst the parties to the conflict. Legitimacy as an intervener can only be acquired with moral leverage, and that can only be built with active mediation as opposed to interested mediation. Therefore the most effective tool of conflict management at the crisis-evident stage of a conflict is active mediation.

### **Conflict stage: Peacekeeping and peace enforcement**

The next stage on the scale of conflict management is the point when negotiations break down and full scale armed conflict breaks out. At the armed conflict stage, the first task of the intervener is to establish a cease-fire or a break in the conflict to create the conditions that will allow negotiations to resume. The tools utilised at this stage of conflict management are the traditional tasks of collective security, which are peacekeeping and peace enforcement. However, even here, in the post Cold War era, the traditional roles and definitions of peacekeeping have also changed. This is a question addressed by three prominent authors in the field of conflict analysis: Paul Diehl, Daniel Druckman and James Wall. They point out that the size and functions of peacekeeping operations has changed dramatically and offer a taxonomy of different definitions of peacekeeping and some prescriptions for policy makers on how to train peacekeepers to accommodate and carry out new functions that they never performed before. For example, a typical peacekeeping operation during the Cold War could be around 10,000 troops, whereas a peacekeeping mission in the Balkans ranges between 30,000 and 60,000. The traditional function of peacekeeping was deployment after a ceasefire to monitor it or before a conflict started to prevent it; in either case the classical 'buffer zone' was the traditional place of peacekeepers. Nowadays peacekeeping forces have to deal with war crimes, election supervision and nation building, all of which are tasks the military have not traditionally been trained for. Also another factor has been the militarisation of conflict management. Traditional peacekeepers monitored ceasefires while the negotiators negotiated. Now the military is involved in a much wider spectrum of activities: these include actual negotiation, mediation, communication, and the deployment of military personnel as peacemakers and peace builders, all of which require new skills.

Peace enforcement as a tool of conflict management has also come under new definitions in the post-Cold War era. Through practice two standards have emerged: a heavy reliance on air power and the reinterpretation of international law. The standard of utilising air power for peace enforcement has been witnessed with Operation Deliberate Force over Bosnia and Operation Allied Force over Kosovo. The reinterpretation of international law is particularly significant with Operation Allied Force, which was undertaken without a UN Security Council mandate but was technically a chapter VII peace enforcement operation. On the one hand, the completion of the operation paved the way for the fulfilment of prior Security Council resolutions over Kosovo; this was the basis of the argument over the operation's legitimacy. On the other hand, the absence of a legal mandate meant that the operation was illegal. In this sense a gap was presented in terms of legitimacy and legality for humanitarian crises in the post-Cold War era. Therefore, at the conflict stage of a crisis, the traditional tools of collective security have also undergone a transformation. It also implies a blurring of the various stages of conflict management. One of the concepts associated with successful mediation is the one put forward by William Zartman, called the concept of 'ripeness'. This is when both parties to the conflict have reached a "mutually damaging stalemate", at which point the parties are most amenable to negotiation. Ripeness does not happen just once in a conflict—it can happen many times and is a 'window of opportunity' to be seized by the negotiators. Peace enforcement in the post cold war era has also given a new interpretation to this concept. For example, NATO air strikes in Bosnia can be seen as a way of forcing 'ripeness', by creating —albeit through force— the conditions for a peace treaty to be negotiated and signed.

### **Post-conflict: Peace building stage**

Finally, the last stage on the scale of conflict management, has reached a new level of prominence that it did not have before. This is because the practice of post-conflict peace building in southeast Europe has become a unique example worth studying in itself. Today there exists an unprecedented, sophisticated framework of 'interlocking institutions' at work in this region carrying out the various overlapping tasks of post-conflict peace building. What is also unique about this stage of a conflict is that it entails the use of many tools across the whole spectrum of conflict management, including monitoring, to make sure conflict does not break out again; peacekeeping, to ensure disarmament

and enforcement of peace; and creation of stability regimes or security communities to build democratic institutions, human rights and free market economies to foster regional stability. Whether the institutional infrastructure carrying out these tasks in southeast Europe are setting an exemplar model for the future remains questionable. After all, the inter-institutional cooperation between IGOs and NGOs in post-war reconstruction, peacekeeping, peace building, repairing damaged infrastructures and building of regional civil society is a very new practice conceptually, for academics as well as policy makers. This is true particularly for the last task, the building of civil society, which has a direct bearing on the legitimacy of institutions as interveners at this stage of a conflict. Legitimacy in this sense refers to the degree to which these institutions are accepted by regional civil societies as legitimate peace builders and implementers of international norms at a regional level. This is more difficult to assess when regional civil societies are as yet dysfunctional in a post conflict setting. The case of southeast Europe (Bosnia and Kosovo) is also questionable in terms of institutional legitimacy in post-conflict peace building, because the enforcement of a peace with military presence and the building of damaged infrastructures can be undertaken with a steady flow of donor aid and the presence of military enforcement. However, this tells us nothing about the legitimacy of external institutions as actors within a region with the goal of fostering cooperation amongst regional actors. In other words, can institutions convey norms and build regional security communities on the 'western' model as envisaged by Karl Deutsch?

In terms of post-conflict peace building, there is a discrepancy between theory and practice. In practice peace building has become the enforcement of a peace treaty after a conflict is brought to a close. The more theoretical definition of the concept is the building of sustainable peaceful relations that address the structural root causes of the conflict. This concept has been forward by John Paul Lederach. According to Lederach, classic conflict management focuses on the *resolution* of issues, while peace building should focus on the *restoration* and rebuilding of relationships. Therefore the focus of peace building should be on social *restructuring* rather than issues. The problem with this proposition is that each region or state will have its own dynamics for social restructuring and one model will not suffice.

Another concept associated with peace building is the concept of negative peace and positive peace. Negative peace refers to the cessation of violence —probably what we see today in southeast Europe through institutional intervention and military enforcement. Whereas positive peace is the removal of 'structural' and 'cultural' violence—

this is a more long-term task. Ideally, post settlement peace building should be a combination of negative and positive peace. It is questionable whether positive peace has been achieved at all in the case of southeast Europe.

Negative peace is usually used to refer to preventing a relapse into war. A relapse into violence is the main challenge facing implementers of post-conflict peace building, due to its stopgap function in bringing an immediate cessation to violence, since it does not address the long term structural causes of the conflict. On how to overcome this Roy Licklider suggests the following strategies:

1. Persuading all parties that their interests are better served by peace rather than continuation of conflict.
2. Change of internal political actors —replacement of 'war constituencies' with 'peace constituencies'.
3. Arms control —military balance of power so that 'mutually hurting stalemate' endures.
4. 'Terms of the settlement' need to ensure all above points.
5. Third-party activities to help sustain all parties through the uncertain period of post-settlement.

Although the task of ensuring that a relapse to violence does not occur is far from straightforward, the next step of peace building, which is positive peace —that is, addressing the structural causes of a conflict—, is far more difficult to achieve. Long-term sustainability of peace involves constitutional and institutional reform; social reconstruction; reconciliation and the rebuilding of economic, social and political infrastructures. Of all of these tasks, psychological factors and reconciliation are the hardest of all to achieve.

This leads us to series of questions: Are democratic institutions and a liberal market economy the key to post settlement peace building? If so, what if 'extremists' or 'spoilers' are major players and have no desire to participate in democratic pathways to governance? In such cases Roland Paris suggests that force ought to be used in implementing a peace treaty. This leads to the next question: Can long-term sustainable peace be built by enforcement? And can 'security communities' be externally enforced?

This brings us back to the definition of 'security community' and how this fits into the scale of conflict management. Karl Deutsch's original study consisted of measured transactions between member states of NATO and how a 'sense of community' could be developed through an increased transaction in social links. The envisaged end result was supposed to be a 'pluralistic security community' among its members,



where there exist long-term expectations of 'peaceful change'. Deutsch maintains that in such a community there has to be a 'belief in a limited number of common propositions.' This can be interchanged with what we understand today as 'norms'.

While Deutsch measured transactions, Emmanuel Adler's constructivist version of security communities focuses on the indigenous development of security communities on three tiers:

- i) Precipitating factors: which encourage states to orient themselves in each other's direction and to coordinate their policies.
- ii) Process elements: transactions; international organisations and social learning. Structural elements: power and ideas.
- iii) Development of trust and formation of collective identity.

In the case of exporting and imposing a 'western security community' model through institutional enforcement in southeast Europe, none of these tiers are indigenous to the region itself. Precipitating factors are brought from outside: i.e. economic aid, promise of membership in institutions, etc. The process elements are brought from outside: international institutions. The structural elements are too, the norms, ideas and beliefs of an essentially 'western security community', which are democracy, free markets and human rights. The same can be said for power, which is also external with institutional enforcement. It is only through transactions and learning processes that one can see an intrinsic regional input into the process of building a security community.

For a greater input by regional actors in the process of building security communities, Lederach's suggestion of building an interaction between political elites, mid-level actors (journalists, educators, bureaucrats) and grassroots (NGOs, local civil society) could be useful. This more theoretical concept has at least found some substance in the active planning of policy makers. The evidence for this can be seen in the policy planning process in IGOs such as NATO, which have been involved so far in the institutionally enforced 'negative' peace in Bosnia and Kosovo. There are signs of a conscious policy process to incorporate elements of a 'positive' peace including the building of local civil society in the programmes of international organizations like NATO.

This also proves that institutions are also socially contingent. As external institutions like NATO socially interact with local civil societies in the process of regional security community building, they (the external institutions) will also be affected by this interaction, which can shape their institutional identities. A very good example is NATO's recent South East Europe Initiative (SEEI). Initially NATO as a traditional collective defence organisation carved a role for itself in post-Cold War conflict management

by 'hiring out' its integrated military structure for peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations. It also took on tasks like transferring its military 'know-how' to regional states through joint exercises, training and civil-military relations. NATO made great headway in this process for some time, until its involvement in post conflict security community building in Bosnia and Kosovo. NATO officials then realised that it lacked the skills as an organisation in the task of transformation of societies. NATO then developed the SEEI complementary to the EU's Stability Pact, which are initiatives that focus on the transformation of societies. This is a function which NATO never had or intended to have before —therefore its social interaction with **regional** civil societies has shaped its institutional identity— therefore institutions are also socially contingent like civil society —they are mutually interactive.

Therefore, can regional security communities be built through institutional enforcement? Do the examples of SFOR, KFOR, EUAM and UNMIK serve as successful models of institutionally enforced peace? This needs to be addressed in terms of legitimacy of institutions and the norms they represent. The starting point for peace building can be a conscious policy-driven process, but the end result can be twofold, when values and norms are exported to another region and become accepted by the civil societies who see the institutions as legitimate overseers of those norms which they have embraced: then it can be said that external interveners have acquired legitimacy.

This kind of legitimacy is a concept derived from Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and civil society. Hegemony in traditional realism is the prevalence of one state or a group of states over others. However, according to Gramsci, hegemony produces this legitimacy by forging alliances with the various forces in civil society, which include cultural and ideological forces. By integrating these forces, hegemony, in Gramscian terms, rules through domination and consent by bridging civil society with political institutions, and acquires a state of legitimacy.<sup>5</sup>

The conveying of norms from one region to another is at the heart of building regional security communities through external institutional enforcement. It is the acceptance of these norms by civil society that gives legitimacy to the intervening institutions. According to Peter Katzenstein norms are communicated in three ways:

- i) spontaneously evolving as social practice
- ii) consciously promoted as political strategies to further specific interests.

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<sup>5</sup> See Aybet, Gulnur, 2000.

- iii) deliberately negotiated as a mechanism for conflict management<sup>6</sup>.

In the case of conveying 'norms' from the Western Europe and North America to southeast Europe, there is a mixture of the second and third ways.

Overall, the scale of conflict management and the tools used by the international community in implementing conflict management at each stage of a crisis have undergone a considerable transformation in the post cold war era. This has been a mutually interactive process, which has impacted policy planning as well as the academic literature in the field. Therefore the gap between academics and practitioners is now closing at a much faster pace than it ever did before, in the field of conflict management. One of the interesting factors affecting this is the socially contingent nature of international organisations. Just as concepts associated with conflict management are undergoing a transformation, so are the policy tools; from new roles for the military in peace keeping to post war peace building and interaction with civil societies. Other trends that need to be examined are the growing role of the media especially the way it can impact the 'warning-response gap' in the pre-conflict stage, and the over-reliance on air power as a tool of peace enforcement in the conflict stage. In the post conflict stage, the case of southeast Europe does provide an example of exporting models of security communities from one region to another through institutional enforcement. But the longer-term implications of positive peace are difficult to achieve without spontaneously evolving regional norms, although institutional enforcement can be an encouragement for regional security communities to grow.

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# **The Rule Of Law as a Precondition for Post-Conflict Rehabilitation and the Freedom of the Media**

Hans-Joachim Heintze

One feature typical of states in crisis is the lack of an independent judiciary. The absence of a functioning legal system is a typical expression of State failure. States of this kind must be seen as in collapse: they lack the core element of the functioning State, which Max Weber (1966, p. 27) saw in its monopoly of power. Police, the judiciary and other regulative systems are in such cases no longer functional, and general anarchy prevails.

The modern worldview based on international law goes back to what is known as the Westphalian Order, a system made up of sovereign States. Proceeding from this system, States were gradually consolidated as territorial power structures (Hobbes), subsequently developing into liberal States governed by the rule of law (Locke) and, finally, performance-oriented social States. Still, this conceptual view has coincided more or less with political reality only in certain periods—for instance, in the creation of the United Nations. More recently, it has been cast in doubt by unmistakable tendencies toward a breakdown of the classic nation-State in many regions of the world. The response of the international community has generally been to support—albeit with different degrees of intensity—the restitution of State functions, i.e. a return to the Westphalian Order. An independent judiciary has a key role in this process. The field of politics has coined a rather vague catchphrase for this challenge: human security. In international law the term is derived from a concept familiar from its prominence in the UN Charter: international security, which originally denoted security of States. Now that, seen in terms of the protection of human rights anchored in international law, the individual has, at least in part, become a subject of international law, we are faced with the question of the extent to which the claim to State security is at the same time also

applicable to the individual. This issue is all the more important as in situations marked by State failure the problem of national (external) security can, in many cases, hardly be said to exist.

This situation, though, entails risks all the more drastic for individuals since in such cases the State is no longer able to comply with its duty to protect its citizens. In short, the politically coloured —and legally undefined— concept of «human security» is seen by its proponents as meaning that the individual must be safeguarded against infringements of his basic rights as well as against threats to his security and his life (Kirn 2000, p. 29). It is self-evident that this can only be ensured by an independent judiciary.

### **The framework under international law**

Modern international law increasingly obliges States to abide by democratic and constitutionally defined rules in their dealings with their populations (Heintze 1998a, p. 76). This remarkable progress was achieved within a period of only two decades. When it was adopted in 1945, the UN Charter contained no such provision. The UN Charter limited UN membership to «peace-loving States,» remaining silent about their internal constitution. It was in regional organisations that the turn of international law towards democracy and the rule of law was first instituted; and the Council of Europe, founded in 1949 and defining itself as a community based on certain shared values, took the lead here. Democracy and human rights were seen as constituting its underlying values. In 1989, in its Copenhagen Document, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) took up this idea, demanding that its Member States abide by democratic constitutional principles. Finally, in 2000, this development reached the UN as well, which, in its Millennium Declaration, expressly stated in the name of all its Member States: «We will spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law...» (Resolution 55/2). One other element of this same Millennium Declaration is «respect for the rule of law in international as in national affairs.»

The binding legal force of this last-mentioned document, adopted within a global framework, must, however, be seen as rather low. We must therefore examine whether there are other —legal— obligations that bind States to respect the independence of the judiciary. Protection of human rights is the chief issue relevant here. This contractual right is reflected in Article 9 of the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which contains provisions on personal liberty. It

states that «No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law»; and that «anyone arrested or detained on a criminal charge shall be brought promptly before a judge.» (Nowak 1993, p. 158). This obligation has been repeatedly underlined, most recently, and urgently, at the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights (UN-Doc. A/CONF.157/23, para. 27). The matter is of great importance because this conference also expressly upheld the principle of the universality of human rights. In the end, this means that all cultures are obliged to respect a certain basic number of human rights. These include, incontrovertibly, the independence of the judiciary (van Hoof 1995, p. 4).

### **Safeguarding the rule of law in cases of State failure**

Human rights entail an obligation under international law to establish and maintain an independent judiciary. This obligation is binding above on all the signatories of the Vienna Human Rights Convention. Apart from this, however, the international community also sees in the safeguarding of an independent judiciary a universal imperative stemming from the democratically legitimised State monopoly of power. This is why numerous programmes of nearly all pertinent nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and international organisations centre on the rule of law (cf. list in Mani 1998, p. 2).

In cases of State failure, the challenge is to use national means and methods, including an independent judiciary, to restore government functions. What is meant here above all is a successive (re)building of the State from the bottom up, through the self-constitution of a people in the framework of civil society (Cohen/Arato 1992, p. 10 et seq.). It is in this way possible to create focal points of public awareness and the national will. By building local administrations and institutions of public and private infrastructure, it is possible to mobilise the will to make a new start. Such fragmented subsystems can provide the impulses needed to create a public space that can, in the long run, bring about the legitimacy required for the task (Thürer 1995, p. 40). Elections play an important role here.

However, by itself, the holding of elections can be no more than a superficial and limited measure if the process does not succeed in creating «bottom-up» democratic structures. It is for this reason that in Cambodia and Somalia the UN has instituted numerous information programmes for the population geared to forming local human rights groups. In Somalia new regional councils have been created to compensate for the inability

of fragmented groups to come to an agreement at national level (Hufnagel 1996, p. 328). Development of democratic structures by the population itself is wholly in line with the international legal norms on the right of the self-determination of peoples. This at times entails merely the obligation to create grass-roots democratic structures, since otherwise the only alternative would be to call in the parties to a civil war, which are as a rule not particularly representative.

And it is only in this way that it appears possible to ensure the independence of the judiciary. For only a judiciary that is accepted by the populace can be truly independent. In such cases an independent judiciary is called upon to heal the wounds inflicted in times of arbitrary rule. The example of Kosovo unambiguously illustrates the challenges involved here. When the UN assumed governmental power in Kosovo in the early summer of 1999, it was faced with the question of what legal system was to apply there. The answer found was that the Yugoslavian law valid in this territory prior to the abrogation of autonomy in 1989 was to be seen as applicable in this case (Büllesbach 2001, p. 83). The Albanian population was however unwilling to accept this law, which it regarded as Serbian. The judiciary therefore decided to apply the old law, i.e. not to alter it, but to add to it the formula «in the KFOR version.» The consequence was growing public acceptance of this legal system.

The existence of an independent judiciary need not imply that courts alone are in a position to deal effectively with past events. Experiences gained in the recent past point to other possibilities such as roundtables and truth commissions, which can, in specific situations, contribute to the formation of social consensus and a reconciliation of offenders and victims (Schulz 2000, 52 et seq.). Still, measures of this kind can prove successful only against the background of an independent judiciary. If such attempts at reconciliation are not accepted by individuals, there must be a possibility to seek judicial redress (Bronkhorst 2000, p. 40).

### **Creation of the rule of law by external intervention**

External intervention used to restore governmental functions gives rise to a situation even more complicated than that involved in recourse to national means. The parties to the relevant human rights conventions are mutually bound to one another by a legal relationship. They have committed themselves to safeguarding an independent judiciary at home. If they fail to do so, such States are guilty of a violation of international law. Other parties can demand that the State in question comply with the law and restore the independence of the judiciary. The



monitoring bodies established by the relevant individual conventions are also authorised to lodge complaints: the UN Human Rights Commission, for instance, in cases of violations of the UN Human Rights Convention. Under certain circumstances, Member States can also lodge national complaints concerning non-compliance with treaty obligations, though this implies no further-reaching competences such as a right to intervene.

Theoretically, an intervention would be unlikely to pose problems, since in cases of State failure there is no reason to assume the existence of a State. Still, practical experience shows that even in such cases the international community continues to abide by the fiction of sovereignty. The most impressive example in this case is Somalia. In 1992, this «State» was already largely deprived of its effectiveness, and yet the UN Security Council took action only when requested to by the Somali ambassador to the UN—even though she no longer represented a functioning government (Herbst 1999, p. 240). This stance of the international community appears to indicate an unwillingness to create precedents (Heintze 1998, p. 170).

### **The search for local partners**

International peace missions have as a rule been most successful when the parties to a civil war have assented to such a mission. In the literature there are many sources that point out that international assistance measures are bound to fail if they are not supported by local forces, which mainly means securing the support of NGOs (Thune 2000, p. 207). However, any such cooperation presupposes coordination and harmonisation between various national and international NGOs. Numerous overlaps have been observed precisely for rule-of-law programmes. Many initiatives are weakened by duplications and conceptual contradictions in the measures taken, as has been noted for the cases of Rwanda, Congo/Zaire, and El Salvador (Mani 1998, p. 3 et seq.).

Yet the assent of parties to a conflict can play a positive role only if the groups concerned are clearly defined and stable ones that are representative of certain segments of the population. This is most clearly the case when a group has been recognised as a conflict party or has already created a stabilised *de facto* regime (Epping 1999, p. 89). The situation is far more complicated when the players are a number of small splinter groups and it is not clear whether and to what extent such groups in fact represent forces of society. Often such heterogeneous players in fact prove unable to implement obligations either inside or outside their

own group. In situations of this kind, international assistance must be directed, via local authorities, to the population itself. Another important consideration in situations involving civil war is to bring the most important groups to a negotiation table as a means of providing for the legitimacy needed to rebuild the State in question.

## **Independent judiciary and international courts**

Solutions from the outside geared to an independent judiciary and imposed without the assent of the local population are highly problematic. This is demonstrated by the practice of the Tribunal on the former Yugoslavia. This ad-hoc criminal court—a peacekeeping measure, yet at the same time one with a coercive mandate— was created by the UN Security Council (Resolution 827, 1995) under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, in other words, without the assent of the parties to the conflict. From the very beginning, the international community has been accused of acquiescing in this measure simply in order to «do something because something obviously had to be done» (Heintschel von Heinegg 1999, p. 86). The court's legality is thus entirely open to question.

This legal problem was very soon to become the grounds for an appeal in the Tadic case (Case No IT-94-1-AR72). Pointing to the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the petitioner claimed that the Yugoslavia Tribunal was not a «law-based court.» What was needed to create such a court, the argument went, was a legislative act, i.e. a democratically controlled legal norm, and not merely an executive measure.

The Appeals Chamber rejected this view, pointing instead to the fact that UN organs cannot be classified in terms of national categories and noting that for this reason the principle of the separation of powers was not applicable in this case. Consequently, the Chamber went on, the «law-based» principle was applicable only within States, not, however, under international law. It further noted that as long as the UN Security Council remained within the scope of the powers defined by the UN Charter, it was also entitled to establish courts. The decision further stated, however, that such courts were then obliged to act in conformity with the rule of law, which meant that the rights of the accused had to be ensured by means of adequate procedural and court rules. In legal terms, the Chamber's line of argument raises a number of questions, though the establishment of the Tribunal must be seen as correct in political and practical terms (Uertz-Retzlaff 1999, p. 89).

The example of the Yugoslavia Tribunal clearly illustrates the difficulty involved in actually complying with the stringent standards implied by the rule of law and the principle of an independent judiciary in cases of armed conflict. If even an organisation like the UN, endowed as it is with considerable powers, reached the limits of the principle of the rule of law in creating the criminal court, it is easy to understand how complicated it is for small States with unconsolidated structures to respect the principles associated with the rule of law.

Another important factor is that even an international criminal court cannot function without local support. The first point here is the extradition of accused persons, as we saw in the tug-of-war surrounding the handing-over of Milosevic to the Hague Tribunal. The successor States of the former Yugoslavia are also expected to provide help in securing evidence, protecting witnesses, etc. Since the Yugoslavia Tribunal was established as a coercive measure as per Chapter VII of the UN Charter, all States are required to cooperate with it. The behaviour of Croatia and Serbia for many years has shown that it is nevertheless possible to refuse such cooperation, even though such refusal is unlawful. There is little doubt that the main reason for the «soft» stance the international community long maintained toward this resistance, as well as for the reticence it has shown in making arrests on its own, stems from fears of negative impacts on the peace process in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Böhme 200, p. 118). The pictures of UN blue helmets taken hostage have left their mark.

All this gives an inkling of the difficulties faced by the international community in dealing with crimes against international law if the process is not backed by the authority of the Security Council or if, for political reasons, the mandate the Council gives its blue-helmet forces is inadequate to the task at hand.

### **Taking local factors into account**

The example of the Yugoslavia Tribunal as well that provided by different kinds of national resistance to cooperation with this organ of the international community show how sensitively States may react when they feel that inroads are being made into their sovereign rights—in this case, into their sovereign penal jurisdiction. This also explains why the Cambodian Government decided to set up a national criminal tribunal to try the cases of genocide committed in the country. In this case UN international experts and expertise were allowed, even though the court was established on a national basis.

This mirrors a general problem faced by international assistance for crisis regions. The problem consists in the fact that it is very difficult to take adequate account of regional factors. Yet the political context can prove to be an impediment to the rule of law. Because they see political and economic tasks as more urgent, new rulers often accord low priority to the establishment of an independent judiciary following a crisis situation. In addition, those in power must frequently fear a loss of their power if an independent judiciary is in fact established. The literature (cf. Mani 1998, p. 6 et seq.) cites a number of examples. The Government of El Salvador, for instance, dragged its feet in implementing the binding recommendations of the Truth Commission and disbanding the country's corrupt supreme court. When Namibia became independent, the Government also neglected to take the steps required to sanction infractions of the law committed by the country's liberation movement, SWAPO, during the struggle for independence.

The situation in Cambodia was even worse for years; here, with an eye to securing the fragile peace, the international community insisted on a continuing participation of the Khmer Rouge in the Cambodian Government. Under these circumstances it was quite inconceivable to build an independent judiciary. Western legal experts, calling for the introduction of a new legal order —common law for the Americans, the *code Napoléon* for the French— were themselves running the risk of disregarding the interests of the local population and showing insufficient understanding for the country's historical and mental peculiarities (Lithgow 1994, p. 44 et seq.). This missionary zeal necessarily gave rise to the —false— impression that Cambodia is a territory without any centuries-old legal traditions of its own. Any approach of this kind is more apt to put off the local population, though the aim should be to ensure its involvement as a means of building an independent judiciary. It is therefore imperative to ensure a strong involvement of local NGOs at the earliest possible date in order to gain the participation of a given region's civil society in the process of rebuilding government structures. The experience gained in East Timor underlines this fact (Patrick 2001, p. 52 et seq.).

### **Practical experience in the role of law following conflicts**

The rule of law is a key element in rebuilding social structures after conflict and collapse. This is seen in the medium term as a precondition essential for peace and durable internal stability. It is for this reason that a large number of international players are involved in supporting

efforts aimed at creating an independent judiciary. These include various UN bodies such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The World Bank lists ten elements on which legal reforms in developing countries should be based (Thürer 1995, p. 30). These centre on: creation of an independent judiciary; security for judges; streamlining of legal procedures and improvement of legal management; selection and training of judges; establishment of legal institutions and an information system; opening up of access to courts; legal groundwork needed to create courts or bodies of arbitration and mediation commissions.

The growing importance of the fields of justice and security has also found expression in UN peace operations. Practitioners have proposed setting a new priority here (Brahimi Report 2000). The means available to promote the consolidation of peace include the use of civilian police and other law-oriented forces such as justice experts to secure both the rule of law and human rights (UN-Doc A/55/305, para. 29 et seq.). A central role is assigned in this context to reform of the judiciary and criminal justice as well as to support for the process of democratisation (Cumaraswamy 1996, para. 4 et seq.).

Compared with national law, the options available to enforce international law are very weak. Apart from responses of the UN Security Council to threats to or breaches of the peace, there is no central international enforcement mechanism. Consequently, it is as a rule not possible to use international coercion to force countries to institute an independent judiciary. Instead, customary international law and treaties binding under international law oblige the world's States to guarantee an independent judiciary at national level. If such countries are called upon by other countries or by international bodies to do so, this can in no way be seen as interference in internal affairs. However, the international community has no choice but to rely on the cooperation of the States concerned in redressing grievances.

This being a crosscutting problem, various UN organs have been concerned, since 1980, with the independence of the judiciary as well as with related issues. As early as 1980, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), in its Resolution 1989/124, proposed appointing a special reporter on these issues. The Human Rights Commission in Resolution 1995/36 finally appointed such a special reporter. His mandate consisted in assessing, on the basis of international best practices, the significance of an independent judiciary and analysing the impact of international assistance such as advisory services and technical support. The aim was to adapt relevant international assistance to the challenges posed by the task of supporting democratisation

processes and the protection of human rights in the post-Cold War era. The reports, analysing above all relevant existing human rights instruments, reflect the present state of international legal affairs. The second part of these documents describes the situation in various crisis-torn countries of the world. Since most of these countries have declared their willingness to cooperate with the special reporter, the reports also reflect the positions of both the countries concerned and the relevant aid organisations. Interested parties will be able to distil some general information from the reports as well as from UN practice.

### **General findings derived from UN practice**

In its peace missions in collapsing States in the 1990s, the UN increasingly assumed a trusteeship role (Hufnagel 1996, p. 320). Any such concrete activities of course require a detailed mandate for specific operations and must be geared to local conditions. Still, some main lines of development have become visible in practice. The international community is, for instance, unable to rebuild government structures in crisis regions without reference to certain values. Such activity is based on a concept of good governance that is reflected in the specific mandates adopted by the UN Security Council. If we look, for instance, into the UN missions in Namibia, Cambodia, and Somalia, we find that they share a number of common characteristics. These show that efforts aimed at instituting the rule of law and setting up an independent judiciary have been embedded in a comprehensive catalogue of measures.

Democratic governmental structures are aimed for in all such cases. In Namibia and Cambodia this was achieved by means of nationwide elections, while in Somalia efforts have been aimed at forming representative organs at local level. The UN's commitment here was not restricted to the expression of the population's democratic will, but also extended to the preparatory work for elections. Comprehensive awareness campaigns were used to inform people of their basic rights. This was aimed at countering any attempts to intimidate the population. These activities included information on possibilities of gaining access to the media, presentation of the general right to vote, and a declaration that this right applied to all persons, including refugees.

All UN operations have also been based on the aim of improving the *human rights situation on the ground*. This was approached by means of information programmes geared to creating an awareness of human rights and educating people to respect human rights. In addition,

the missions also had the task of investigating human rights violations on their own initiative.<sup>1</sup>

In Cambodia the mission included a special human rights component. One important task of these UN interventions was to *secure the State's monopoly of power*. Since both police and military, as armed and organised groups, play a key role in internal conflicts, any solution must begin with them. It is for this reason that control over the armed organs of the State and their subordination under the political leadership has always been a priority task.

Apart from the ceasefire, peace operations have focused on disarming, barracking, and demobilising the conflict parties. In practice, however, there have been major problems here. Disarming the conflict parties proved impracticable, for instance, in Cambodia and Somalia.

The experience gained in building armed organs in the countries to be stabilised has likewise differed from case to case. In Namibia, the task was merely to monitor the process of reorganising an existing police force. In Somalia, on the other hand, the police force had to be rebuilt from scratch.

One feature shared by these operations is the aim of creating a police force that acts not as an instrument of oppression but as a protector of human rights on the basis of the rule of law. This task is derived from the human rights of personal security and the right of freedom from fear. The monopoly of power, which at the same time implies a subordination of executive power under the democratically legitimised political leadership, is one of the core elements of any democratic order.

The goals named above cannot be achieved if care is not taken at the same time to institute the rule of law and create an independent

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<sup>1</sup> In Somalia, though, the credibility of UN commitment suffered heavily when, in 1993, at the height of the conflicts with General Aidid and other warlords, UN and US troops were themselves involved in severe human rights violations; and human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and African Rights levelled serious charges against them. What was at issue here were, first —as was noted above all for the Canadian contingent— cases of torture and racist excesses perpetrated on Somalis. In the second place, hundreds of Somalis were detained for months without trial. And, finally, UNSCOM troops had used wholly unreasonable force against the civilian population, in this way violating international humanitarian law. After the charges levelled by UN representatives had been rejected on problematic or indeed flimsy grounds, a UN commission of investigation appointed by the Security Council, while clearly placing the blame on Aidid, also criticised the US and the UN for the aggressive nature of their actions and recommended payment of compensation to the victims among the Somali civilian population. Furthermore, in September 2001 the UN human rights representative for Somalia, Ghanim Alnajar, recommended a comprehensive investigation of war crimes committed during the phase in which the UN troops were withdrawn.

judiciary. This is why the UN devoted so much effort in Cambodia and Somalia to creating a new system of courts designed to operate independently of the government. As far as human rights and the right to vote are concerned, international organisations or bodies have in some individual cases even assumed jurisdictional functions. Under Annex 6 of the Dayton Agreement, for instance, a Human Rights Chamber was created for Bosnia-Herzegovina. Its task is to ensure that the country maintains the highest possible standard of internationally recognised human rights. This court is made up of 14 judges, six from Bosnia-Herzegovina's constituent States, and eight international experts (Nowak 1998, p. 192). Furthermore, the international community is also providing support for the training of judges, lawyers, and judicial staff. These missions have also been engaged in monitoring prison systems and the treatment of prisoners (Bartole 2000, p. 162 et seq.). Numerous changes in the national protection of human rights as well as in electoral laws are likewise due to UN missions. And such countries have also, not least, been provided support in working out democratic constitutions.

The task of building an independent judiciary in crisis areas can prove successful only if it is accompanied by efforts aimed at reviving the economy, though this is not a task immediately associated with UN peace operations. Still, practice shows that it is in many cases impossible to strictly separate the tasks of instituting the rule of law and (re)building an economic infrastructure. To this extent, development-assistance measures are also instrumental in creating the conditions needed for an independent judiciary.

In his 1992 Agenda for Peace (UN-Doc A/47/277), former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali expressly referred to this state of affairs and called for a new type of technical assistance. The issues involved here are support for the reshaping of inadequate national structures and capacities as well as the strengthening of new democratic institutions. The fact that the UN has had every reason to become active in this field becomes evident when we consider that social peace is just as important as strategic or political peace: «There is an obvious connection between democratic practices —such as the rule of law and transparency in decision-making— and the achievement of true peace and security in any new and stable political order. These elements of good governance need to be promoted at all levels of international and national political communities» (Boutros-Ghali 1992, Section 59).



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# International Law, Conflict Prevention and the Media

José Manuel Pureza

The modern international system is presently subject to a second phase of structural change. The first one consisted of the worldwide expansion of the nation-state as a pattern of political and social organization. From the ancient, narrow club of so-called “civilized states” we have passed to a situation of almost 200 states that emerged from the identification between self-determination and state building. East Timor is perhaps the latest and most symptomatic expression of this vision.

The second wave of structural change of the international system is producing a dramatic intensification of cross-border interactions and giving place to a new concept and experiment in political and social community (new communities of fate). Territorial primacy is being replaced by functional and thematic identities and, within this framework, national communities have ceased to be the central references for both regulation and loyalties.

What international law is supposed to rule is no longer inter-state anarchy. James Rosenau, for example, suggests that the present international system is founded on a bifurcation between a state-centric world, of which sovereignty is the cornerstone, and a multi-centric, non-hierarchical world, formed of several non-territorial networks of different international actors (writers, intellectuals, criminals, workers, sportsmen, ecologists, etc.).

Therefore, these radical sociological changes —synthesised in the word “globalisation”— involve a new construction and understanding of international law. Several legal scholars have studied this paradigmatic shift that globalisation is causing in international law. Most of them analyse this phenomenon as a move from the classic inter-state law towards a sort of law of all mankind. For example, Wolfgang Friedman announces two opposite logics of international regulation: on one side,

the traditional law of co-existence, with a mere procedural scope, and centred around the question of “how to keep them peacefully apart”; on the other side, the modern law of co-operation, whose main concern is “how to bring them actively together”. Whatever the accent may be, the fact is that we are witnessing a recovery of a non-positivist and a non-state-centric way of explaining and understanding international law. Contemporary common sense concerning the constitutive and regulatory functions of the international legal order underlines the need to take into due account not only the efficiency of international rules (i.e., the proximity between international rules and the actual behaviour of states) but also their capacity to express, on a worldwide scale, some crucial values of humankind as a whole.

Therefore, this paradigmatic shift operating within international law can be read as a process of rediscovering the potential of bringing together legal and ethical categories, in the same way that some of the founding fathers of international law have done. They were wise enough to incorporate the novelty of a plurality of values and of political units (the nation-states), without permitting a lapse into pure relativism. This was the main importance of the notion of *totus orbis* (the whole world), in Francisco de Vitoria, or of the centrality of the *bonum commune generis humanis* (the good of all humankind), in Francisco Suarez. Given the risks of negative utopianism that political globalisation today carries with it, international law is once again called upon to incorporate the new, while limiting its potential for perversion.

So, the question is: in what measure does contemporary international law, understood as a law of all humankind, permit new forms of a *bonum commune humanitatis*? In my view, there are two main legal areas in which this tendency is found. The first is regimes based upon an alternative logic to that of territorial sovereignty over natural resources and spaces, like the “common heritage of humankind” regime. The second is the international regime of human rights through which the exclusive monopoly of States in the regulation of the legal status of individuals, established since Westphalia, is abandoned and replaced by a general international accountability of states concerning individuals under their jurisdiction.

Dramatically contrasting with these developments that occurred in international legal discourse during the last five decades, the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been the most violent in all history. In fact, there have been as many casualties from mass violence in our century as in the rest of human history combined. Robert Manoff, president of the Centre for War, Peace and the News Media, stresses that “the human race has seen fit to engage in something like 250 significant armed conflicts in the course of

this century, during which over 110 million people have been killed, and many times that number wounded, crippled and mutilated."

This diffusion of mass violence and the dramatic increase of every form of ethno-political conflict demand a refreshment of some crucial concepts. The concept of security is obviously one of them. The traditional state-centric and militarised view of security must give place to a multi-level understanding that embraces individuals, groups, peoples and humankind as simultaneous subjects of security.

But what are the precise and consistent basis of a commitment "beyond our tribe, beyond our nation, family, intimate network?" (M. Ignatieff). If the concept of *bonum commune humanitatis* has a significative presence in contemporary international law, "what scripts and narratives of involvement get some of us to commit ourselves to people we had no connection to until some chance encounter with televised images of atrocity galvanized us into action"? (ibid).

Michael Ignatieff answers his own questions: "There is no narrative of imperial rivalry or ideological struggle that compels the zones of safety to make the zones of danger their business. What is left is a narrative of compassion." And he goes on: "Television has become the privileged medium through which moral relations between strangers are mediated in the modern world". Ignatieff then denounces the deep ambivalence of the moral relations formed on a media base: "On the one hand, television has contributed to the breakdown of the barriers of citizenship, religion, race and geography that once divided our moral space into those we were responsible for and those who were beyond our ken. On the other hand, it makes us voyeurs of the suffering of others, tourists amid their landscapes of anguish." The greatest danger of this ambivalence of media-based ethics is misanthropy: "the ethics of victimhood generate empathy only where victims are obviously blameless (...). Where empathy fails to find the blameless victim, the conscience finds comfort in shallow misanthropy. For the reaction — "they're all crazy!" — reproduces the reassuring imperial dichotomy between the virtue, moderation and reasonableness held to exist in the West and the fanaticism and unreason of the East".

Summing up my argument until now:

- Contemporary international law evidences some openness to value-centred strategies, in which the notions of common good and unity of all humankind are crucial;
- Notwithstanding this, the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been the most violent of all history, imposing a renewal of conceptual constructions like "security" in a cosmopolitan worldwide scale.

—This renewal faces a crucial obstacle: the fragility of media-based ethics, whose ambivalence may result in mere voyeurism and even misanthropy.

Is media language able to overcome these ambivalent results and serve as an operational support for peace and a fair international order? Despite being aware of the potential that journalism has for conflict management and prevention (deobjectifying the conflict actors for each other, counteracting misinterpretations, identifying the core interests), some of my journalist friends would immediately raise the question of objectivity as an obstacle to any sort of partisan journalism. Peace, in this view, is not a cause for media because media, by definition, have no causes. They are supposed to be attached only to seeking the truth.

Let me state very honestly that, not being a journalist myself, I follow Robert Manoff when he qualifies objectivity as a “vital illusion and perhaps even a tragic one”. The epistemological and deontological strength of “objectivity-as-neutrality” is also its moral weakness: it stops its followers from intervening in the events they are covering and voids them of any kind of responsibility for the consequences of maintaining their distance towards the facts.

Now, I suggest that the paradigmatic shift operating in international law demands a new journalistic paradigm. As a particular form of social practice, journalism must be thought of within the framework of the human combat against genocidal culture. This means that journalism as a social practice must be reconfigured as a major contribution to the prevention and resolution of conflict. Let me finish by quoting Robert Manoff once again: “instead of starting with the media’s understanding of their own possibilities, as determined by current paradigms, we have decided to begin by establishing the desiderata for media action based on the work of negotiators, diplomats, ‘track two’ practitioners and protagonists who have participated in the resolution of conflict or who have studied the process. This shift of perspective makes it possible first and foremost to address the question of what conflict prevention and management require of the media, putting aside for the moment the question of under what circumstances the media may be able to provide it”.

**II**

**Regional Studies**





# **Conflict Prevention in the Co-operation Policy of the European Union**

João Cravinho

Nowadays, the concept of Conflict Prevention is a core aspect of the main agenda of international donors, including the EU, academic institutions and non-governmental organisations. In fact, this has been increasingly translated into the debates and guidelines adopted by the majority of international donors and actors, as well as in underdeveloped countries, who are primarily responsible for their implementation.

I was therefore very pleased to accept the invitation to take part in this seminar.

## **Conflict prevention - what is the EU's policy?**

During the last years, the EU has been trying to stand as one of the main international actors defending the need of an effective policy on peace consolidation and violent conflict prevention, management and resolution. In fact, these are the core issues of the Union's external relationships, both at the levels of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and of the Community Development Aid Policy.

According to the Treaty of the EU, the community's development co-operation policy is based on a very clear set of principles, namely:

- to promote underdeveloped countries' sustainable economic and social development;
- to promote their progressive integration in the world economy;
- to contribute to the fight against poverty;
- and, globally, to contribute to the overall goal of development, rule of law and democratic consolidation, as well as of respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms.

Besides developing and consolidating these fundamental values, according to the mandate entrusted to it by the Maastricht Treaty and further revised by the Amsterdam Treaty, the CFSP should also contribute to peacekeeping and to the reinforcement of international security.

Well, here we stand before a situation in which a relevant international actor explicitly refers to the importance of using its available means for conflict prevention. Amongst the most relevant available means is the fact that the EU is one of the main international donors of development aid (providing, together with its Member States, over 50 % of global Public Development Aid), as well as a relevant trading partner. Therefore, the EU is extremely well placed to act on a set of matters, which are normally at the root of violent situations.

But, perhaps more relevant than those statistics, is the fact that the EU is a unique actor in the international scenario, in terms of both foreign policy and development cooperation. There is an ongoing debate in many countries on the accurate relationship between foreign policy and development cooperation policy. Often that debate is excessively simplistic, but it can be characterised as a tension between the interests propelled into foreign policy and the values that are revealed through co-operation. It is clearly nonsense to separate interests and values in this way, but still one must bear in mind that the EU is a completely different case when compared to a State that has had a foreign policy for many decades or even centuries and still has a recent, fragile and incipient co-operation policy.

At least for the time being, the EU's foreign policy is something that practically does not exist. On the contrary, co-operation policy is something that has become more consolidated and complex throughout several decades, standing as one of the most clear and visible ways of projecting European values in today's world. In other words, the EU's intervention in the world relies deeply on its capacity to intervene at the level of development support, in which the conflict prevention debate is naturally included.

There is a growing understanding of today's violent conflicts as a result of a set of structural problems that, despite varying on a case-by-case basis, seem to accommodate most of these situations.

In general terms, we can say that in many of the cases these are situations of structural crisis, often happening in extremely under-developed countries, leading to chronic instability, insecurity, violations of human rights, social and economic collapse, heavy reliance on external aid, and growing levels of absolute poverty.

Secondly, the heavy costs of violent conflicts are not only felt in the areas directly affected by conflict, but go far beyond the State's own

borders. This means that countries that have the misfortune of bordering other countries with structural crises that overspill into conflict, themselves end up with high probabilities of being destabilised by contagion with outside conflicts.

Thirdly, though with different degrees of intensity and depending on specific circumstances, in recent years these situations have been feeding a feeling of uncertainty and mistrust. This results in a massive rupture of foreign investment in the affected regions and in a certain scepticism regarding the efficacy of international cooperation or even regarding the real feasibility of development. This feeds into a vicious circle, which tends to fulfil the most pessimist expectations.

Thus, besides having a significant potential to do so, the EU has a particular interest in acting on these situations, which have often made the concretisation of the Union's political aims impracticable (for example, promotion of respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law, the fight against poverty, promotion of sustainable development) and have considerably increased long-term development costs. This is the core concern in the several documents adopted in the meantime, which together have been outlining the performance mandate in this area.

Two contributing factors to the European stance can be ascertained here. The first one is that it is the EU that tends to pay for conflict's physical costs. One example: during recent years the EU has invested several million euros in Palestinian infrastructure, which in recent weeks has been almost totally destroyed by Israel. The EU is now asking the Israeli state for one hundred million Euros of compensation for that destruction, but we are not very confident that this will bring the desired result.

The other relevant factor is that the EU is trying to find a certain balance in respect to the American superpower, and the quest for such a balance informs the European stance. Using the same example, the EU's foreign affairs ministers decided early this week not to have a clear stance towards the conflict because they didn't want to endanger the mission of American Secretary of State Colin Powell.

Thus, notwithstanding its very singular characteristics, the EU isn't free of the influence of *realpolitik* in this field, though perhaps to a lesser extent than is the case with traditional states.

From that general framework, it is worth mentioning that there is a new guidance in the use of the EU's tools —political, diplomatic, financial and trading— towards strategic action on the immediate and structural causes of violence. This translates not only the complexity of such situations, but also the growing understanding of the potential of a guided and integrated utilisation of the several tools.

It is here that the Union's development aid policy comes in, having gradually started to integrate a strengthened political component, in which issues related to peace consolidation, management and resolution are considered when outlining development strategies, programmes and projects, in a framework of passage into a preventive approach.

In the same way, the growing political debate with underdeveloped countries and regions is becoming a relevant tool for this aim, as it was, for example, consecrated in the framework of the new ACP-CE Partnership Agreement, the Cotonou agreement, which has a reinforced political dimension, capable of regularly tackling any subject of mutual interest, at the global, regional or national level.

### **Future challenges for the EU**

Despite the progress already made regarding the political definition of the EU in this subject, there are still, however, some challenges demanding answers, so that the policies already adopted can be made effectively operational and credible.

Firstly, there is the always-complicated case of the articulation between the actions processed within the Common Foreign and Security Policy framework and the community development aid policy, as well as the Member States' bilateral actions regarding the established guidelines. The principles that supposedly guide the European stance may not be shared by the Union's Member States, which may have different political, economic or historical interests, depending on the context.

In this line of thought, the elaboration of Country Strategic Documents is a relevant element, which may be able to ensure, on a case-by-case basis, greater coherence and synergy between long-term co-operation programmes and other complementary actions, specifically devoted to conflict prevention and reinforcement of democratic principles, as well as a greater articulation between the Community's actions and the bilateral support of Member States and other international organs. This process, aiming at creating an integrated approach, sometimes works better and at other times worse.

It will therefore be necessary to intensify efforts both within the Community and between this and its Member States, and to gather the relevant political will, so that, together with the beneficiary countries, it is indeed possible to move towards a common approach. In fact, the more the European approach is shared, the nearer it will be to the aforementioned principles.

The growing political debate that the Union is developing with underdeveloped countries and regions is a significant mechanism of dialogue on issues related to violent conflicts. In fact, conflict prevention, management and resolution have been gradually integrated as a core aspect of that process. However, there is a problem here: the “political dialogue” ends up being invoked only in cases where dialogue itself is extremely difficult, as happened recently in Zimbabwe. There is still a long way to go in order to refine these mechanisms, but one can positively say that there seems to be an awareness of this fact.

One other relevant aspect is the need to strengthen the articulation between the Union’s actions and those adopted by other international actors. This has, by the way, been translated in the EU-UN dialogue on the definition of common policies in the field of conflict prevention and crisis management, in order to reflect both actors’ potential in the area, as well as the need for increased information and co-operation exchange.

However, for an effective improvement of the participation and articulation with the UN and other international organisations, a strengthening of the political weight and influence of the EU within those organisations is fundamental. The blend of the EU and its Member States’ efforts towards this issue is, once again, an essential condition, but it is known how this plays with Member States conflicting interests. An example of this is the interest of the United Kingdom and France in keeping their privileged status as Permanent Members of the United Nations Security Council.

## **Specific situations**

One of today’s existing tensions in international co-operation policy results from the tendency to reward the “good students” and punish the “bad students”, the so-called “poor performers”. Obviously, it is precisely in those countries afflicted by a context of political or institutional frailty, that there exists a pressing need to put conflict prevention mechanisms into action. There are, for example, acute cases where State structures have disappeared. In other cases, the central power may look strong (such as in terms of military control) but it does not possess the indispensable legitimacy, given its incapacity to carry out a set of intrinsically fundamental tasks (including the provision of basic services or of minimum security conditions), or to maintain control of its whole territory. There are also those States affected by the highest levels of underdevelopment and by added difficulties regarding the incorporation of resources made available by the international

community, considering the existing political and institutional constraints.

A systematic conflict-prevention policy requires refining mechanisms to improve co-operation, specifically in the so-called poor performer countries. This doesn't necessarily mean an increase in the resources directed to those countries, but simply an identification of the most effective mechanisms to achieve the goals of reconciliation and pacification of societies.

Besides the endeavours in the political dialogue framework, the Community's support should, in these cases, consider additional attention to the rule of law, essential for the good functioning of the democratic process, through strengthening of civil society and institutional capacities (through training, support of social sectors, and reinforcement of the judicial system). This reinforcement is also a fundamental condition towards a better incorporation and utilisation of the resources made available.

In fact, this is the only possible way of ensuring an effective coherence and application of the commitments made regarding peace consolidation and conflict prevention.

Allow me, lastly, to allude to the issue of the visibility of peace consolidation and conflict prevention policies.

Although actions in this area, if successful, are necessarily less visible than those, for example, in the area of humanitarian aid or peace keeping operations (which has in fact been pointed out as one of the factors that have conditioned some donors' engagement towards these issues), it is in practical terms a fundamental matter. This is true both for the beneficiary countries —primarily responsible for its implementation— and for the donor community, given its specific responsibility, as well as for the need for an effective credibility of their aid policies, whose efficacy is being questioned due to the situations of instability experienced in some geographical areas.

In this field, the media have a fundamental role, but others more qualified than I will tackle that issue.

# **Swedish Conflict Prevention Policy and the Challenges of the Media**

Cecilia Bruhn

The relation between conflict prevention policy and the media is a burning but still quite unexplored issue. It is well known that bad journalism may contribute to one-sided opinions about the causes of a crisis, and even to its deterioration, but it has not been fully explored how good journalism may have an influence on the positive development of the same situation.

In this paper the Swedish policy regarding conflict prevention, especially its different approaches, will be presented briefly. As a comment some reflections about possible strategies concerning the media, especially in relation to international co-operation, will be presented.

The Swedish policy below is taken from the Government communication entitled *Preventing Violent Conflict*, published in 2000.

## **An integrated approach to conflict prevention politics**

An integrated approach to the prevention of violent conflicts is a central issue in the Swedish Government's policy. The Government is aware of the importance of democratic governance, respect for human rights, gender equality, economic and social development, measures to combat crime and environmental degradation and the strengthening of international co-operation, in particular through trade and investment.

The programme states that all these areas have to be integrated and combined with economic, political, legal and military instruments, in order to achieve human security, which is a precondition for social stability. Making use of the collaboration within and between ministries and public authorities, research institutions, non-governmental organ-

isations and the business community, the Government will strengthen the capacity for pursuing conflict prevention and may also encourage similar methods in the international arena.

Sweden has presented five main areas where the country believes the future tasks of conflict prevention lie.

### 1. *Development co-operation*

Sweden's integrated development co-operation, including areas such as social and economic development, human rights and the rule of law, fulfils a key preventive function by combating poverty and strengthening important societal functions. This policy addresses the structural causes of destabilisation and armed conflicts.

It is stated that efficient development co-operation can contribute to a favourable evolution of peace and security, but to qualify as conflict prevention, there must be a specific link between such co-operation and a beginning conflict situation. The purpose of the measures must be to help reduce the risk of an outbreak of armed conflict. The measures may be both structural and direct. Support for a multi-annual project, e.g. empowering women, or targeted aid, e.g. to an independent radio station, can both have preventive effects and reduce the risk of a situation developing into an armed confrontation.

At the same time it is said that it is important to integrate the preventive dimension into long-term development co-operation that is not directly related to a potential conflict situation.

### 2. *International law*

Like many other countries, Sweden maintains that respect for national sovereignty must not be an obstacle to acting in intra-national conflicts. Taking early co-operative action to prevent violent conflict can help to avoid the need for intervention at a later stage—a humanitarian intervention that is not always accepted by the State in question.

International law has a marked conflict-prevention dimension. Armed conflicts are often preceded, or even directly caused, by flagrant violations of the population's rights, and international co-operation today is largely concerned with promoting the adoption of, and compliance, with international norms.

Respect for international humanitarian law in armed conflicts helps to protect civilians and facilitates humanitarian actions, which may prevent the conflict from spreading to other areas and further escalating. The Swedish government argues that long-term measures to strengthen



a culture of respect for international law, in particular through educational measures and political dialogue, have a structural conflict-prevention function.

### 3. *Democracy and security*

Security and development policies, which have long been regarded as separate fields of activity, are closely linked in Swedish policy. At the same time, increasing importance is attached to the political dimension of development co-operation and the need for measures to promote democratisation in developing countries.

The Government states that democracy consists not only of formal democratic institutions, but also of a democratic culture and respect for human rights. There is a strong link between democracy and conflict prevention, and this link is evident especially in situations where an internal conflict is about to develop into a civil war.

Sweden's support for democracy is primarily long-term and is designed to promote the gradual establishment of democratic institutions, a democratic culture, gender equality and human rights. It is closely related to efforts in other areas, for example equitable social and economic development and pro-environment measures.

To be recognised as conflict prevention measures in the operational sense, there must be a clear link to a concrete risk of armed conflict. However, the conflict prevention dimension should also be integrated into other programmes and measures designed to develop democracy. Support for democratisation must, therefore, be designed on the basis of analyses of the power structures and interests of the actors involved.

### 4. *Economic and social development*

Tolerable social and economic conditions are an important, but not sufficient factor for political stability. Poverty tends to mean the absence of human security, at the same time as the factors associated with poverty —lack of rights, of participation, etc.— also trigger and sustain conflicts. The increasing globalisation of the world economy and the development of new information technology create opportunities for increased prosperity for nations, groups and individuals, but also the risk of wider gaps that may generate conflicts. The Swedish government therefore states that it is important to combat poverty and increase the opportunities for participation in economic development.

Scarce resources and uneven distribution are potential causes of conflict that, alone or combined with other structural risk factors, can

lead to armed conflicts within and between states. In several parts of the world, water scarcity is at the centre of regional politics. In other parts, issues such as deforestation are at stake. It is said that expert assistance and economic support for the development of new technical solutions, educational measures that lead to a more sustainable use, and measures to ensure equitable distribution of resources, are necessary to prevent scarcity of resources from being a contributing cause to armed conflict.

### 5. *Economic integration and trade*

It has long been recognised that economic integration as well as technical co-operation at the regional and sub-regional level can have a preventive effect. The government points out that collaboration creates mutual dependence and increases mutual trust between the potential parties to a conflict. Trade increases the opportunities for development and mutual dependence between potential or former enemies. The importance of maintaining trade flows means that armed force is not seen as an effective or sensible means for settling disputes.

Economic growth, which is promoted by economic integration, is said to be a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for eliminating potential structural causes of conflicts such as increasing poverty and economic inequality. There is a need, it is stated, to raise awareness of the fact that economic co-operation and development can contribute to peaceful development. Armed conflicts create opportunities for a kind of economy that does not normally thrive in peacetime and which obstructs conflict management and conflict prevention efforts. Knowledge of the specific economic interests of the actors involved is therefore necessary if an armed conflict is to be effectively prevented or otherwise managed.

### **Instruments and measures used for the prevention of violent conflict**

It is stated that in order to act early to prevent violent conflict from breaking out we must use existing instruments for partly new purposes. Many of the instruments that are used today both within development co-operation, international law, trade and economic co-operation and also in crisis management and peace-keeping operations, can be further refined so as to be even more effective in the context of conflict prevention. There is also a need, it is stated, to develop new methods for collecting and analysing information to make it possible to

respond at an early stage to signs of a nascent conflict and to set up new institutional mechanisms. A coherent strategy must be adopted and the measures taken at various stages of a conflict must be prepared on the basis of well-defined objectives.

The instruments for conflict prevention can be divided into two main categories in the Swedish programme. Structural prevention instruments address the factors that are liable to generate conflicts in the long term, while direct prevention instruments address the factors that may lead to violent conflict in the short term. In most situations it will be necessary to combine both direct and structural instruments. These instruments can also be divided into four broad policy areas: the socio-economic, the political-institutional, the diplomatic, and the policy area relating to stability and physical security.

## **The media and conflict prevention**

In Swedish policy the role and responsibility of the media in conflict prevention are not discussed. Even though the document exemplifies some structural instruments, such as the training of journalists and the support for an independent media, there is not a clear policy line dealing with the link between the press and conflict prevention.

Having the Swedish policy document as a basis it is possible to trace some general tasks that might strengthen the relationship between the responsibility of the media and the conflict prevention politics. They are not new findings *per se* but they are some reflections about the possible strategies for the future policy concerning conflict prevention. To a certain extent they could also be a natural policy line since there is a clear relation between a democratic State —something Sweden opts for— and the free production, publication and circulation of uncensored information.

To begin with, the training of local or national journalists is important both from a democratic point of view and from a practical standpoint when media cover a crisis or conflict. In the process of trying to guarantee a free and independent media —through the training of national journalists and support to national news agencies—, donors should aim at making sure that they will and can give objective, transparent and correct information. This, of course, depends largely on the democratic possibilities in the country but it is important to change the use of old patterns, stereotypes and one-handed material.

Donors could contribute to the impact of news through the training both of the actors in the field and of the journalists that are covering a crisis or conflict. Showing how an event, presented in

another way, can give other opinions about the conflict, and showing how to solve the situation, both the media and the organisations working in the field could eventually be able to contribute to another development of the situation.

Journalists are not only persons who tell us stories. In a crisis they are natural narrators who also have to analyse, investigate, give opinions and propose solutions on a reality that may be very complex and difficult. To be able to contribute to a fair development in a crisis, knowing that the media alone probably will not prevent a conflict, it is crucial that national and international journalists have good knowledge and understanding about the country's historic and current situation, the good or bad relations between different actors and possible external interests in the crisis.

The supply of journalists with these characteristics in every single crisis or conflict is not high and the difficulties of an independent media are still a problem in many countries. It is obvious that donors have to find new or at least stronger arguments to underline the importance of skilled journalists and the relation between a free press and conflict prevention. Giving more money to different co-operation programmes will not guarantee a better media coverage from the point of view of conflict prevention. Donors have to change their strategies.

Secondly, the responsibility of humanitarian actors, civil society and governmental organisations in the conflict prevention policies, and its links with the media, has to be stressed even more. Here donors should contribute to develop regular relations between the national and international media agencies, the international human rights and humanitarian actors in the field and governmental agencies. It is likely that all these actors instinctively think that they depend on others at the same time as they all state that they are independent. Many cases have shown how the humanitarian actors as well as the local or national governments and the media use other parts for their own, or the victims', purposes.

The journalists and media agencies have to be aware of the fact that the humanitarian actors in the field may be advocacy organisations trying to put a special issue on the international agenda, which may endanger the development of a crisis or conflict. Statements from the ICRC, for instance, are always neutral and impartial but, even so, sometimes the media distorts the messages. Hopefully neutral organisations will never come to the point where they choose to supply only a handful of journalists who are able to transmit news in the right way.

It is crucial that the journalists and the media in general cover the whole situation, from the pre-crisis situation until the post-conflict situation, using the right facts and figures. Normally the conflict is only

reported during some peak days, whilst the possible prevention of a conflict is rarely reported at all. The difficulties of knowing exactly which elements are preventive may be one of the reasons, but most probably is the sole fact that prevention itself does not make a headline. Conflict prevention does not produce the images of suffering or mutilated populations that are brought to us by the globalised media. Today, part of the solution may be knowing how to create a headline out of a «normal» conflict prevention story. That is, we must know how to inform the audience not only when the man bites the dog but also when the dog bites the man.

Establishing a regular contact between, for instance, the humanitarian actors and the media agencies, even during periods of time when there is no immediate danger of an armed conflict, could lead to a regular coverage in the press even in times when the every-day situation is fairly good in a specific country or region. Surely the whole problem is not only how to establish regular contacts between the field actors and the press but how to break into the media cover in general with news that do not show conflicts, misery or catastrophes. This is a question of the agencies' norms and also about politics, media priorities and ownership. Donors may have great difficulties in changing these conditions since normally the least important advice is that coming from external actors. It is also known that the economic contributors to the media agencies have their own preferences, as does the audience.

The media has to condemn crimes committed against international law, according to the principle of universality, in order to put more emphasis on the possibilities of the international legal system and its preventive functions. Donors' responsibility in this context will thus be to guarantee a solid international legal framework and, if possible, to influence the media's strategies and ways of working. The case of the NATO bombings in Bosnia and the legitimacy given to them both by politicians and the media is well known. On the other hand, an interesting case is the process in Rwanda where three journalists are being prosecuted for incitation of genocide in the 1994 massacres. The outcome of this case will be important for the future International Criminal Court.

There should never be «good conflicts», «second class conflicts» or «forgotten conflicts» but unfortunately sometimes the voice of the humanitarian actors, or the victims, is not enough. In this case a stable relation between conflict prevention politics and the media could be a crucial but not a sufficient condition. Much more has to be done in the area of conflict prevention; the issue of the media is just one of the elements that has to be fully explored.



# **The Return of the Colonial Protectorate: Colonisation with Good Intent in the Western Balkans?**

Robert C. Hudson

## **Introduction**

Too much ink has been spilled by Western commentators over the past decade in misrepresenting the background to the recent conflicts that broke out between different factions and peoples who had once lived in a country that was called Yugoslavia. This misrepresentation of ideologies, discourses, history and events has placed blame fairly and squarely upon different South Slav communities for conducting conflicts based upon alleged deep ethnic hatreds and 'blood-drenched earth' mythologies of ethnic identity formation. This type of reductivist and essentialist stereotyping of peoples, such as the Bošnjaks, Croats and Serbs of Bosnia and Hercegovina (henceforth BiH) has since been applied by western commentators to other conflicts. Witness, for example, explanations of the conflicts that broke out in Chechnya and Transcaucasia, Kosovo and more recently in the US-led campaign against Afghanistan, situated within the framework of the 'War against Terrorism'. It is an attitude and a representation that is both dangerous and deeply disturbing.

In the case of BiH, such essentialist analysis and comment would deny four hundred years of tolerance between Catholic, Jewish, Muslim and Orthodox Communities and would feed directly into what has eloquently been denounced as a Balkanist discourse by the Bulgarian-born, US-based academic, Maria Todorova (1997). Recourse to the Balkanist discourse has, in turn, fanned the flames of Huntington's so-called 'Clash of Civilisations' paradigm (1993, 1996 and 1997) which has had a considerable impact upon western policy-makers, politicians, academics and field workers, whose efforts are crucial to contemporary

post-conflict rehabilitation processes. The misrepresentation of identities is currently influencing the debate on the potential forth-coming war against Iraq, and has equally impacted upon the recent crisis in Afghanistan (Tariq Ali, 2000 and 2002, and David Chandler, 2002); the ongoing debate over the 'new military humanism' (Noam Chomsky, 1999 and Michael Ignatieff, 2000) and the current thinking on the 'new age of imperialism' (Robert Cooper, 2002).

It is this crisis of representation and the inherent dangers of observing the Balkans and *de facto* BiH from afar, which has affected the disciplines of anthropology, history, literature, philosophy, sociology and cultural politics in the past in how we visualise, represent and think of this region. This way of thinking only serves to affect the way that ministers, public servants, think tanks and field workers from the international community continue to draw up plans and policies and execute the process of rehabilitation in the region.

Furthermore, on the heels of the implementation of post-conflict institutions by the international community in both BiH and Kosovo, there is a concern that rather than resolving problems by local means at a local level, international organisations have been empowered at the expense of these local institutions and have become *de facto* colonial authorities in what is little other than a process of international colonisation and colonialism in thought, word and deed. The attitudes of some representatives of the international community might well amount to little more than benign colonialism, yet a continued and direct political interference on the internal political life of BiH might only serve to reaffirm the continued emphasis on difference that has frequently been returned in the raft of elections, managed by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) that have taken place since 1996.

In this article, I will advocate rebuilding inter-communal tolerance throughout the western Balkans by the fusion between a more traditional set of indigenous values and practices and western demands for establishing civil a society, based upon liberal, modern and democratic norms, without the arrogance of believing that tolerance is necessarily exclusive to the western democratic model. It is this writer's belief that it will be through the process of education (in both western Europe and in south-eastern Europe, as well beyond) alongside the exigencies of trade and commerce, that better foundations for building ethnic tolerance might be established in these early years of the twenty-first century.



## The pre-existence of inter-ethnic tolerance in BiH

For the past decade, south eastern Europe, specifically the Balkans, has attracted a tarnished reputation in the eyes of the west, where popular opinion, influenced by the media, populist writers and the academy, has distanced the region from mainstream Europe, as the 'other' of Europe, or Europe's 'backyard'. In the two post-conflict scenarios that have emerged after the various armed conflicts in BiH between 1992 and 1995 and the 1999 conflict over Kosovo, which in both cases have witnessed the establishment of international protectorates, it would appear that the so-called 'western Balkans' have been transmogrified into being virtual colonies of the West. For example, Adam Burgess (1997), writing before the establishment of KFOR and UNMIK (United Nations Mission in Kosovo) has argued that there is virtually a colonial character to the relations between the two halves of Europe, whereby the west is 'on a moral mission' to introduce democracy and economic know-how to the 'potentially "unruly" natives' (111); that the role of the United States and organisations such as NATO and the OSCE, with its concomitant 'international circus of "election monitoring"' (112) is exacerbating relations between the western and Balkan states, and that the 'international protectorate' set up in BiH is little more than a 'benign colonial regime'. With reference to the Vance-Owen and Dayton maps of BiH, Burgess recounts how the head of a radio station in Bosnia, in discussing the 'carve up of his country' commented that 'Only English colonial minds could have drawn a map like this... The problem is, this is not Africa.' (115).

Furthermore, despite the reality of the Balkans being, from a geographical perspective, inextricably part of Europe, the region is culturally reconstructed as other, branded, from the early nineteenth century with the epithet of 'Balkan Powder Keg' as a focal point for tribal enmity and concomitant slaughter. Nevertheless, as Maria Todorova has remarked, the peoples of the Balkans have no monopoly over barbarity: 'Indeed there is something distinctly non-European in that the Balkans never quite seem to reach the dimensions of European slaughters.' Indeed, one wonders why it is that so many western commentators are ready to point the finger at others, without ever considering the number of Vietnamese who were killed by United States forces during the 1960s<sup>1</sup>, to say nothing of other American foreign policy adventures throughout the developing world, during the Cold War and its contemporary aftermath.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Estimated at 3,000,000 Vietnamese lives.

<sup>2</sup> In a period of 17 days, during its Gulf War operation, in 1991, 243,395 people were killed by United States armed forces.

Of course, it would be so easy to reduce the conflicts of the last decade to a 'clash of civilisations' à la Samuel Huntington, in which lines of cleavage drawn across the maps of Europe, Africa and Asia, have been represented as perennial lines of confrontation. His controversial approach might once have had some appeal as a generalised theory, but it soon falls apart under closer scrutiny. For example, in the case of BiH, he has described a cleft society arising from the existence of three different faith communities in one region, and yet fails to recognise that these communities had lived together in relative peaceful harmony, with only the occasional outbreak of tension, for a period of five centuries. Indeed, Robert Donia and John Fine (1994; 10) are more emphatic in their proclamation that religious rivalry and violence had never been a feature of Bosnia's heritage:

...Nowhere do we find evidence of the alleged centuries of hatred (whether religious or ethnic among the various Bosnian groups) that has supposedly permeated their history. Though Bosnia in the Middle Ages fought wars against Serbia and against principalities under the Croats, at no time did the Bosnians fight civil wars along these or any other ethnic lines. In fact, few Bosnians ever referred to themselves as Serbs or Croats, and those who did were to be found in border regions. Since the Ottomans categorized people by religion, Bosnians did not use ethnic names under the Ottomans either, before their gradual appearance in the nineteenth century. However, at the start of the nineteenth century, Bosnians were certainly conscious of being members of distinct communities defined by religion. Then, in the nineteenth century, Orthodox and Catholic Bosnians gradually and unevenly, under the impact of ideas exported by their neighbors in Serbia and Croatia, began acquiring the ethnic labels 'Serb' and 'Croat' respectively.

Adil Zulfikarpašić (1998; 43-44) confirms this viewpoint, arguing that religious, ethnic and cultural diversity are fundamental to Bosnian identity. Talking of his home town of Foča, he adds that:

For centuries this area was the meeting place of East and West, Islam and Orthodoxy, Serbs and Muslims —their cultures, customs and ways of thinking. They were different, of course, but there was a culture of communal living, tolerance combined with rivalry and mutual respect and competition.

For a thousand years Bosnia was an example of how diversity —whether religious, cultural or of any kind— does not hinder the creation of a common society. Bosnia had its own specific Bosnian society, a social structure that makes a country a common state.

So, those writers, who are so ready to comment on the cruelty and intolerance of Ottoman rule, should study the history of these three communities and their interdependence in greater detail and depth. As Ivan Lovrenović (2001; 94) and Noel Malcolm (1994; 49) have both remarked, a certain level of tolerance was shown to followers of other faith communities, especially the 'people of the book', to a degree that allowed them to preserve their identity. In reality, this meant that adherents of the Christian and Jewish faiths would on the one hand be able to practice their own faiths, but, on the other hand, would always remain second class citizens in a society in which there was no equality before the law, and in which non-Muslims suffered certain humiliations, such as restrictions on dress or having to build their churches below the height of mosques (Donia & Fine, *op. cit.*; 68). The result of the interrelationship of these peoples is rather neatly summed up by Lovrenović (*op. cit.*; 108):

In the context of all-embracing confessionalism, three cultural identities emerged [in the nineteenth century]: Muslim-Bosniak, in which Turkish-Islamic culture dominated; Serbian Orthodox, linked to the Byzantine religious tradition; and Catholic Croatian, shaped by western Christian traditions. After the expulsion of the Arabs and Jews from Spain and Portugal in the sixteenth century, these three components were joined by another, that of the Sephardic Jews. The result was an exceptionally complicated and ambivalent society, characterized on the one hand by cultural and spiritual isolationism, on the other by tolerance for difference as a normal aspect of life.

The economy and trade, in particular, acted as a stimulant to tolerance between the different communities, particularly as urban life increased all over Bosnia in the sixteenth century, which would witness the great monuments of Islamic culture in Bosnia, such as the Mostar Bridge, the Ferhad Paša Mosque in Banja Luka and the covered market in Sarajevo. (Lovrenović, *op. cit.*; 97).

An example of this tolerance is well demonstrated by those Ladino-speaking Jews who were exiled from Spain in 1492, and who settled in towns, such as Sarajevo, Travnik, Banja Luka and Mostar, where they were able to flourish, in an urban setting, under a regime of Ottoman tolerance. It is indeed to the urban culture of Bosnia that one can look to in stimulating Ottoman and *de facto* Islamic tolerance towards others. This particularly forms the *leitmotif* to Adil Zulfikarpašić's book, *The Bosniak* (1998); whilst the importance of urbanisation as the best means of ensuring post-conflict rehabilitation and inter-cultural tolerance has been elegantly argued by Dražen Pehar in *Forum Bosnae* (2002).

Such inter-communal tolerance, engendered by urbanism, is further stimulated by the existence of the *komsiluk* (neighbourhood or neighbours) and it is this cult of good neighbourliness which Lovrenović (*op. cit.*; 100) sees as having been grounded upon a very natural need for survival which lies at the core of Bosnian inter-cultural dependence. Perhaps one only has to read the novels of Ivo Andrić to understand how, traditionally, towns such as Sarajevo, Travnik and Višegrad played an important role on inter-cultural and inter-communal tolerance, it is only the influence of outsiders, which serves to upset the state of harmony. Here, I am thinking, for example of the arrival of Austro-Hungarian forces in Višegrad as recounted Andrić's *The Bridge over the Drina* (1945)<sup>3</sup> in what Lovrenović has described as a 'civilizing mission' (148). Yet although the Austro-Hungarian Occupation (1878) and Annexation (1908) of Bosnia-Herzegovina brought about tremendous change and radical transformation, these events were also partly responsible for affirming the national consciousness of the three communities along ethno-nationalist rather than confessional lines, of the Ottoman period. Thus, it is worth taking into account Zulfikarpašić's reflection on his conviction that it was the forty-year period of Habsburg occupation protected the Muslim population from the hegemonistic ambitions of Serbia and Montenegro, backed by Russia and that the struggle for autonomy in the Austro-Hungarian empire drew the Orthodox Serbs and Muslims together within Bosnia-Herzegovina (24).

Yet, amongst westerners, there has been a tendency to judge the Ottoman Empire by its nineteenth century decline, thus disregarding the existence of inter-communal harmony and, concomitantly, the existence of an Ottoman golden age in the sixteenth century. Of course, it is quite understandable that the Balkanist view was largely formed in the nineteenth century at a time when the Eastern Question was a major issue in foreign policy and where every major power had a stake in influencing events in South Eastern Europe in the struggle for the European balance of power that had interests in the demise of Ottoman power, hence the terminology of the time, with 'Turkey' being presented as the 'Sick Man of Europe' and the ready resort to Orientalist discourse by European writers, anthropologists and artists alike. Edward Said (1978;39), is useful on this, whereby Orientals, especially Arabs, are:

... shown to be gullible, 'devoid of energy and initiative', much given to 'fulsome flattery', intrigue, cunning, and unkindness to animals; Orientals cannot walk on either a road or a pavement (their disordered

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<sup>3</sup> In the edition, published by Harvill in 1995, chapter ix, p. 113 *et seq.*

minds fail to understand what the clever European grasps immediately, that roads and pavements are made for walking); Orientals are inveterate liars, they are 'lethargic and suspicious', and in everything oppose the clarity, directness, and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race.

Applying this negative reading of the other to the Balkans one is presented with a raft of essentialist descriptions of a barbarous Orient, starting at the gates of Vienna, or when crossing the River Danube between Buda and Pest. So, outside influence, and nineteenth century social, economic and political tensions, such as the need for land reform in Bosnia, are constructed against the background influence of liberationist nationalism, which will eventually erupt as inter-ethnic conflicts. After 1878, the religious-based communities of Ottoman times become increasingly secularised and constructed in ethnic nationalist terms, as nationalist sentiments began to impact on local sentiments. With this process arose the gradual erosion of Bosnian identity, as such, and the recognition of Bosnian Croats, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims as separate ethno-religious communities.

Set against the more balanced view of Bosnia's cultural and political heritage, expressed by writers such as Donia, Fine, Malcolm, Pehar and Lovrenović, are the serried ranks of the essentialist writers, who find an appeal in explaining away the raft of conflicts that have taken place in the region since 1991, with reference to 'ancient enmities', blood-drenched earth' and 'Balkan Ghosts'. But, when one reads that such an approach has allegedly influenced the US State Department and President Clinton in their policy making during the 1990s, with reference to Robert Kaplan's essentialist travelogue of the region (1993), then there is some cause for concern. It was Kaplan who wrote that: 'The Balkans were the original Third World, long before the media coined the term' (1993; xxiii) in what he saw as being: '...a time-capsule world: a dim stage upon which people raged, spilled blood, [and] experienced visions and ecstasies' (*ibid.*; xxi) he continues in a similar essentialist, existential and ahistorical vein, with:

Twentieth-century history came from the Balkans. Here men have been isolated by poverty and ethnic rivalry, dooming them to hate. Here politics has been reduced to a level of near anarchy that from time to time in history has flowed up the Danube into Central Europe. (*ibid.*; xxiii).

Maria Todorova's reply to this sort of hysterical nonsense is that: Herder's Balkan *Volksgeist* has been virtually transformed into Kaplan's *Balkan Ghosts*, and that the only spectre that has been haunting western

culture over the past two centuries has been the Balkans. (Todorova, *op. cit.*; 187).

In a similar vein to Todorova, another academic, the UK-based George Schöpflin (2000; 5), has commented on how it is 'truly lazy' to see 'Good western nationalism (civic, democratic, peace-loving etc.) juxtaposed against a bad eastern European nationalism (nasty, brutish and anything but short...). And, what is worse, by this interpretation, and particularly in its application to post-conflict rehabilitation, western illusions and worse, have been projected onto eastern Europe, giving rise, not only to poor political analysis, but also: '...to the effect that if only those benighted Easterners could be shown the errors of their ways, they would rapidly become Jeffersonian democrats' (*ibid.*) Clearly we are being dismissive in our treatment of communities in eastern Europe. We treat them as tribal, primitive and backward peoples. I go further and say that what we are doing is behaving as colonialists both in thought and in deed.

Furthermore, there is nothing uniquely western, modern or liberal about some of the key values and issues that confront us today. For example, toleration cannot be claimed to be a value that applies solely to 'western civilisation'; neither is it necessarily modern, nor is it liberal. Consider how toleration was practised in the Ottoman Empire at a time when it was not practised against the 'other' in Christendom. Witness the fanatical hatred of Jews in England during the Middle Ages, which led to the massacre of the Jews of York in Clifford's Tower in 1190. Similarly, one should consider the persecution of the Jewish population throughout the thirteenth century, with a plethora of legal restrictions, intimidation and many acts of reprisal against the Jewish population, following accusations of Jewish paschal ritual murders.<sup>4</sup> All this enmity and loathing culminated in the Edict of Expulsion of Jews from England in 1290. In a similar vein, the *Reconquista* in medieval Spain led to the economic exploitation of Jews, the infringement of rights of converted Moors (*Moriscos*) and the spread of the Inquisition, culminating in a bout of religious intolerance that led to the forced exile of Muslims and Jews from Cordoba and Grenada (the *via dolorosa*) in 1492.

To polarise the debate between being either for or against liberal democracy, is to take a terribly impoverishing standpoint, and may in its own way be another form of fundamentalism. Indeed, rather than

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<sup>4</sup> Witness the case of ritual murder of Little St. Hugh of Lincoln, in 1255, which resulted in the arrest of 91 Jews and the hanging of 18.

anguish belatedly over the *via dolorosa* of ethnic cleansing and war crimes that took place in BiH in the first half of the 1990s, the task confronting both the international community and the local communities in BiH is now to search for a *via media* in attitudes and policies that will re-establish inter-cultural tolerance in Bosnia in the near future.

### **The persistence of misrepresentation despite the theoretical analysis of identity formation and conflict**

So, the Balkans have been marginalized, excluded and collectively transmogrified into playing the role of Europe's 'other', whilst some communities in the so-called western Balkans, the 'former' Yugoslavia, have been represented in the collective conscience as tribal peoples who have been essentialised and stereotyped largely through a reductivist media, which itself has built its narrative upon two centuries or more of populist and, often pseudo-academic writing. Just as western opinion has patronised, excluded and marginalized the peoples of Africa and Asia in the past (as it is barely refraining from doing so in the aftermath of the events of 11 September 2001, with its representation of Islam), so it continues to do so with the Balkans. Indeed, the very terms 'former' Yugoslavia and the now more popular 'western Balkans' are themselves redolent of western 'othering' intent, thereby distancing the region once again from 'mainstream' Europe in thought word and deed. The epithet 'western Balkans' has been totally rejected by Slovenes who describe themselves as either central or southern European. Whilst many Croats, prefer to be identified as central Europeans and disdain the expression 'Balkan' as being pejorative in its meaning and implications, as is the word Balkan itself. Perhaps one could adopt the expression eastern Adriatic, but even this has a whiff of colonialist intent to it, being the expression long-employed for the region by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office. What, then, are we to make of expressions such as, 'Balkan mentalities', 'Balkan savagery' and 'Balkan tribalism', which seem only to serve the purpose of relegating the region to a lower category of civilisation?

Ultimately, one can criticise writers, such as Huntington and Kaplan, for many things, but at the end of the day, the major problem with the *Clash of Civilizations* theory is that rather than attempting to understand the different cultures that are and have been in conflict, so as to lessen the danger of conflict in the future, Huntington has simply extended the Cold War conflict into a new ideology. Edward Said asks the following fundamental questions in his critique of the *Clash of Civilizations*:

Is it wise as an intellectual and scholarly expert to produce a simplified map of the world and then hand it to generals and civilian law-makers as a prescription for first comprehending and then acting in the world? Doesn't this method in effect prolong, exacerbate, and deepen conflict? What does it do to minimize civilizational conflict? Do we *want* a clash of civilizations? Doesn't it mobilize nationalist passions and therefore national murderousness? Shouldn't we ask the question, why is one doing this sort of thing: to understand or to act? to mitigate or to aggravate the likelihood of conflict. (Said, 2000; 573).

Put another way, Said argues that thanks to Huntington, those planners at the US Pentagon and the US defence industry experts who had lost their jobs at the end of the Cold War, have now discovered a new vocation for themselves and that the *Clash of Civilizations* is: 'a very brief and rather crudely articulated manual in the art of maintaining a wartime status in the minds of Americans.' (*op. cit.*; 571).

Certainly, this sort of literature would pose some concerns, with regard to the level to which it has influenced those who work in BiH and elsewhere, as members of the international community. One wonders to what extent, those grounded in the writings of Kaplan, Huntington *et alia* would be able to appreciate some of the finer nuances of Bosnia's complicated culturo-political heritage. Would they not be all too quick to lay blame for daily irritations at the door of one allegedly 'blood thirsty' group of South Slavs against another? The writer has a political responsibility to his reading public after all. The influence of this kind of essentialist literature could so easily serve to aggravate and delay the process of post-conflict rehabilitation.

At several levels, both with regard to the everyday running of post-conflict rehabilitation and also in the attitudes of the internationals involved in these processes, one has a feeling that one is working in a colonial situation. This is something which we should be made aware of, because the emphasis on reductivist essentialism in our representation of the Balkans and also the growing cry for a new 'benign colonialism' could lead to a worsening of the western management of post-conflict situations rather than to its improvement. One key problem that I keep identifying is that of negative attitudes held by members of the international community towards local communities involved in post-conflict rehabilitation. This is something that is found, not only among western political leaders, but also among people working on the ground in the various NGOs and supra-national organisations, such as the OSCE. It would seem to be an inherent problem in such organisations, from those at the top, running right down to those working on the



ground, in what can be described as little better than a post-modern colonialist attitude. My argument is that given the recourse to greater intervention from outside bodies, a blindness to local cultural factors can result, which is, in turn, detrimental to any attempt at establishing post-conflict rehabilitation, especially when one considers that cultural difference has often been used as an ideological resource by contestants and can even be an accelerant of conflict. We therefore need to be aware of the role that culture plays in conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation.<sup>5</sup> It might, therefore, be useful to digress at this stage, and consider some of the theoretical analyses that underpin our understanding of the relationship between identity formation and conflict.

For a long time our understanding of identity had been located in the nation and the state. This had certainly been the case for International Relations, as for History and Conflict Studies. The dominance of the state in the realist school of International Relations has served to minimise the role of culture and more particularly the role of identity formation, which all, in turn will affect any process of post conflict rehabilitation. As such, the role of cultural identity has been rendered invisible. However, it is becoming ever more apparent that nation-state identity may now be less significant than other identities, particularly ethnic identities, which 'often generate greater loyalty than any national identification to which an individual should normally subscribe.' (Davies, 1996; 79). Certainly, after the break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, after the collapse of the state in Somalia and Liberia, the crisis in Albania, or even the fragility of Walloon-Flemish relations in Belgium or Quebecois separatism in Canada, alongside the notions of failed states, pariah states, fragile states or even imagined states (such as Padania), it becomes more difficult to think of states in their armour-plated post-Westphalian form. Against this background, our understanding of the processes of identity formation form one of the greatest challenges to the international order at the beginning of the twenty-first century, especially given that identity politics, and in particular ethnic conflict have been central to the events of the post-Cold War world. Since 1989, our awareness of identities, other than nation-state identities has come to the fore, particularly our understanding of the role of religion in identity formation (Smith, 1991; Duizings, 2000), the role of the region (Guibernau, 1999; Ignatieff, 1993), gender (Yuval-Davis, 1997) and even the role of the Internet and identity (Hables Gray, 1997; Ignatieff, 2000 and

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<sup>5</sup> The importance of culture to International Relations is well developed by Kevin Avruch in his *Culture and Conflict Resolution* (1998) and also by Richard Davies in his 'Ethnicity: Inside Out or Outside In' in Krause and Renwick (1996).

Hudson, 2002). It is now generally accepted that individuals have multiple identities and loyalties, so that identities are not static, but malleable or in a state of constant flux (Krause & Renwick, 1996, xii). Community and national identities are made up of lots of other identities. Put another way, the problem of assuming that there is a uniform distribution of culture is that each group, institution or affiliation places the individual in a different experiential world. No two individuals share the same sociological location in a given population for example class, religious, national or ethnic backgrounds), and as such these sociological locations entail (sub-) cultural differences, so that any two individuals can not share all cultural content perfectly. This is what Kevin Avruch describes as the sociogenic reason for the non-uniform distribution of culture (Avruch, 2000; 18).

Generally speaking, there are three approaches to ethnicity. The first is generally referred to as primordial, and is normally associated with the work of the anthropologist, Clifford Geertz. In this case ethnicity is seen as being something beyond human control. It is something to which one is born, whereby one is 'bound to one's kinsman' through kinship and language (Davies, 1996; 81). This is what Huntington would refer to as what one is, whereby there is no free choice to one's ethnic identity, that this is a given that can not be changed. (Huntington, 1993; 5). Anthony Smith, with reference to Van den Berghe (1967) warns us that an ethnic community; 'must be sharply differentiated from a *race* in the sense of a social group that is held to possess unique hereditary biological traits that allegedly determine the mental attributes of the group.' (Smith, 1991; 21). Interestingly, Davies notes that many groups which have been involved in so-called 'primordial' conflicts are not rooted deeply in history, but rather are known to be recent historical creations (*op. cit.*; 82).

The second approach is referred to as situational, contextual or circumstantial, whereby ethnicity is seen as being an adoptive identity, which is voluntaristic rather than enforced. This approach is associated with the work of another anthropologist, Federik Barth, whereby ethnicity is seen as being a dynamic form of social organisation in which ethnic communities are created and transformed by particular elites, so that individuals are mobilised in the pursuit of power for the benefit of individual or collective interests. (Davies; 83).

A third approach is that of cultural collectivities, and this type is generally associated with the works of Anthony Smith, who sees the primordial and the situational variants as being two poles or extremes. This approach emphasises the myths of descent and historical memories (Smith, 1991; 20), as 'cultural-historical' community identity, whereby ethnic identity as a group is identified by non-group members; the

'them' as opposed to the 'us', which leads us into the discourse of exclusion and identity. Thus, according to Smith (*ibid.*), the ethnic community or *éthnie* may be identified by a list of six main attributes:

1. A collective proper name
2. A myth of common ancestry
3. Shared historical memories
4. One or more differentiating elements of common culture
5. An association with a specific 'homeland'
6. A sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population

For Anthony Smith,

It is the intellectuals —poets, musicians, painters, sculptors, novelists, historians, archaeologists, playwrights, philologists, anthropologists and folklorists— who have proposed and elaborated the concepts and language of the nation and nationalism and have, through their musings and research, given voice to wider aspirations that they have conveyed in appropriate images, myths and symbols. (Smith, 1991; 93).

These intellectuals became the national awakeners who would use culture and mythologies to forge an ethnic identity. Of course, culture is inherently political, and the impact of culture upon identity, politics and conflict needs to be fully addressed if one is to gain a better understanding of the issues affecting international politics in the early years of the twenty-first century. Culture can be used as an ideological resource by contestants. It can, therefore, become a source, or an accelerant of conflict. When culture is thus politically charged —usually by nationalistic racialist or ethnic discourses— this can lead to genocide, as has been demonstrated in Rwanda, Burundi, Bosnia and, before them, Nazi Germany (Avruch, 2000; 18).

Yet despite the theoretical interpretations and analyses underpinning the nature of identity formation and conflict, there has been, since the beginning of the 1990s, a revival of essentialist and reductionist talk and writing based on the out-moded theme of 'mentalities', reflecting the attitudes and interpretations of another age, and this has become quite popular amongst some journalists, academics, intellectuals and practitioners in the field, at the same time as influencing political leaders and their policies. The problem was already being flagged up, as early as 1994, by Bogdan Denitch, in his *Ethnic Nationalism: The Tragic Death of Yugoslavia*, where he commented (136):

A major disservice to scholarship as well as to interethnic peace has been performed by generations of national historians, ethnographic

writers and poets who labored mightily in trying to prove the special role and virtue of their own group.

If criticism is levelled at the national awakeners in the South Slav states for stoking the fires of ethnic and nationalist identity, it may be equally applied to western writers and particularly publishers in the 1990s in their bid to quench the thirst for background knowledge of a reading public who were finding it difficult to come to terms with what was actually happening in former Yugoslavia. This makes one think of the proliferation of reprints of old texts on Balkan history that were suddenly issued in the 1990s, Among them: Howard Temperley's *History of Serbia* (1912); the much-maligned *Carnegie Report* (1913)<sup>6</sup>; John Reed's *War in Eastern Europe* (1916); R.G.D. Laffan's *The Serbs* (1917); Rebecca West's *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (1942), and, of course Robert Kaplan's ubiquitous *Balkan Ghosts* (1994), a travelogue of south-eastern Europe, in which he tries to emulate the writing styles of his Balkanist forebears.

Basically, anything was being published in Great Britain and America, that appeared to provide the reading public with the background to the then current crises and conflicts, sadly fuelling, at the same time, the stupid, pointless onslaught of misinformation and the rapid reaffirmation of the Balkanist discourse. The reprinting of the books mentioned above has provided us with the wrong kind of historical background, as they were written in a style that might have been considered appropriate at the time of writing, but has since become totally inappropriate, one would have thought, for contemporary western liberal tastes. With the passage of time these books have become little more than pseudo-historic texts that have misrepresented the region to western readers and no doubt, many publishers made a quick buck out of the process. It is this misinformed liberal opinion, fuelled also by the writings, speeches, practices and policies of certain academics, journalists, politicians, practitioners and administrators alike, which has resulted in the establishing of a 'benign colonial regime', an 'open-ended occupation', 'post-modern colonialism' and 'colonisation with good intent'.

### **Establishing post-modern colonialism in the world after Dayton**

Some policy advisors, politicians and other commentators have also begun to advocate a 'benign imperialism' or 'benign colonial regimes'

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<sup>6</sup> Todorova particularly comments on this, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

and this is reflected in particular, in the recent writings of Robert Cooper, foreign affairs advisor to British Prime Minister Tony Blair.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, quite a furore has broken out in the United Kingdom around a paper entitled *The Post-Modern State: Re-Ordering the World*, which was written by Robert Cooper, and published recently by the Foreign Policy Centre. Cooper has advocated the need for 'a new age of empire', in which western powers no longer have to follow international law in their dealings with 'old fashioned' states, whereby they can use military force independently of the United Nations and impose protectorates to replace regimes which are seen to 'misgovern'. This is what Noam Chomsky has labelled the 'new military humanism' —which he considers to be a contradiction in terms, if ever there was one. By contrast, Cooper's articulate reasoning would argue that, as part of the 'new military humanism', the bombing of Yugoslavia could be justified on 'moral grounds' rather than legal ones.<sup>8</sup>

In reading his article, one sees that Cooper has divided the world into three types of state: pre-modern, modern and post-modern. If the pre-modern state represents chaos; and the modern state is quite prepared to resort to war in a Clausewitzian sense as, presumably, an extension of politics by other means, then the post-modern state no longer thinks of security in terms of conquest or of going to war, but rather in terms of transparency or 'mutual interference'. By Cooper's definition, the proffered examples of pre-modern states are Somalia and 'until recently' Afghanistan; whilst the examples of modern states are India, Pakistan and China. By contrast, the most developed example of the post-modern system is the European Union, which is seen to 'represent security through transparency and transparency through interdependence.' Cooper goes on to add that the EU is more a trans-national than a supra-national system, a voluntary association of states rather than the subordination of states to a central power. (*Op. cit.*; 3).

The real bite in Cooper's reasoning, comes with the following passage:

The challenge to the post-modern world is to get used to the idea of double standards. Among ourselves, we operate on the basis of laws and open cooperative security. But when dealing with more old-fashioned kinds of states outside the post-modern continent of Europe, we need to revert to the rougher methods of an earlier era —force, pre-emptive attack, deception, whatever is necessary to deal with

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<sup>7</sup> See Robert Cooper, 'Why we still need empires', *The Observer*, 7 April 2002, also [www.observer.co.uk/worldview](http://www.observer.co.uk/worldview) and [www.fpc.org.uk](http://www.fpc.org.uk).

<sup>8</sup> Indeed, this very argument is currently being put forward by Mr. Blair, in its ever-changing attempts at justifying the need to go to war against Iraq.

those who still live in the nineteenth century world of every state for itself. *Among ourselves, we keep the law but when operating in the jungle, we must also use the laws of the jungle.*

And, for Cooper, the best way of dealing with pre-modern or failed states is through colonisation, although he admits that colonisation *per se* is unacceptable to post-modern states, nevertheless, he argues that what is needed is: '...a new kind of imperialism, one acceptable to a world of human rights and cosmopolitan values.'

By applying these values and principles to the Balkans we are presented with the following:

Misgovernment, ethnic violence and crime in the Balkans *pose a threat to Europe*. The response has been to create something like a voluntary UN protectorate in Bosnia and Kosovo. It is no surprise that in both cases the High Representative is European. Europe provides most of the aid that keeps Bosnia and Kosovo running and most of the soldiers (though the US presence is an indispensable stabilising factor). In a further unprecedented move, the EU has offered unilateral free-market access to all the countries of the former Yugoslavia for all products including most agricultural produce. It is not just soldiers that come from the international community; it is police, judges, prison officers, central bankers and others. Elections are organised and monitored by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Local police are financed and trained by the UN. As auxiliaries to this effort—in many areas indispensable to it—are over a hundred NGOs.

Ultimately, for Cooper: '...the "imperial bureaucracy" must be under control, accountable, and the servant, not the master, of the commonwealth. Such an institution must be as dedicated to liberty and democracy as its constituent parts.'

At the end of the day, post-modern colonialism may have become the reality. One British political scientist, who has written much about the Balkans in the post-Dayton world is David Chandler. He, by contrast, objects to the terminology employed by Cooper as being 'the old-fashioned language of realpolitik and western power', and he has advocated dressing it up in what some might refer to as typical rhetorical 'Blair-speak' ('universally empowering', 'equality of human dignity', 'international civil society' and the 'duties of cosmopolitan citizenship' with the empowerment of 'local voices', the provision of 'capacity-building' and supporting the lengthy process of 'democratisation' and 'civil society building').<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See David Chandler, 'Imperialism may be out, but aggressive wars and colonial protectorates are back' in *The Observer*, 14 April, 2002 and also, [www.observer.co.uk/worldview/story](http://www.observer.co.uk/worldview/story).

But, I think that the biggest risk here is what underlies the various interpretations of our contemporary understanding of international relations, with the misrepresentations of other communities and peoples, which makes western thought, opinion and policy truly colonial, if not xenophobic, not only in deed, but also in spirit.

This development has not eluded Bosnian intellectuals. In seeking an alternative to what he describes as an *impasse* in his recently published article in *Forum Bosnae*, on the civic elements of compromise in the crippling implementation of the Dayton Agreement (2002),<sup>10</sup> Dražen Pehar acknowledges that one option might be to transform Bosnia into a protectorate in which the OHR (Office of the High Representative) would probably be the one to take the role of a 'BiH emperor' who would 'rule over a Bosnia in a fashion not unlike that of the period of Austro-Hungarian rule in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He admits that in such a scenario there would be little sense of compromise in Bosnia and that there would be the strong likelihood that: 'the leading politicians would continue in their underground work on planning for the period following the 'colonial conquest of the High Representative', when the first chance to fight for pre-Dayton political objectives would most likely be taken. Pehar also offers the possibility of Bosnia portioning itself into a loose confederation of three entities, although he does not rule out the possibility of this being achieved by resorting to further violence. This is a position I share, in the continued belief in the important security role that is being played by SFOR in maintaining stability in the region.

Concomitant with the musings of IR theorists and politicians, we have also identified a western elitist view of the perceived incapacity of so-called Balkan peoples to cope with democracy and, in a linguistic register that is redolent of Howard Temperley's imperialist prose style of the early twentieth century, that they are 'even incapable of governing themselves', thus legitimising the growth and the empowerment of international mandates in the region. David Chandler, in his excellent *Bosnia: Faking Democracy after Dayton* (1999), recounts an interview he held with Carl Westerndorp, the one-time High Representative, based in Sarajevo, who seems to be imbued with an essentialist view of the local population: 'It is ugly to democratise a country using force, but where you have such *abnormal mentality in the leadership* [my emphasis], then you have to do this.' (Chandler, 1997; 133). Westerndorp's reasons for saying this serve, no doubt, as an attempt to both justify and empower the OHR's role in BiH, post-Dayton, and particularly after the 1997 Bonn PIC (Peace

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<sup>10</sup> Reference in Chandler (1999; 182) to Simon Jenkins, 'Ulster of the Balkans: British troops have been sent on a mission impossible in Bosnia', *The Times*, 17 December 1997.

Implementation Council), which gave the OHR *de facto* colonial powers, thus transmogrifying the High Representative into a post-modern colonial governor. Nevertheless, it says something too of the contempt for the local population held by individuals in such powerful positions, which is not that far removed from western attitudes towards the Balkans throughout the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries.

Little hope of escape from reductivism and essentialism seems to be provided by other political leaders; even David Owen felt moved to write the following in the introduction to his book, *Balkan Odyssey*:

History points to a tradition in the Balkans of a readiness to solve disputes by taking up arms...it points to a culture of violence...[and] dark and virulent nationalism. (1995; 3)

Sadly, many western academics and politicians have fallen into this trap and continue to do so. It is this reductivist, essentialist approach that keeps re-emerging, probably out of a fear of getting embroiled in a perceived quagmire of Balkan politics.

How many times has one heard or read this kind of rhetoric applied to the Balkans? Ever since I first started studying southeast European history at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, in the mid-1970s, I have come across this western disdain for the Balkan other. I well remember the first time I came across Howard Temperley's *History of Serbia* and the claim, reflected above by Westerndorp, that the Slavs are 'incapable of self-government'. So, here we are again, in the opening years of a new century, repeating the same old mantra, that the peoples of the Balkans are ill-suited to democracy and they are unable to govern themselves. *Plus ça change...*

What has happened in BiH can easily be carried across to Kosovo. With Rambouillet as a successor to Dayton and the imposition of an international system that makes it well-nigh impossible for Albanian Kosovar institutions to regulate themselves —to say nothing of the situation for the Serbs, the ethnic Turks, Muslim Bošnjaks and the Roma. Are we not sowing the seeds that will reap a bitter harvest?

But, in this case, the blame is not just on liberal opinion and an ill-informed liberal press, but fairly and squarely upon those international organisations —primarily the OHR (Office of the High Representative), the UN and the OSCE, to say nothing of the IMF, the EU and the myriad of NGOs (estimated at some 200 BiH alone) which have transformed Sarajevo into the 'world capital of interventionism'.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Dražen Pešar, 'Civic elements of compromise and the crippling of Dayton', in *Forum Bosnae* 'Reconstruction and Deconstruction', 15/02, 2002, pp. 118-136.



Another British academic, Adam Burgess, underlines the 'virtually colonial character of relations' between western and eastern Europe (107), arising from what is essentially western arrogance in its attitudes to the East, with the West, on a 'moral mission' (110) to the 'politically unruly natives' (111). This sentiment is similar to the concern expressed by Said about the appeal of 'running the affairs of lesser peoples' (1994; xxvi), or his comment on the impact of missionaries on indigenous populations in the past, or the 'prevailing western consensus that has come to regard the Third World as an atrocious nuisance, a culturally and politically inferior place.' (*Ibid.*; 31). This is a process to which Said refers elsewhere in his work, with reference to Rudyard Kipling, as 'taking up the white man's burden.' Extending the thrust of this logic elsewhere, to the case of the new protectorates established by the international community in BiH, since 1995, and in Kosovo, since 1999, they may be seen as being little more than the 'benign colonial regime', referred to above, with OSCE, SFOR and KFOR and the raft of other inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations serving as the somewhat hamstrung agents of western imperialism and hypocrisy, in the spirit of 'new interventionism' (Chomsky; 1999) that was exemplified by NATO's war against Yugoslavia in 1999.

But, in the case of the OHR, we are concerned not only with attitudes, but also with outcome. Clearly, the OHR, which has been transmogrified into a colonial authority which has: 'more autocratic control than even the colonial administrators of the past', (Chandler; 273) placed alongside the OSCE and NATO has: '...removed all policy-making capacity from Bosnian institutions' (*ibid.*; 274), thus delaying and incapacitating local government in what has become little more than a 'US-run international protectorate in BiH' (*ibid.*). The power of the High Representative has been reinforced by the Bonn PIC of 1997, which has given the High Representative the power to impose legislation directly, giving the international community both executive and legislative control over a formerly independent state. This, in effect, is the new post-modern version of colonialism —the return of the colonial protectorate.

The upshot of all of this is that elected majorities have been given little control over policy-making. Instead, high-handed international rule has disempowered the Bosnian people and their representatives (Chandler; 278). The reasoning behind this process is that the Bosnian entities and their representatives are considered to be ill-suited to democracy and unable to govern themselves, in a process which has legitimised the growth of international mandates in the region. Thus the Balkanist discourse continues to cloud western thinking and one is

rather reminded of Temperley's mistrust of the South Slav's capacity for self-rule, which he expressed in 1912.

My own experience as an 'international' working on the ground; working at a grass roots level, on temporary secondment to the OSCE, in five elections in the Yugoslav successor states, has been the growing awareness and unease at how some of my fellow 'internationals' see themselves as fulfilling the role of some kind of *mission civilisatrice*, bringing peace, democracy and harmony, or at least some semblance of civil society to the restless and obdurate natives. For example, I well remember the patronising attitude of two female American colleagues towards their drivers, interpreters and the chairmen of the polling station committees, with whom they were supposed to be working as advisors. By the end of the election period in BiH, in November 2000, the two individuals, who also claimed to have been working for or to have had connections with the US State Department, had managed to have the leading local representatives of the OSCE team in the town where were based in eastern Hercegovina, removed from office.

## Conclusion

The impact of inter-cultural relations on post-conflict rehabilitation is an issue of considerable importance to both our understanding of contemporary international politics and the way in which we deal with post-conflict situations on the ground. This will continue to constitute a major challenge for the immediate future, particularly in the aftermath of September 11 which has engendered the creation of a 'war against terrorism', which has led to the current post-conflict situation in Afghanistan and the war against Iraq. But rather than strengthen the autonomy and self-confidence of local peoples, it would seem that the hands-on role of enforcing democracy has done little more than serve to strengthen the United States-led international community. This would seem to be the case in BiH, where rather than bringing disparate communities together, factional, identity-led politics have been strengthened, as has been demonstrated by the raft of OSCE-organised elections which have taken place since 1996, which have resulted in little more than voting along ethnic lines. By contrast, the international community has been strengthened and an empowered OHR has become little more than a post-modern colonial governor. If anything goes wrong, they, the Bosnians get the blame for it, in criticism that resorts to the usual reductivist, essentialist and stereotypical clichés of exclusionism which reflect two centuries of Balkanist discourse.

There are perhaps two solutions to the problem. The first is to ensure sensitivity and an in-depth knowledge of the history, culture and identity of BiH amongst those members of the international community working in the field. This would be enhanced by a moderate working knowledge of Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian, and by a greater investment in training and education in area studies and cultural politics at a university level, in West European countries and in the United States.

The second solution would be to give full encouragement to local initiatives, such as the Sarajevo-based non-governmental organisation, International Forum Bosnae (IFB) with its mission of building a new intellectual community in BiH, by inspiring and promoting research networking, debate and research into the culture, history, language, literature, philosophy and politics of BiH. So that, by enhancing an understanding of the unity and diversity of BiH, the essential basis for eliminating the tensions and mistrust that have been composed on and in the society of BiH may be provided.

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# **The Media and Conflict Prevention: Warning or Monitoring? The Case of Drvar, Bosnia**

Victoria Firmo-Fontan

## **Introduction**

Conflict prevention seems to be a recurring theme within the discipline of peace studies. While some argue that conflict prevention lies at the core of human decency, more pragmatic actors rely on its cost effectiveness, based on the idea that, as the 'civilized world' will end up paying for the reconstruction of countries emerging from years of atavistic civil strife, conflict prevention should be used to fight these 'deviant tendencies' at their roots. This paper will explore the idea that conflict prevention lies more in Margalit's (1999) notion of building a 'decent society', than that of preventing latent conflicts from re-appearing at a later stage. Conflict prevention will be analyzed in this article specifically as the prevention of further conflict within post-conflict environments. The role of the media in the prevention of further armed conflict will be assessed.

Indeed, while placed at the forefront of the information debate, the media, whether local or international, may be utilized to play a warning role in conflict prevention. Rather than fall exclusively within a closed academic debate, the concepts raised in this paper should be seen as a potential way to facilitate the media's action in conflict prevention, as well as to provide a reflection of the Western imposition of values and models that do not necessarily match the field's aspirations and needs, and that, eventually, lead to a resurgence in ethnic conflict. The municipality of Drvar, in eastern Bosnia, will provide a case study to that effect, and will show how a subtle restructuring of traditional media coverage of the area could assist in post-conflict rehabilitation, and more importantly in the resolution of ongoing, and in the prevention of future, conflicts.

## 1. The media: witness or monitor?

The role of the media in post-conflict rehabilitation remains understudied, partly for reason that the link between post-conflict rehabilitation and conflict prevention is not obvious to all observers, particularly to international actors on the field. As the media industry stands, post-conflict situations that do not harbor open dissidence between formerly warring groups are seldom reported on: they constitute 'old news'. This was the case of Iraq in late May 2003, when many foreign news editors were considering a withdrawal of their reporting teams. Iraq was rapidly fading away from prime time, at a time when the media could have been allowed to act as a warning agent, in preventing the escalation of violence between the growing Iraqi resistance and Coalition troops. Indeed, many reporters complained to the author of the disinterest that they faced when communicating the situation to their editors. A free-lance journalist lamented to the author, "they only want to hear of mass graves back in Paris, the resistance is mounting, but they are not interested".<sup>1</sup> Iraq reappeared in the news when the situation had gotten out of hand and the US army was facing one attack a day or more. Often, the mere mention of post-conflict rehabilitation suggests that a conflict has ended, which is not necessarily the case for every conflict. Of importance here lies the rationale of peace, which can either be negative, a mere absence of conflict, or positive, bringing people to live together again. The former was the case in Iraq. What becomes apparent in an increasing number of post-conflict environments is that armed conflict might not be waged as such, but that different parties in the former conflict have not resolved their pre-war grievances. A post-conflict environment can therefore develop into a time-bomb. Could the media play a role in defusing this time-bomb? If so, which role would it be: prevention or warning?

### 1.1. *Which role for the media?*

First and foremost, which role can be ascribed to the media? Would a preventive role, or any role at all, be ethical? Would the implication of a role not corrupt its vital precepts of press freedom? What are the media and what should they tend to be? When observing the behaviour of news outlets in a conflict or post-conflict environment, one is struck

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<sup>1</sup> Author interview with Jean-Philippe Hamon, free-lance reporter for the French-based periodical VSD, Baghdad, May 30<sup>th</sup> 2003.

by the different dimensions that reporting can take.<sup>2</sup> One confines the journalist to the role of scribe, reporting events as they seem to occur, sticking to filing deadlines and word-counts granted by an almighty editor in a remote and secure office. The scribe, in his descriptive role, will not question his editor's choices, and tends, either through time or financial pressure, to attend official press briefings. Investigative journalism seems to be remote from the working ethics of the scribe, who sees his or her role as being a 'witness of history'. Scribes who rebel may suffer the fate of CNN reporter Peter Arnett, sacked for interviewing the Iraqi military during the war, and labelled a traitor by many of his peers. Indeed, when the author attempted to break into the world of journalism, she was repeatedly told that she should not be lecturing in her articles, that a 'report' was meant to highlight facts, and that only 'feature' articles allowed analyses and comparisons to be drawn. The fact that the media is split between these two ethics would not be of such concern if feature articles were not usually confined to a newspaper's back pages, or a television bulletin's last minutes. Contrasting with the 'scribe' type of media activity, a second dimension, found in some feature reports though rarely in news pieces, places the individual as a monitor of the centres of power, questioning and assessing political decisions, placing situations in their deeper context, and acting as a watchdog for taxpayers and voters. Such a reporter will try to ensure that decisions made on behalf of the public are ethically sound, and will seek the truth by investigating all sides of a story. A 'monitor' of media professional will be accountable to the public sphere, while the 'scribe' will be accountable to power, whether it emanates from his media outlet, or his government. However, monitoring centres of power is a hazardous activity which necessitates strong editorial support. It is therefore not affordable for all journalists, who may have other priorities, such as ensuring their families' future. As a matter of fact, very few members of Fox News working in Iraq during and after the second Gulf War showed any respect for their network's choice to obliterate the truth to the American public.<sup>3</sup> However, they chose to comply with editorial decisions in order to survive, just as some media outlets choose to rally around the flag in times of war in order to gain necessary governmental support. If the media were not an industry, then a monitoring, warning and preventive role could be ascribed to its practitioners. However, as

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<sup>2</sup> The following analysis was developed by the author while working as a free-lance journalist in post-Saddam Iraq.

<sup>3</sup> Unattributable interview with a relative of a FoxNews cameraman, Baghdad, June 2003.

the corporate nature of the media stands, it is unreasonable to hope for absolute integrity in reporting. While some journalists may be afforded the luxury of monitoring centres of power, most can only aspire to becoming more ethical scribes. The role of the media in conflict prevention is therefore one prone to wishful thinking, especially when the prevention of conflict may not be on the political agenda of the governments or corporations concerned. The following analysis will therefore assume that the media, that is to say some reporters, could place themselves in a position to adopt a preventive role when following certain guidelines. It is not the author's wish to admonish the media industry, or to demand integrity from every journalist. This article merely aims to explain how an analysis by the media of a given conflict situation could help defuse its potentially lethal consequences, either through warning or prevention. Iraq is too volatile a topic, so Bosnia-Herzegovina will be used as an illustration of how prevention of further conflict may be possible.

### *1.2. Understanding conflict development to inform accurately and/or prevent further conflict*

The media could be given a specific role in post-conflict rehabilitation and conflict prevention, should they choose to accept it, through being given the tools to apply a suitable understanding of post-conflict environments. Murray's (1997) conflict life cycle seems to provide an appropriate link between post-conflict rehabilitation and the prevention of further conflict, and alludes to the idea that inappropriate post-conflict rehabilitation can lead to a recurrence of conflicts. By reporting on a situation while bearing in mind some simple precepts of conflict development, the media could act as a safeguard against the deepening of a volatile situation in where there is an absence of open conflict (a 'negative peace'). While the relationship between grass-roots rehabilitation and conflict prevention is of crucial importance, one should be cautious as to why such a link needs to be emphasized. One aspect of media coverage of the Balkans could be corrupted, as it has been in the past, by a tendency on the part of the international media to report from an essentialist perspective, based on assumptions of endemic ethnic hatred and the 'Othering' of the Balkan natives (Hudson, 2002). The life-conflict cycle should not be applied in this light, but as a means of understanding and addressing the failures of key players, past and present, in the region's politics, in order to warn, and prevent failures from becoming causes for conflict escalation. The aforementioned theory will be employed as a means to understand the role of the international



community<sup>4</sup>, including the media, as an entity that tends to act more as a 'fire brigade' than a proactive entity. A potential warning role for the media will be explored in this light.

A media interpretation of the conflict life cycle (see figure 1.1) builds its strength on a common understanding of conflict development.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT	ELEMENTS
Historical context	Territory
Group disadvantage	Power
Group awareness	Religion
Reaction (media coverage leading to IC reaction)	Culture
Accommodation	Politics
	Ethnicity
	Perceptions
	Actors

**Figure 1.1**

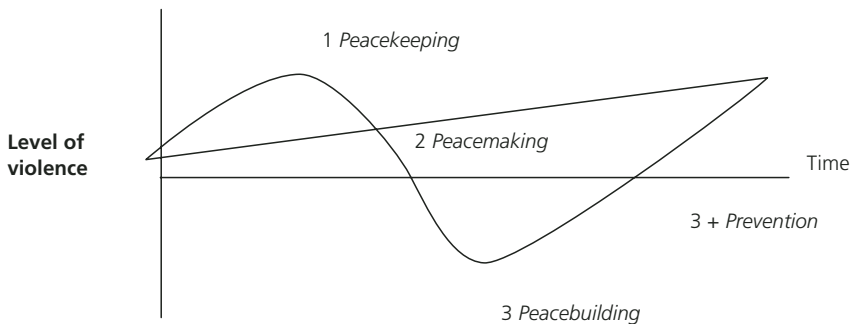
Conflict dynamics and parameters. Source: Murray, 1997

It identifies various parameters linked to history, group dynamics, and conflict accommodation, alluding to the idea that the international community, mostly through media awareness, only reacts to a situation when the group in question fully asserts its own perceived deprivation. The dimension of historical context can be a perceived episode in the group's history, such as the battle of Kosovo Polje for the Serb and Kosovo-Albanian communities, or the WW2 Croatian Ustashe regime, allegedly responsible for the death of thousands of Serbs. Of importance at this point is not the event in itself, but the perception of it, followed by the interpretation and integration of alleged events within the national consciousness. Minority disadvantage can also be an important factor: examples include the scarce or non-existent allocation of civil service jobs for the Kosovo-Albanian community in the province of Kosovo, and the disparities in the provision of housing, an issue at the core of ethnic discontent in post-war Drvar. Minority awareness then comes as natural result of minority disadvantage, and can be either awareness of the minority, like Serbian concerns for the Serb minorities

<sup>4</sup> The rather obscure term 'international community' includes the international media, as well as the international agencies, non-governmental and others, active in post-conflict environments.

of Croatian Krajina, or more commonly experienced by the minority. The ensuing reaction can then stem from this awareness, and be used to justify a military campaign, such as Milosevic's campaign to 'protect Krajina Serbs' in the early 1990s, either from the minority or from the state. Many elements can contribute to these parameters, and should also be analyzed by the media and international actors involved in either conflict prevention or post-conflict rehabilitation. They range from territorial grievances, to issues of power, religion, culture, politics and ethnic identity. The media's failure to look into these dimensions and parameters has resulted at best in the condescending over-simplification of conflict reporting, and at worst in the unquestioning validation of 'rogue' foreign policies (Firmo-Fontan, 2002).

When matched to a schematic expression of conflict development, these parameters could promote intervention at level 'three plus' of the following chart, resulting in a preventive approach for future conflicts (see figure 1.2).



**Figure 1.2**

Conflict-life cycle and conflict prevention

At present, the trend is for media reporting to intervene in late phase one, namely peacekeeping, while the International Community tends to intervene reluctantly during late phase one or more willingly during phase two, at the negotiating level. The failure to draw a link between stages one and three, that is to say, the failure to understand how not addressing original grievances may lead to a community re-mobilizing politically in the future, could lead to further conflict developing. While the media should ideally act as a warning agent for the initial prevention of a conflict, they should therefore also be present in post-conflict settings, to monitor advances that have been made since a

cease-fire was brokered. In this light, the media could therefore act at all stages of conflict, not only late in phase one, and not only as a witness.

## **2. Practical application of life-conflict cycle to monitoring post-conflict rehabilitation**

The rest of this paper is dedicated to the application of this model to a concrete situation, that of Bosnia-Herzegovina, in order to a) show how the media interact with the present situation, and b) how the International Community (IC) addresses the grievances and factors that led to the conflict. The data concerning Drvar were collected up to March 2002, the time of the Coimbra seminar.<sup>5</sup>

### *2.1. Overview of the Dayton Agreement*

The General Framework Agreement for Peace, negotiated in Dayton, Ohio, and signed in Paris on December 14<sup>th</sup> 1995, had the positive result of stopping the war and preventing more lives from being lost. It also created a state whose executive powers were to lie in the hands of an international body specifically created for the task of implementing the civilian aspects of this agreement, the Office of the High Representative (OHR), and whose entities were to be separated between the Republika Srpska and the Bosnian-Croat Federation. The international structure currently in charge of the implementation of the Dayton agreement is mainly composed of the aforementioned OHR, the Organisation for Co-operation and Security in Europe (OSCE), the International Police Task Force (IPTF), the United Nations Civil Affairs organisation (UNCA), and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).

The situation of Drvar municipality was chosen for review for several reasons. Drvar has many specific characteristics that make it a unique case in post-Dayton Bosnia: its population of 97 % Serbs before the war was 'ethnically cleansed' in September 1995, and replaced by a Croat population of displaced persons (DPs) that had never previously lived in Drvar. It is also the largest area, outside Sarajevo, to which Serbs have returned, despite obstacles put forward by both communities, in the RS and the Federation, respectively. It is believed that the implementation of the Dayton Peace Accord in this area has been overlooked since the

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<sup>5</sup> The situation has subsequently improved, as a result of OSCE Human Rights Officer Lucio Valerio Sarandrea's commitment to restoring the rule of law.

end of the war, for two main reasons: first, the lack of professional involvement and dedication from key IC players in the area; second, the political isolation of the municipality as a minority in the Croatian Canton 10, reinforced by a negative role played by the local media.

A brief statement explaining each agency's theoretical role in town will exemplify how Dayton is to be implemented on the ground. The OHR was created as the instrument through which the IC would "monitor the implementation of the peace settlement".<sup>6</sup> Its principal role would be to facilitate the return of refugees to their pre-war environment and ensure a sustainability of returns. The process of returns has been halted on several occasions in the past by OHR Special Envoy to Livno, also covering the Drvar area. The OHR Special Envoy allegedly attempted to slow-down the returning process to Drvar until the arrival of newly appointed OSCE HR Officer in August 2001. Up to March 2002, and six years after Dayton, only 140 "evictions" had taken place, even though an "eviction" in Drvar generally involved an already vacant housing unit and the spontaneous delivery of keys. The International Police Task Force's role in Drvar is to monitor and advise local police with the objective of "changing the primary focus of the police from the security of the state to that of the individual".<sup>7</sup> The UN Civil Affairs role is to advise the IPTF on the local political situation. The OSCE local field office is composed of a representative of the Human Rights Department and one from the Democratization Department. The Human Rights department's heavy workload concentrates mainly on the implementation of property law, while addressing sustainability of return issues on an *ad hoc* basis. The Democratization Department's role is to implement tools provided by the Head Office, concerning the co-ordination and facilitation of civil society, specific issues of good governance that in Drvar's case do not match with events in the field, and the development of local political parties, which can only operate within a designated Political Resource Centre situated an hour and a half from Drvar. The implementation of an inadequate DMC mandate in Drvar corresponds in practice to the organization of sporadic round-table events. The role of the UNHCR in Drvar is of a unique kind when compared to other

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<sup>6</sup> Dayton Peace Agreement, Annex 10, Article II. Annex 10, Article I provided that the civilian aspects of the peace settlements were: the continuation of the humanitarian aid effort so long as required, rehabilitation of the infrastructure and economic reconstruction; establishment of political and institutional institutions in BiH; provision of respect for human rights and the return of displaced persons and refugees; and the holding of free and fair elections.

<sup>7</sup> UNMIBH Fact sheet.

UNHCR mandated areas: the primary role of the UNHCR in BiH's is to facilitate the returnee process, while providing direct assistance in rebuilding housing units.

Seven years since the end of the Dayton Peace Accord and over \$5 billion of aid later, what is the situation in the field?<sup>8</sup> More importantly, how does it relate to the life-conflict cycle presented above, structurally and in relation to the media?

## 2.2. *Vulnerable groups and current issues in Drvar*

According to the precepts of the life-conflict cycle, key vulnerable groups can be identified in post-war Drvar. They are the refugee returnees, who return to their legally held pre-war accommodation; the displaced, who presently occupy accommodation illegally; women, who are economically marginalized; and young people, who remain politicized and polarized.

### 2.2.1. RETURNÉES

Returnees in Drvar are the most vulnerable group in the municipality, due to the ethnic composition of the returnee population, which is virtually 100 % Serb. Before the ethnic cleansing of the town by the Hrvatsko Vijeće Obrane (HVO), the Croat army, in September 1995, the town was 97 % Serb. As a direct result of the HVO's arrival in Drvar, Croats displaced from central BiH moved into accommodation abandoned by Serbs, and were promised by the HDZ that they would never have to leave Drvar. The appendix provided demonstrates the HDZ commitment to the ethnic cleansing of Drvar at the time. Of importance here is also the fact that the aforementioned document was distributed to Croat refugees beyond BiH's frontiers, mainly among the Croat refugee community based in Germany.

The time has come for property law to be implemented in Drvar, which of course is a deeply resented fact among the displaced population. History has been re-interpreted by both communities to their advantage. While the Serb community states that the town was 'theirs' before September 1995, and the Croat community, among them the local Parish Priest Dom Zjelko, argue that the town was ethnically cleansed during WW2; others go further back in time to argue that the town

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<sup>8</sup> For more details, consult OECD Development Assistance Committee Online Database: <http://www.oecd.org/hm/M00005000/M00005347.htm>.

was ethnically cleansed more than 100 years ago.<sup>9</sup> As historical parameters could stretch out ad infinitum, the present project will focus on property law and its implementation according to deeds and claims related to pre-war property occupation. Many businesses in Drvar fall under the Croat-owned Finvest Company umbrella, and a majority of others simply belong to Croat displaced. Prices are displayed in most shops in Croatian Kunas. Moreover, out of the public apparatuses, only the municipality falls under Returnee control (through elections).

As a result, the returnee population faces the following problems. They are provided with limited health care, there are no Serb doctors and Serb returnees usually pay higher prices for medical treatment. No social security or pension system is made available to returnees; in practice the only pension available is for HVO veterans. The local school curriculum is entirely Croat, and biased against returnees. Returnees do not benefit from any employment opportunities in the public sector, comprising the post office, the electrical company and the local hospital, excluding the office of the Serb Mayor. As virtually all businesses in town belong to Croats, including occupied business premises, returnees are employed only through Serb businesses. Access to public resources like phone lines, mail or electricity is also restricted. Ms. Mira Popovic, head of the Serb Women's NGO Lasta, was told by Mr Neven Maric, Director of Post Office and former local HDZ leader, that she would never get a phone line because she was involved with Lasta. She has been waiting to be re-connected for the last three years, while 'others'—displaced persons moving into the town— can get a line in less than five days. Mr. Maric was repeatedly approached by the IC on the issue and to this day has not reconnected Ms. Popovic. This unfortunate example can also be applied to other all other services controlled by the Croat community.

Security is also a concern, the local police force is comprised of 60 % Croat officers. In order to match the ethnic composition of the town, a Serb chief of police has recently been appointed. This will sustain the deadlock concerning the efficiency of policing in town, almost exclusively dedicated to traffic offenses. The presence of the Croat army in the town does nothing to ease the tension. The absence of a public prosecutor has also been detrimental to the returnee process, among other problems. It remains a common occurrence that houses vacated by DPs are vandalized before being abandoned. The army presence also causes

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<sup>9</sup> Material gathered during interviews with local residents. The 100 year-old argument can be found in *'Impunity in Drvar'*, International Crisis Group Balkans report No. 40, 20 August 1998. These allegations remain 'on the grapevine' to this day.

obvious resentment from the Serb community, as most soldiers are illegal occupants.<sup>10</sup>

The relationship between the municipal authorities and the Canton 10 Government is also of concern, and directly contradicts the Dayton idea of providing a working framework to facilitate the returning process. As the governing body, forming part of the Bosnian-Croat Federation, the Canton 10 Government is perceived by the returning population as obstructing the municipal government of Drvar. The division of offices and tasks between the Canton 10 Government and the municipality of Drvar is indeed impeding the returning process at many levels, including most importantly education and municipal governance. The appointment of teachers falls under Canton 10 jurisdiction, as well as the establishment of the school curriculum. The Canton 10 Government has no intention of addressing the education situation in Drvar. Of relevance in the case of Drvar is that, under the Dayton agreement, the Serb returnees are considered as a minority under Federal Law. They therefore do not hold the same rights as the Croats or Bosnians. The Canton 10 Government is therefore under no obligation to provide mixed education. The issue clearly falls under the remit of the OHR, whose over-cautious attitude over the past seven years needs to be challenged swiftly. One project of mixed education has been carried out in a primary school located in the village of Bastasi, in 1998. Concerning municipal governance, the budgetary situation of Drvar remains precarious. While all the key industries have been hastily privatized, leaving the municipality with no directly generated income, the municipality's forestry resources are allegedly being illegally logged out by the Croat owned Finvest Company.<sup>11</sup> Finvest is evading payment of customs duties to the municipality. It is worth mentioning that in 1998, the Federation Parliament voted to partly devolve responsibility for forest management to the cantons. These operations are therefore granted tacit authorization by the Canton 10 authorities.

### 2.2.2. DISPLACED PEOPLE

After being told that they were never to be forced out of Drvar, the displaced population is left confused by the application of the rule of law, resulting in unavoidable evictions. They feel vulnerable, marginalized

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<sup>10</sup> The issue of illegal occupancy does not, however, only concern HVO personnel. A significant proportion of the police force, as well as municipal civil servants and councillors, are themselves illegal, double or even triple occupants.

<sup>11</sup> *'Impunity in Drvar', op. cit.*

and let down by the national HDZ. They recently have been politicized under the banner of the local, Drvar-based HDZ, whose Head is the local mafia boss and petty criminal Drago Tokmadzija. While their living conditions are considerably easier than those of the returnees, they perceive themselves as direct victims of the International Community, and the OSCE in particular. The displaced population (DP) needs increased awareness as to what is the role of the International Community through radio shows and constant representation. For the moment, Radio Drvar sides against the any IC efforts to carry out evictions, where regular broadcasts vilify members of the IC as well as OSCE local staff. Local politicians, including Mr Maric and Tokmadzija regularly appear on air to criticize the IC and provoke unrest. Death threats to the IC are a common occurrence. The media also play a negative role, backing most of Radio Drvar's statements. For instance, a Dnevni List article of 22 February 2002 stated that "Lucio Valerio Sarandrea ... want[s] to systematically expel Croats from Drvar". These actions are extremely detrimental to public order and post-conflict rehabilitation in Drvar. So far, the OHR, whose mandate it is to regulate the press, has done nothing to address the situation.

### 2.2.3. WOMEN

In Drvar, the vulnerability of women is the indirect result of the politicization of the two main women's NGOs, 'Lasta' and 'Zena 47', which have been present in Drvar since 1998 and fall under the returnee/displaced axis. While aware that they need to appear to co-operate and to show their goodwill in order to get funding, they do not co-operate on a daily basis. In the rare event that they write project proposals together, they are known to 'take the money and run' back to their respective offices. They actually share the same premises and have been given co-existence training by the Political Resource Centre in Livno under an UNHCR initiative. They need to be introduced to an idea of accountability and sustainability after having being given funding for a project. This represents a long-term solution to breaking the returnee/displaced axis (they have had numerous training sessions on co-existence and have 'heard it all before'). The consequences of this for women in general are that there is no gender awareness in Drvar, female participation in local politics is negligible, and as there are limited employment opportunities, equality concerns are not a priority.



#### 2.2.4. YOUNG PEOPLE

In Drvar, the youth NGO sector seems more open to interethnic activities. The last summer camp hosted a wide range of youth groups (out of 30 participants). However, their day-to-day interaction—or lack of it—suggests that they fall under the umbrella of their respective ‘mother’ associations: the Serb/returnee ‘Friends’ youth association under the ‘Lasta’ umbrella, and the Croat/displaced ‘Inside’ youth association under ‘Association for the Welfare of the Displaced’ umbrella.

The youth organizations do not operate in total independence from their umbrella organizations, and they need to be encouraged into distancing themselves from them. The latest initiative of the IC was a Halloween party designed to bring the younger members of the youth community together through a series of games and presentations. The initiative failed as the groups, comprising members as young as six years old, polarized into intense competition.

One more issue is that of transportation for youth parliament meetings in Livno. As public transport is poor throughout Canton 10, a *rapprochement* of all Canton 10 youth NGOs has been made almost impossible because of logistical problems.

Education also represents a crucial element in the development of the youth in Drvar. Research on the transmission of ethnic identity within a conflict environment identifies schools as the most important environment for ethnic polarization to occur and manifest itself.<sup>12</sup> In a post-conflict environment like Drvar, the problem is emphasized by the lack of consensus over schooling. At present, the only secondary school in town falls under a strong Croat nationalist influence. Teaching staff and curricula are strictly Croat. All local children, either returnees or displaced, are subjected to the same biased and outdated education. As mentioned earlier, the OHR, partly mandated for education rehabilitation, took the initiative in 1998 to introduce a Serb curriculum and teachers at the Bastasi primary school. The project, supposed to be a success, has not been extended to the rest of the Drvar municipality.

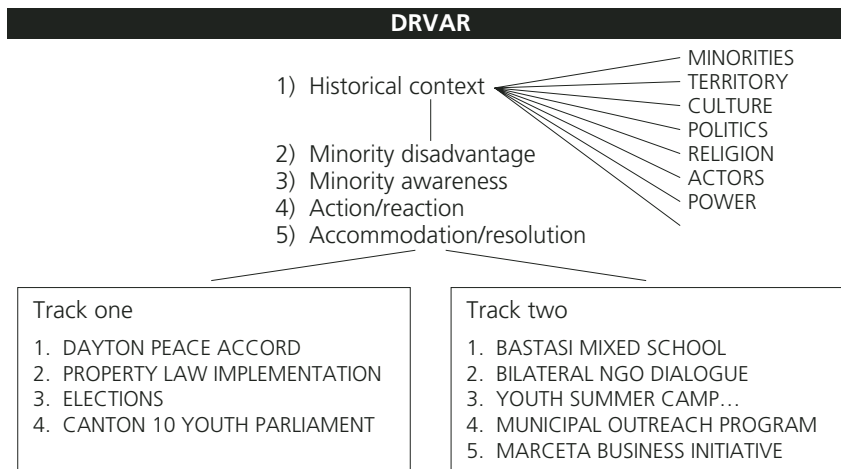
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<sup>12</sup> On Transmission, see Fedida, P *et al.* 1986. *Actualites transgenerationelles en psychopathologie*. Paris: Broche, and Kaes, R. 2001. *Transmission de la vie psychique entre generations*. Paris: Dunod. On group polarization, see Mosvovici, S., Zavalloni M. 1969. ‘The Group as a polarizer of attitudes’ in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 12, pp. 125-35, and for a more general approach: Tajfel, H., (ed.). 1982. *Social Identity and Intergruop Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

### 2.3. *Priorities for the improvement of citizens' quality of life*

#### 2.3.1. INITIATIVES PREVIOUSLY TAKEN

Initiatives previously taken can be categorized with respect to the ideas of multi-track diplomacy. Within track-one, or top-down initiatives, can be found the Dayton Peace Accord, regulating the refugee returns — a paradox in itself. Elections can also account for track-one reconstruction; the creation of a Youth parliament by Canton 10 authorities, initiated by the OSCE DMC Department, is a step towards reconciliation. It is unfortunate that the youth of Drvar should be marginalized as a result of the lack of adequate public transportation. Track-two, or bottom-up, initiatives include the Bastasi mixed-school curriculum initiative from the OHR, an eventual bilateral NGO dialogue prompted by the OSCE DMC Department, youth *rapprochement* initiatives and a series of meetings elaborated by the former Serb Mayor, Mile Marceta, to attract investments from other parts of BiH as well as the former Yugoslavia. The Municipal Outreach Program, an idea raised by the OSCE DMC Department to address municipal governance issues, is still being elaborated. Of main concern here is the lack of OHR action to prevent the local press from disseminating false information and encouraging antagonistic behaviour.



→ **Missing: STIFLING OF LOCAL MEDIA HATE SPEECH**

**Figure 2**  
Multi-track Diplomacy in Drvar

### 2.3.2. CIVIL PARTICIPATION AND INFLUENCE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The main problem of Drvar is that its people do not interact outside ethnic boundaries, because they do not consider their coexistence as a long-term matter. For instance, on the returnee side, some think that they do not need to work with the displaced because they are bound to leave the town anyway. While on the displaced side, many perceive themselves as being persecuted by the International Community on behalf of the returnees. An example of this can be found in the forest fire that occurred in September 2001, which may be said to have been prompted by Radio Drvar's constant campaign against the evictions. While forestry resources belonging to the municipality tend to be usurped through illegal logging by the Finvest Company, and under the nose of the OHR, the forest surrounding Drvar was criminally set ablaze in September 2001 as a symbol that even though the Croat population 'has to depart', it would not leave the forestry resources to the Serb population of Drvar. Such an act demonstrates that the refugee situation of Drvar is a zero-sum game, despite the fact that the OSCE HR Department constantly makes it known that Croats can stay under the condition that they occupy property legally.

In order for events of this kind not to recur, the OSCE and the OHR Special Envoy need to introduce the following initiatives, in accordance with its limited mandate, inappropriate to the pressing needs of Drvar: inform the citizens on the activities of the international community in Drvar as well as in other parts of BiH (to show that in other areas, other ethnic groups find themselves in the same situation as the displaced persons of Drvar), through radio shows; raise awareness on property law issues; set up a strategy that will encourage the development of a common feeling of belonging to the town. The strategy will be to organize a series of events targeting first youth, professionals and women. They could be conceptualized into the introduction of track-three diplomacy, geared towards the facilitation of grass-root actor interaction, for local benefit, and as a means of setting the local reconstruction agenda. For instance, such an initiative could take the form of a Professionals Discussion Meeting, where a returnee carpenter would meet a displaced carpenter, and talk about carpentry issues and problems. Such an initiative would facilitate grass-root dialogue, while breaking away from the returnee-displaced axis, hindering the reconstruction and returns to Drvar. Another initiative would be to ask the Municipal Council to change the date of Drvar Day, now 14 September, the day when the Croat HVO army arrived in Drvar, to a less bellicose date evoking a common event, such as the anniversary of the Dayton Peace

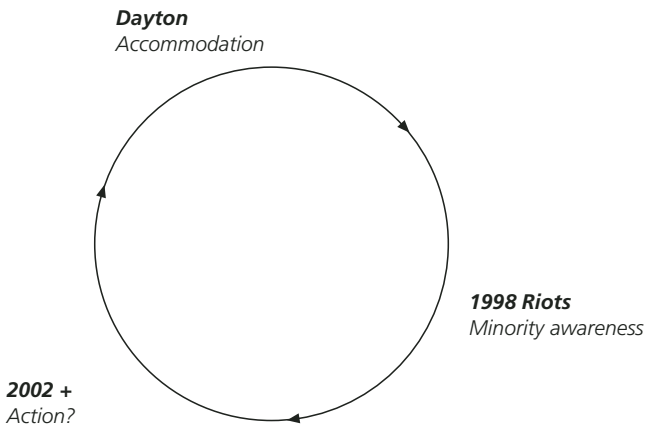
Accord. To date, the international mandate in town remains inappropriate to facilitate such initiatives. An example which has been implemented by the OSCE Head Office was a campaign entitled "We Can Do It....", in the autumn of 2001, designed to provoke a reaction among the youth into 'standing for themselves' and finding work. Such an initiative has indeed provoked reactions, but of another kind. As the editor-in-chief of the youth magazine "Buka" notes, the OSCE "offered the youth a pre-made solution again", and does not understand the reason why the youth of BiH prefer to "wash dishes in McDonalds or clean toilets in European train stations ... rather than offer their intellectual, creative and other services to the country that rejects them constantly", and where it is impossible to find work. Such an initiative had the result of marginalizing the youth even more than the IC's initiatives for reconstruction. Furthermore, such a PR disaster demonstrates the lack of track-two dialogue within the OSCE, whereby officers in the field offices are made aware of the local issues they need to address, but are not given the possibility to engage in a constructive dialogue with their Head Office. Track-one dialogue also seems to be lacking, as the campaign was imposed on the field without any prior piloting. Of importance here is the discrepancy between BiH society's needs, the IC's policies and the BiH media concerns.

### **3. Potential monitoring role for the media in conflict prevention**

According to the life-conflict cycle, the situation depicted above, contributing to the perceived marginalisation of virtually all sectors of the population of Drvar, has the potential to erupt into political conflict. As mentioned above, local media outlets, exclusively held by the displaced population, constantly vilify and sap the efforts, or lack thereof, of the international community to apply a mandate that at times is not specifically appropriate to demands of the field. As for the international media, their representatives were only seen in town during the October 1998 Croat riots against Serb returnees, in which the democratically elected Mayor Mile Marceta was left for dead, having been thrown out of his office window in the town hall by an angry Croat mob. He was saved *in extremis* by the Canadian SFOR army battalion. Again, the international media was only to be seen during late phase one of the life-conflict cycle (see figure 1.1). The riots, caused by an incident between Serbs and Croats, resulted in still further mutual antagonism. As for Mayor Marceta, the embodiment restored democracy in the town: he was awarded a medal by President

Clinton after his recovery in hospital. This event was widely covered by the media in the Republica Srpska, although ignored or ridiculed in Canton 10, and sporadically mentioned by the international media. Shortly afterwards, OHR Special Envoy Peter Chapel, allegedly involved in illicit activities with Croat mobsters, removed Mr. Marceta from office for being the focal point of the riots. He was held responsible for having 'triggered' his own attempted assassination. No international media covered Mr. Chapel's ambiguous decision, and once again, the Serb/returnee population was alienated from the Croat/displaced population. The failure of the international media to report on the situation and monitor the centres of power with regards to international decisions in the field, decisions taken on behalf of the tax-payer, could well, in the future, trigger more conflicts to defuse; and an ungenerous person might add, more conflicts to cover.

The failure to understand the nature of peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina, from being 'negative' to, rarely, becoming 'positive', is leaving the media, international as well as local, short of accomplishing a monitoring role. A basic conflict-theory established reporting, let alone investigative, may well allow the media to forge reliable and relevant judgements (see figure 3). A conceptualisation of the situation in Drvar as precarious could therefore have prevented the 1998 riots, and may well help diffuse potential problems in the future. By holding the international community responsible for its actions, through investigative monitoring, the media may influence its policies.



**Figure 3**

Negative peace in Drvar

#### 4. Conclusion

Since this paper's data collection and the Coimbra seminar, the volatile situation in Drvar has been diffused, not because of media good practice, but through the courageous implementation of OSCE Human Rights mandate, ignoring Croat threats of further political and civil unrest and repeatedly clashing with OHR Special Envoy's personal agenda of collusion with Croat mobsters holding businesses in town. This drastic change and the exceptional conditions surrounding it, the 'early retirement' of a high-ranking OSCE official, guilty of corruption, and the internal investigation of Mr. Chapel's actions, has not been reported in any news-media. The lessons learned from Drvar will therefore not be kept on record for further post-conflict zones, nor their conflict prevention potential.

The industrial nature of the media, prompting opportunistic editorial decisions, remains an impediment to investigative and monitoring reporting. However, should reporters of conflict be made aware of basic theories related to conflict development; should they, with time, choose to bring their past experience to their reporting; then a more ethical testimony of a given situation could help in preventing further conflict. Considering priorities within the media industry, scribes will be scribes, but they may also become aware of their surroundings.

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# Africa: From Conflict Promotion to Conflict Oblivion

Jordi Raich

## Introduction

I have been asked to write about Africa, not a country but 53 of them, about an entire continent. Needless to say, the enterprise seems to me impossible due to limitations of space and the complexity of such a vast territory, far more diverse than Europe. Africa is not a 'case study' but thousands of them. However, I will try my best to present the big picture, partly drawn from the experience of someone like me who, when it comes to Conflict Prevention, is always late. As an emergency humanitarian aid worker during the past 18 years, by the time I reach a place conflict and violence have already erupted.

In the early 1990s, caught in the global whirlwind of the so-called New World Order, many African states began processes of democratisation and pacification that seemed to mark the beginning of a fresh era of multi-party pluralism, rule of law, and the end of a past politically unfree and socially violent. The novel trend was led by a new generation of more pragmatic and 'Westernised' leaders, many of them children when their countries gained independence: people like Museveni in Uganda, Kagame in Rwanda, Zenawi of Ethiopia and Afewerki of Eritrea. Years later, after the horrors of the Rwandan genocide or the butchery in Liberia, we are now coming to terms with the fact that the hopes raised were a mirage, and some parts of Africa are experiencing a return to the brutal and authoritarian days characteristic of the post-colonial period.

The *coup d'état* still remains a common way to attain power in some African nations like Niger, Nigeria, Burundi or the Congos. Yet, it is true that many other countries, actually the immense majority, prefer to play the more internationally acceptable democratic game and bend its rules until it is barely recognisable. Intimidation, manipulation of

censuses, arrests, blunt killing of political adversaries, elimination of the secret nature of the ballot, tampering with counts, are all integral parts of many African elections, Zimbabwe being one the latest examples.

The main aim behind these actions is always to give a democratic varnish to a dictator, a successful practice if judged by the fact that the international community contents itself with a narrow and normative conception of democracy when it comes to African states. Only that explains the much praise received by Yoweri Museveni, an exemplary leader according to the White House, who claims his 'no-party system'—a new euphemism for the classic old-fashioned 'one-party system'—is perfectly free. Another example is the 1997 election of warlord Charles Taylor in Liberia through elections described by international observers as 'free and transparent', a case of international legitimisation of a well-known criminal. Many Western governments tend to downplay the democratic failings of their African colleagues as long as their economic policies are favourable to them. The world outlaws the *coups d'état* but can live with false and puppet democracies.

Many political processes are accompanied by, or are the primary cause of, armed violence and internal disorder. 'Success stories' are at hand and some nations like Mozambique, Uganda, Namibia and South Africa have abandoned violence during the recent past and initiated a remarkable political transformation with majority-based regimes. But concentrating on a handful of exceptions is misleading. Thus, the 'great' leaders cited before have been or are at war with at least one of the others. A war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, a *coup d'état* followed by a civil war in the 'exemplary' Ivory Coast, increasing disorder in Uganda and Zimbabwe, remind us how fragile and unstable these processes can be. To these, a long list of old and new African conflicts and violent outbreaks has to be added. Since 1970, more than 30 wars have been fought in Africa, most of them of an internal nature. In 1996 alone, 14 of Africa's 53 countries were afflicted by armed conflicts, which were responsible for half of all war victims worldwide and more than 9 million refugees and internally displaced persons. Centralization of power, corruption, despotism, systematic persecution of minorities, wealth hijacked by the military, political, religious and tribal groups, and the lack of representative systems, make people fight for access to space, to water, to natural resources, to power. Even genocide becomes a state enterprise in modern Africa, as it did in Germany during WWII. All these conflicts dangerously undermine local governments' efforts to provide prosperity, peace and stability to Africans.

In our real-time globalized world, none of this occurs out of the blue, without signals and warnings that should ring alarm bells, but do



not. All these patterns are neither causes nor problems; rather they are symptoms of that long-lasting African illness, internal political decay, which in extreme cases leads to so-called 'failed states', of which Somalia is the paradigm.

## **Somalia**

When I first went to Somalia in the spring of 1992 it was a society already a long way down the path of disintegration, quickly plunging into chaos. Everybody was aware of it and the signs were evident all over the country. But I found only 500 Pakistani UN peacekeepers, scared to death, confined in their compound because their cars, weapons and radios had been stolen by armed gangs driving the sadly famous 'technicals'. The situation was so dangerous and abnormal that even NGOs, UN agencies and the ICRC hired their own Somali armed guards, their own private soldiers. The international community only reacted when the mass media reported about the suffering of the Somali population. Yet, instead of taking resolute actions to address the root causes of the problem, the United Nations Secretary General fired Mohamed Shanoun, his special envoy and a very much respected interlocutor by all sides, and the United States transformed a deep political crisis into an innocuous humanitarian TV show. In December 1992, I myself helped the CNN crew to find a nice rooftop with beach views from which to film the long-awaited American disembarkation. President George Bush senior sent a US military contingent to lead a new UN-sponsored multilateral force, called UNITAF, to ensure the safe delivery of humanitarian aid, something the majority of charities never asked for. More than 35,000 troops were quickly deployed in what was widely termed as 'armed humanitarianism'. The international forces' failure to disarm the Somali factions and destroy their weapons reassured the warlords that American soldiers would soon be out of the country. In October 1993, the whole 'humanitarian' campaign suddenly collapsed when Farah Aidid's forces killed 18 US rangers and wounded around 80 in an urban ambush. Images of a dead American soldier being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu were broadcast around the world, and played an important role in the sudden American withdrawal from Somalia. The United States put the blame on the UN and retired all its forces. In March 1995, the UN also pulled out without any peace settlement in sight. The Somalia fiasco became the Somalia effect, to be felt for years to come.

## Rwanda

Rwanda, 1994, awakened the world to the fact that in Africa widespread violence could also be the result of deliberate and careful political planning, and that the media could become a deadly weapon of mass destruction. When I visited Rwanda in 1993 there were unrest and bomb blasts in Kigali, attacks and killings in the countryside, arms were being distributed to the population, and many people were talking about the lists of names and addresses being broadcast by Radio Mille Colines.

Governments and international organizations ignored the clues of a genocide plot, received months before the shooting down of the plane carrying the Presidents of both Rwanda and Burundi. The plane crash triggered the start of a strategy of genocide that went on for more than four months. The reaction of the United Nations Security Council was to avoid the problem and withdraw 2,000 UNAMIR troops, leaving behind only 250 soldiers to protect a few foreign nationals. Four months later the UN decided to send 5,000 peacekeeping troops to Rwanda, mandated to protect civilians at risk and to provide security for humanitarian assistance. However, member states were not willing to commit soldiers to such a mission 'somewhere in Africa'. Meanwhile, around 800,000 Rwandans were slaughtered. Nothing was done to stop a campaign of genocide that was broadcast live. 'Never again' was said after WWII. 'Never again' was repeated after Rwanda.

Then, an army of Tutsi refugees invaded the country from Uganda, deposed the architects of the genocide and sent two million Hutus fleeing across the borders into neighbouring states. Amongst the wave of refugees were the perpetrators of the genocide, who took control of the camps and manipulated the distribution of humanitarian assistance. They transformed the refugee settlements into guerrilla training bases. In 1996, the untenable situation prompted the new government in Rwanda and other nations to send military forces into eastern Zaire, setting off an insurrection that toppled Mobutu Sese Seko. In this new phase, thousands of Hutu refugees were systematically chased and murdered in the forest.

At the end of 1996 I was back in the region, stuck on the Rwandan side of the border with Zaire, in the company of dozens of TV and radio crews from all over the world. After weeks waiting we were allowed into Zaire, but covering the story of such a dispersed refugee population hiding in the tropical jungle was considered too difficult. The public had difficulty understanding how perpetrators of genocide could become victims themselves. One day, the news that there would

be no international troops coming to deal with the violence spread through Zaire like a bushfire. Besides, the French transport strike was paralysing Europe and saturating the headlines. Within a week most reporters left the area. What was to have been Africa's First World War, with eight countries participating, became a non-issue in which more than two million people have lost their lives since 1998.

## Sierra Leone

In the 1980s a combination of corruption, ambition and negligence by a succession of governments was plunging Sierra Leone into chaos. International organizations, together with African and Western states, preferred to ignore the violent signs pointing to war. By 1991 Sierra Leone's civil war was a fact. In five years more than 50,000 people lost their lives and half the country's population was displaced. Even then, there was no significant pressure to reverse the fragmentation process and stop the fighting between government forces and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The democratically elected government of 1996 was followed by a *coup* that allied former enemies in a terror campaign of massacres and mutilations. The 1998 civilian government, restored by Nigerian forces, was followed in early 1999 by a wave of violence in Freetown that left 5,000 dead and wounded and scores of women raped. Yet, the RUF was later welcomed to be part of the government in the Lome Agreement. Lome led to a sort of ceasefire and a partial disarming of the RUF, while British intervention helped to train police and soldiers. Nonetheless, the Sierra Leone experiment is far from the successful intervention some scholars and politicians, especially the British government, pretend it was. Despite the setting up of a Special Tribunal and a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, there has been no real justice process. Many murderers and warlords have been welcomed into the new army, giving the impression that violence brings rewards and no punishment. Not surprisingly, corruption is still widespread in towns and rural areas, where the availability of small arms fuels new militia groups seeking a share of power and interfering in neighbouring Liberia.

## Conflict prevention?

Could we have prevented all that? That is the million-dollar question, because success in conflict prevention is almost impossible to demonstrate. How can you be sure that your efforts have stopped a conflict from

erupting? On the other hand, war proves easily that conflict prevention has failed. Yet, it should not be difficult to agree that not enough was done to address the causes of conflict or to guarantee a lasting peace, that many tragedies could and should have been prevented, that in many cases the commitment was too little, too late and lasted too short a time.

It has long been argued that prevention is better than cure, something people working for medical humanitarian organizations know very well: providing safe drinking water is far cheaper and saves more lives than treating diseases with drugs. Likewise, preventing conflict is more cost-effective than responding to a crisis or a war. Conflict prevention is said to be good for international business and commerce, preserves human life and the organizations involved are relatively cheap to fund compared to military budgets. It is all about preventing the emergence of violence, building peace in fragile post-conflict situations, and creating the necessary conditions for sustainable development in order to avoid future wars.

The root causes of conflict often lie in discrimination, denial of rights, poverty, corruption and proliferation of arms. Fortunately, conflict prevention initiatives also proliferate. They come from the US, Canada, the EU, the UN, the G8, and Africa itself. Most of these schemes are centred on combating poverty, promoting democracy and human rights, tackling the availability of small arms, establishing early-warning systems, improving the professionalism of local armies, promoting an impartial and committed media, enhancing the role of civil society and fighting impunity.

Concerning Africa, a considerable number of proposals have been put forward, including the idea of Africans being responsible for conflict prevention, management and resolution of crisis in their own continent. Thus, a conflict mechanism with an early-warning system was created at the OAU, presently 'replaced' by the AU. The US, France and the UK proposed several times the creation of an 'African Crisis Reaction Force', a sort of on-call army composed of members from various African states, ready to be deployed anywhere whenever the alarming signs of a potential crisis are detected. No doubt, the AU and Africans themselves should assume more responsibility for their own lives and destinies. The bitter experiences of Angola, Liberia, Rwanda, Somalia, Burundi, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo show the low level of interest and commitment that the states that control the UN have regarding Africa's problems. But unless we make the terms of trade more favourable to primary commodities, open up our markets to developing countries, settle the debt problem, re-design highly corrupt bilateral development

aid, and re-examine the impact of economic adjustment programmes on distressed populations, all our talk about Africans sorting out their own problems will be cynical hypocrisy. One wonders why some Western states are ready to support and help financing a standing army for the AU or the ECOWAS but are against doing the same for the UN.

Africanising problems, responsibilities and solutions is a dangerous piece of disengagement distilled in the 'Africa for Africans' rhetoric and the naïve idea that answers for Africa's troubles must come only from Africans themselves. Letting Africans to identify, design and implement solutions is a must, but indigenising problems, pretending the West should stay away because somehow 'it is not our business', and expecting proposals from weak states is preposterous. Recent peacekeeping operations are a good example of this tendency. After the fiascos and killings of foreign troops in Somalia and Rwanda, the UN has more and more trouble in finding developed countries ready to supply soldiers for missions in Africa. About 77 % of the forces currently deployed in 15 UN operations come from developing countries, Nigeria and Ghana being the main African contributors. Thus, the bulk of peacekeeping is left to soldiers from poor nations, most of whom belong to national armies that are untrained, badly equipped and accustomed to violating human rights in their own countries. Paying Africans to sort out their mess is, at the end of the day, cheaper and less politically risky than doing it directly, but this is not conflict prevention, this is irresponsible dishonesty.

The famous revived economic interest in Africa goes together with a supine lack of political interest, badly hidden behind testimonial visits from Western representatives, who keep focussing on 'success stories' such as South Africa, Mauritius, Senegal, Uganda or Botswana. The continent has lost political weight in the eyes of world powers, not only because of the end of the east-west confrontation but also due to the growing geopolitical importance of the EU, the Middle East, North Africa, Eastern Europe and China. Nowadays the so-called international community is more interested in managing African crises with donations of beans, rice, maize and high-energy biscuits than in solving them through prevention, diplomacy, negotiation, and reconciliation. The withdrawal from Somalia, the impassivity and indifference in the face of the atrocities in Rwanda, Liberia and Sudan, the slow response to the floods in Mozambique... Compared to the reaction to the suffering of the Kurds in Iraq, or the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, the difference in scope and scale of the response is astonishing. Increasingly, developed countries show a spurt of concern over Africa's afflictions during a given crisis, which fades away soon afterwards. Only worst-case scenarios, only tragedies, are considered. Graça Machel put it more bluntly:

“When we are dying by the thousands, then they come running, but it’s always too late”.

Some may wonder how I have dared to write for so long without saying a word about how much the world has changed since 11 September, 2001. Since that fateful date, we are told, politics demand a new kind of war against global terrorism and swift action to defeat a hidden enemy in a battle with no front lines. But terrorism, concealed enemies and diffuse wars are not new. True enough, some things have changed dramatically. Today, Human Rights and Democracy, the two pillars of Western foreign policy before September 2001, have been replaced by a violent campaign against ‘terror’ in the name of which everything seems justified. Besides, there is a lot of talk about the way the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon showed how conflict in one part of the world could affect the lives of people on the opposite side of the globe. Likewise, much is being said about the dangers of ignoring the suffering of African nations whose poverty, miseries and frustrations, we realize now, could threaten peace and international stability.

Yet, concerning Conflict Prevention little has or will change because of September 11. We only have to follow how the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan is evolving. Most parts of the country are more dangerous now than they were under the Taliban regime, and the warlords, whose atrocities justified the very existence of the Taliban, are back in business with Western support and approval. Although there are 5,000 European peacekeeping troops in Kabul, the US rejected plans to deploy them in other parts of the country. They remain in the capital and a few big cities, confined in their secure bases, getting out only for very specific offensive operations and occasional photo-ops. Similarly, the 2003 US military campaign to ‘liberate’ Iraq has transformed a country at peace into a guerrilla war zone, where no one is secure and political stability looks more remote every day.

Despite the events of September 11, the United States’ reluctant commitment in drought- and war-ravaged Afghanistan and decomposed Iraq is alarming. Afghans and Iraqis have plenty of reasons to doubt White House promises because Washington has deserted them before. And it will abandon Afghanistan and Iraq again once it has accomplished its limited military and economic objectives. This is not new either: it is a pattern repeated throughout the world and a trademark of US interventions throughout history. Therefore, do not expect much political commitment to Africa beyond bombing Somalia, Sudan or Libya.

Rather than a problem of an unfavourable Western policy towards Africa, it is often a problem of lack of any policy at all. Thus, the US

keeps bouncing from direct involvement in Somalia, to disengagement in Rwanda; from leave it to Mandela in South Africa, to bombing a drugs factory in Khartoum to combat international terrorism... The only African issues that clearly worry the world beyond the continent are AIDS, emigration and terrorism. In this regard, journalists, and specially the media companies they work for, have a big responsibility in covering what is going on in Africa in a more consistent, impartial and long-term basis, not only when conflicts and epidemics erupt or when Western leaders tour the region. Likewise, local African media, such as radio stations and newspapers, have a duty to inform in a balanced and unbiased way and to educate the population into the culture of peace, discussion and negotiation, without stirring ethnic and social tensions.

In Africa, during the Cold War, the superpowers instead of Conflict Prevention practiced Conflict Promotion. After the Cold War, Conflict Promotion was replaced by Conflict Oblivion. The events of September 11 have not changed that.

## **Conclusion**

Conflict prevention and resolution in Africa are still in their early stages, and no doubt much work remains to be done. The former OAU interventions in Central and Western Africa showed the limitations of the organization's capabilities. Repeated diplomatic and non-violent attempts to resolve the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Liberia or Sudan have ended in failure. Furthermore, there seems to be still not sufficient clarity on how to bring together the objective of preventing conflict with other goals such as combating poverty and disease, integrating developing countries into the global economy, and improving African governments' accountability and transparency.

It will be difficult to reconcile theory and practice. On the one hand, it is impossible to maintain a peace that does not exist. Even worse, sometimes imposing peace promotes war by giving factions the opportunity to gain time and reinforce their positions. On the other hand, knowing about potential conflicts in advance is very different from being able to stop them erupting. But deadly violence is not inevitable by definition and the need to prevent it is urgent. An effective policy of conflict prevention and resolution requires a comprehensive and flexible political, social and economic strategy that entails actions and funds. Most often, the problem is not one of lack of resources, knowledge or planning, but of will.





# Colombia, Conflict Prevention and the Media: Do Texts Match?

Manuel Salamanca

## Premises

This paper intends to discuss the relationship between the discourse of conflict prevention and the written text in the press as a discourse. It will address different facts from a specific situation which will be taken as a case study: the break-off of dialogues in Colombia between the government of President Andrés Pastrana, and the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - FARC-EP* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, an insurgent leftist organization that has now been fighting for power for around 40 years).

The paper starts from some basic assumptions:

1. It intends to develop what can be called a case study, in terms of observing a specific fact of reality and bringing it to both knowledge and analysis.
2. It understands conflict prevention as a part of Conflict Resolution and/or Peace Studies, still to be defined, even conceived, and thus far from being clearly treated as a technique, discourse or policy. In this direction, conflict prevention will be taken as a course of action or text still to be produced and interpreted.
3. It considers the mass media news as another type of text, coherent within its own logic and possibly related with other texts or discourses, such as Conflict Prevention.

Under such assumptions, the document will:

- a. Establish a relation between one specific fact of reality and a text produced in one press media in the direction of determining

the use or not of terms implied in theoretical discourses on Conflict Prevention.

- b. Discuss the form in which the specific news on a specific fact is presented in a specific mass medium, trying to offer a critical view on the presence of a conflict prevention discourse.
- c. Question whether defining a responsible use of mass media is enough to contribute to conflict prevention in terms of defining a principle of co-responsibility between reality, conflict actors, media controllers and media discourses, transcending the logical conclusion of responsible use of media.

Although probably necessary, the paper will not try to describe the violent confrontation in Colombia, as the general purpose is to discuss the relation between media and conflict prevention and not the description or judgment of a situation *per se*. Nevertheless, when necessary, facts will be mentioned, not to raise opinions but to share a clearer picture of a violent conflict as a whole.

There is a moral or ethical statement implied, though. The paper will not assume the tragic destiny of some violent conflicts, such as the Colombian political dispute. As Keane puts it, even if "*Fantasies of omnipotence among politicians, diplomats, generals and citizens should be abandoned by the logic of triage: just as field medicine first categorized the wounded into the three categories of slightly wounded, terminally injured and critically ill in need of priority treatment, so today's uncivil wars are not all remediable*", there should always be a pathway to peace cutting across the dirty course of violence. As it will be seen, the paper will clearly contradict any kind of omnipotence, but will live under the shelter of a humane, humanistic option: that of a possible non-violence. Even if so, it will approach what it considers myths of conflict prevention, a concept that will be seen both as a possible text and as a question yet to be resolved; not as a given of Conflict Resolution theory and practice.

### **Why texts, why interpretations?**

Where conflict prevention and mass media configure a relationship is a delicate question to start from. This, because literature has been produced on conflict resolution and media, conflict treatment in the media, or the press and its role in conflicts, always under the assumption that a responsible production of mass media news and messages is, at least, beneficial. It is said, or at least commonly understood, that a

responsible use of media is good for societies and events occurring inside them. It seems that not only conflict resolution gets benefits from a responsible use of mass media.

Nevertheless, the question about the responsibilities of mass media use or news and conflict prevention is, by all means, less clear. This, probably, because conflict prevention seems to be still far from defined. Maybe conflict resolution too, but at least there is a field that explicitly addresses the facts, actions and theories of resolving disputes between human beings. Not so their prevention.

Prevention of conflicts remains, or may seem still, a mystery. Probably that has to be taken as implied, for conflicts usually do not follow patterns or logics of occurrence. Conflicts simply emerge, in their own very natures and narratives, in their own specificities and developments, a fact that poses serious questions on what resolving conflict means. Then, reaching the point of conflict prevention might still become a further complicate subject.

It is clear that some of the Conflict Resolution challenges towards the future is to become a real conflict resolution action, and not only the descriptive efforts of valuable scientists, being their work either quantitative or qualitative. This means that conflict resolution efforts must rapidly evolve to contribute to Peace Studies in terms of becoming real peace science and action and not just the presentation of figures and deep analysis. Conflict Resolution is, and has to be, a combination of theory and practice, a combinatory course of action based on responsible reflection on specific situations. Conflict prevention is a part of it, a part yet to be defined.

In fact, the big questions are when to prevent, how to prevent and what does prevention mean. Prevention is action: action during, before and after conflicts. It is also action during, before and after the emergence of violence in conflicts. Its variable nature may constitute a notice of how diffuse prevention as a concept can be. It is a given that human beings can only prevent situations they know. No one has ever prevented anything to happen as long as he or she has not had a previous reference, being this reference close or far. This means that any preventive action put in motion to face a not-known fact is definitely condemned to failure.

As ironic as it may sound, reality might be a good argument to prove it. The disastrous events of a violent conflict, or its terrible outcomes can rarely be predicted, due to the inner unpredictability of conflict dynamics. "Knowing in advance", a "logical" idea that could be logically implied in conflict prevention is almost an impossible, especially if no reference is had. And even if references exist, history has proven that human

beings have not learned the painful lessons of their own past, at least as regards the occurrence of violent conflicts. Fisas has clearly stated this, explaining how the 20th century saw 110,000,000 persons killed during violent armed confrontations. Most of these casualties have occurred since World War II.

Keane goes even further, trying to characterize the violence of the 20th century: *"Genocidal wars, firebombed cities, nuclear explosions, concentration camps, spreading plagues of private blood-letting: this century has seen more than its share of planned and unplanned violence, with prospects of still more to come. Historians of the next century will no doubt record tales of the courageous who struggled to survive its storms of violence: the tunnel builders of the ghettos, determined to outwit those who planned their extermination; the mourning women bearing white scarves stamped with the names of their loved ones, standing in silence in the shadows of a terrorist state; 'ethnically cleansed' men and women, weeping over the destruction of their houses and farms, praying that their conquerors do not raze their crops. These tales will prove remarkable for future generations, but only because of the colossal cruelty symbolized by the trenches of the Somme, where soil and flesh were pounded into pink-grey mud; the burning and recycling of corpses into gunpowder to make more skeletons out of future enemies; the dripping flesh and swollen faces inflicted by a bomb whose flash proved brighter than the sun; the torturer armed with prized instruments like electrodes, syringes and the rectoscope, a device used to place gnawing and clawing rats inside the victim; the military officers flinging drugged or murdered bodies of young men and women out of helicopters and planes into the ocean depths below"*.

Graphic as it may sound, the descriptions above put us in front of a fact: human beings knew about all these disasters via the mass media, in their first role, that of mediation: being the bridge between reality and the public. To some extent, this confirms the idea of the validation of events through the media. In fact, it seems clear that only what occurs in media "really" happens. Only what is shown, talked about, printed, viewed, seems to acquire a value of truth. Given this, it is worth considering the chances of prevention of violent conflicts through the media, from the media and with media collaboration, in the face of a tremendous reality: can the disastrous outcomes of the violent conflicts described above be prevented? It is a double-edged question: on one hand it confronts the possibility of prevention; on the other, it approaches the possibilities of prevention, using the mass media as a tool.

There is a moral fact still to be considered: what Eco recalls as a sign of our conflicted times: war does not occur between two separate

fronts. *"In ancient wars, potential enemies were interned (or massacred); if a compatriot, from the enemy territory, talked about the reasons of the adversary, at the end of war he would be hanged. But war can not be frontal any more, due to the nature of multinational capitalism itself ... it is in the logic of the news industries to sell the news ... it is not that mass media refuse to play the trumpets of war: simply, they are a mechanic piano that plays a music already carved on its roll ... even if mass media were gagged, new communication technologies would accomplish fluxes of information that are impossible to stop ... this flux of information plays a role that in traditional wars was played by the secret services: to neutralize any surprise action ... But information does even more: it continuously gives the word to the adversary."*

The end of the "secrecy" of war implies a subsequent explosion of images, broadcastings and discourses, that is, a profusion of texts. This profusion of texts almost leaves no space for the surprise of the "continuation of politics by other means", and opens the discussion on the role of mass media in violent conflict prevention. But the discussion must focus, first, on what prevention can mean.

The when, how and what question implied on prevention seems particularly tough to answer, for sometimes the synchronicity needed to put in motion a preventive action is almost an impossibility. Conflict resolution itself might be understood as a wishful act that intends to synchronize confronted factions, respecting their own time logics. In fact, the process of resolving a conflict can be interpreted as the intention to coordinate cosmologies, time perceptions, and *diachronies*, in order to find points of coincidence upon which accords may be constructed. Conflict resolution, then, could be seen as a form of dealing with the challenges of human diversity and as a tool for democracy: it implies an attempt to build a political, peaceful ordination of disagreement, rendering disagreement to a point in which it can be desirable or highly tolerated.

Prevention becomes a matter of opportunity, a matter of time. Prevention, in fact, may be pro-active or re-active, and always intends to start processes of transformation when approaching conflicts. In this sense, prevention can start before or after violent possibilities show up in a conflict, in a double direction: to prevent the eruption of violence itself, or to prevent degeneration of violence (all violence IS degeneration) once its dynamic has begun.

The point is to state that prevention is a term related with the transformation of conflicts; that it may imply action or reaction; and that it can also be violent, politically, physically or psychologically. In fact, prevention is a very dangerous political tool when it comes to the

scene of avoiding the emergence of conflicts. Conflicts are desirable; violence is never desirable. Divergence is a motor of transformation; divergences degenerated into violent processes are motives of disaster. Dialogical oppositions are constructive; silence or intentions to keep forced silences are destructive.

But prevention may also be constructive, if it is conceived as a creative political means, such as the setting up of early-warning networks and agendas, such as processes based on cultural transformations and not only thought of as immediate responses to events. Preventing the unknown is impossible; preventing the possible may be feasible if the possibility emerges from processes that have already taught lessons, and lessons are well learnt. Prevention, somehow, must lose its naiveness, even its ingenuity: tragedies can not put up with another set of lip service intentions, for prevention cannot be rhetoric but technical. Technical, it must be said, in terms of developing prevention towards democracy, not towards the dangerous avoidance of confrontation and elimination of discourses and differences.

Prevention, in sum, is a discourse; a text that takes place in time and that in time finds its very reason to be. Prevention, as action, is a key towards the avoidance of violence in conflicts and against the spreading of violence in disputes. It may have three moments, clearly:

1. When violence has not emerged but is somehow seen coming.
2. When violence has emerged but is still subject to transformation.
3. When violence has ceased and the emphasis of conflict resolution has to be put on post-conflict situations.

All these assumptions are correct when talking about political confrontations, prone to violence. Interpersonal conflicts may be even harder to picture, for no politics explains matters related with affection. Tracing and tracking down the nature of prevention must depart from the fact that, by now, prevention is a discourse. This discourse holds to itself some necessary, useful terms. It seems that the first one is the ability to predict. In fact, it is recognized that *"As it is deduced from its very name, the fundamental purpose of conflict prevention is to act satisfactorily when the first symptoms of a conflict emerge, with the intention to avoid it to surpass a determined violence threshold ... Thus, prevention consists in detecting conflict on time, to deal with it conveniently ... Conflict prevention, or preventive diplomacy, is referred to those actions, policies, strategies and governmental or non-governmental institutions that expressly try to contain or soften the threats, the use of organized violence or other forms of coercion of some concrete States or organized groups... [Prevention] can also be defined*

as the set of measures that contribute to the prevention of undesirable conflict behaviors... These measures can have, in definitive, three types of purposes:

- To prevent a behavior or an action considered undesirable or inadequate,
- To prevent the escalation of a conflict situation,
- To limit its effects to a tolerable threshold."

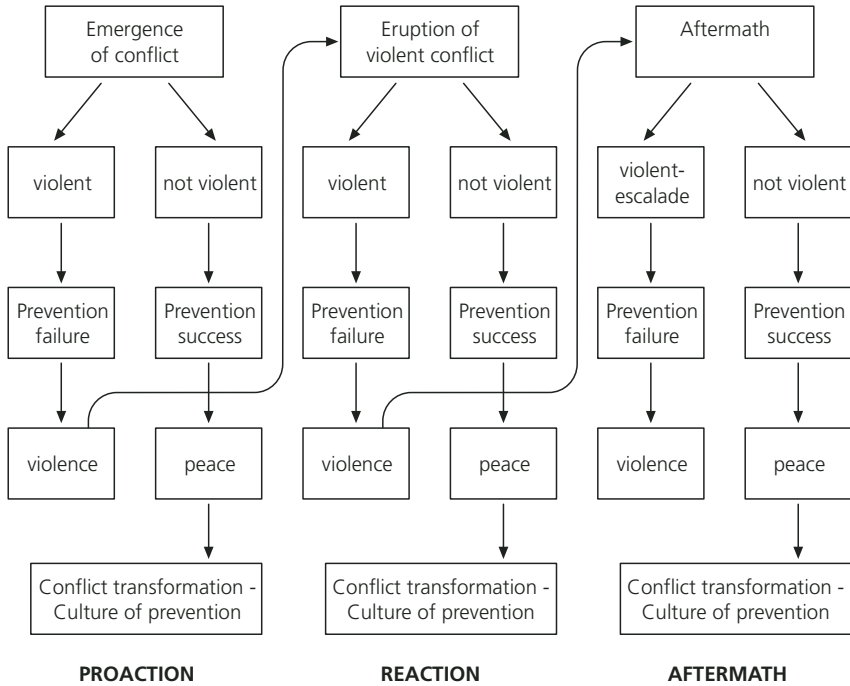
As stated, the question of time seems at least inevitable when considering prevention. In fact, there is a general recognition about the fact that, when talking conflict resolution, prevention can be certainly put in motion *before*, *during* and *after* confrontations. The three imply different actions, thoughts and outcomes.

When referring to actions *before* conflict, we certainly talk about of what can be done in terms of pro-active measures. This is, preventive actions aiming to avoid the evolution of the symptoms of conflict into conflicts that are negative, i.e. violent and/or destructive.

When referring to actions *during* conflict, it is the time for reactive actions, all these being efforts of reducing violence to its minimum expression or to manageable levels in terms of finding ways to set the environment for a possible dialogue between parties.

When referring to actions *after* conflict, we mention the possible ways of preventing and dealing with the aftermath, this is, doing the best possible from the outcomes of conflict. If conflict has been especially violent and destructive, then the outcome will be particularly negative to deal with, and prevention will start from reconstruction of infrastructures and structures. If some sort of creativity has already been seen during the occurrence of conflict, in terms of a search for options by the actors themselves, then prevention will be a continuation of creativity, and lessons to be learnt will be more easily visible.

As seen, time is the definitive question. The life of conflicts implies the ways to deal with them and the forms of preventive action. Prevention, then, is not generic; it is not an action *in general*, but an action *in specific*. This is the reason why this paper deals with it as a *text*, in terms of its terminology and its variation of discourse. If prevention evolves, it may probably mean that prevention has not succeeded at first. This means that prevention in its later stages (the after conflict) is a *need*, taking into account that conflict was not prevented beforehand. Then, if the prevention *after* occurs, a whole narrative sequence has already taken place:



As seen, the courses of action, in what can be called a serial sequence of facts, can be interpreted as a type of narration in which, depending on how things evolve, the endings might be of one form or another. If prevention fails, in general, violence is reached. If it succeeds, then peace will be at least closer, although the most probable outcome of success is precisely none: if prevention works, nothing will happen. Nothing bad, at least, it is implied.

Structural as it may seem, the graph shows the dimensions of time and prevention, and justifies the fact that this paper can read conflict prevention as a text, with a beginning and an ending. Each failure in prevention implies a step towards the following stage: that of violence, where another effort at prevention might be undertaken. Each success in prevention implies a step towards the following stage: that of peace, where prevention becomes a state of things, for the lessons have been learned and peaceful dynamic environments will develop their own prevention mechanisms towards a culture of prevention.

Nevertheless, it must be said, wars do not occur as a sequence nowadays. Each stage of the steps between peace and armed confrontation



has its own dynamics, almost as a node, independent from the rest. Such is the big challenge for prevention initiatives, for reality cannot be drawn as a scheme, but more as an amalgam of situations, each so unpredictable, each far from being possibly controlled.

Prevention, then, must confront its own discourse with real world, for conflicts emerge in sudden moments. Early-warning systems can only be built upon assumptions of what has occurred in determined times and places, which becomes a reference, sometimes external, of what can be taken as a sign of a forthcoming event. Prevention, also, can be a form of dialogue, if it complements the peace talks of confronting parties. In fact, peace dialogues might occur when negotiation is the alternative to violence, although sometimes negotiations occur during violence and violent environments can lead to negotiations in a very dangerous double-direction causal relation.

To conclude, prevention might be understood as a sudden moment that stops time. In violence, the prevention efforts will tend to provoke a disruption: that of the logic of violent events. If violence is a language that creates new, negative situations, from a state of things in which instability turns into destruction of lives, structures and cultures, with a possible outcome of nothingness (for nothing will remain if violence evolves to more or total violence: a hecatomb), prevention would also mean a reflection moment: the instant needed to opt differently or to change one's mind. Possibly, the narrative of violence could take a different direction: that of creation, as opposite to destruction.

In such terms, it is important now to give a glimpse to a case, in order to determine if another language—that of the press, corresponds with the text implied in prevention of conflicts. The question, as stated above, transcends the logical conclusion about the responsible use of media, although for the case chosen—Colombia, a reference must be made. The press is a sum of various printed texts: in the written press, the texts also analyze, for they assume that readers will dedicate time both to the writer's analysis, and form their own type of analysis on specific situations.

Written texts confront the challenge of their main competitors for audience, audio-visual discourses, offering the supposed seriousness of producing non-instant messages. This makes them very conductive discourses that not only narrate but also tend to opinion and to form opinion. Their text logic does not necessarily show the events in a sequence (a function that images may fulfill far more easily), but through interpretations, even reflections.

In theory, media could contribute to peace prevention. Media could be mediators, in the sense of developing a preventive, creative peace

action that could become a space for the necessary dialogue in what Keane describes as “mesopublic spheres”. *“Mesopublic spheres are those spaces of nonviolent controversy about (violent) power that encompass millions of people watching, reading or listening across vast distances. They are mainly coextensive with the nation-state, but they may also extend beyond its boundaries to encompass neighbouring audiences... their reach may also be limited to regions within states... Mesopublic spheres are mediated by large-circulation newspapers... [and also] by electronic broadcasters”*.

Such mesopublic spheres, advocated at large by the author, constitute a civil initiative against uncivil wars, for example. If information was transcended as the role of the media, then their contribution to peaceful debate could be effective in terms of building peace. Nevertheless, media discourse, related with media owning, is more constitutive of powers and reverses powers, being at the same time their means and their objective. This fact may contradict the possibility of creative media contributing to creative peace and to conflict prevention. The case below will be discussed under this perspective.

### **A day in the press: The breaking off of peace dialogues in Colombia**

Peace talks between Colombian Government, under the presidency of Mr. Andrés Pastrana, and the guerrilla of FARC-EP ended on 20 February 2002 following a sequence of events that led the parties to a point of no return. After three years of interrupted dialogues, president Pastrana decided to cut contacts with the guerrilla movement of the FARC-EP. The reason: a commercial plane hijacking act, and the subsequent kidnapping of its passengers, among whom a senator, who was held hostage. Right after the fact, Mr. Pastrana decided to end the so-called demilitarized zone, an area of 42,000 sq. kilometers including the territories and the populations of five municipalities in south-central Colombia. The area would be the meeting point where the talks would take place. The FARC-EP blamed the government for the dialogue’s break off, arguing, among other reasons, that no state results were visible in the war against the paramilitary forces conforming the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia - AUC* (United Self-Defense Organization of Colombia).

Without going into the depth of a description, it must be said that the case of Colombia is precisely one of those non-paradigmatic situations, since it follows no logic and, more than that, can be seen as a negative paradigm in itself. In fact, the protraction of the conflict has

even led to think of it as a manifestation of cultural violence at its highest peak. The armed confrontation, reaching its 50<sup>th</sup> year of continued occurrence, seems to be one of those non-tractable situations, so unlikely to be resolved. Such is the commonplace internationally spoken and presented by the media. It might not be that far from reality.

With a population of around 40 million and a murder rate of around 80 murders per day, Colombia is nearly the most violent country in the world, and certainly a place where the basic human rights are commonly violated. The conflict has already surpassed the lines of positive prevention, leaving only the space for a very long projected action in terms of building peace infrastructures and cultures. Very little can be done today in terms of building peace, and the breaking off of peace talks is only another reason to worry about the future of the uncivil war fought in almost all of Colombia's 1,140,000 sq. kilometer territory.

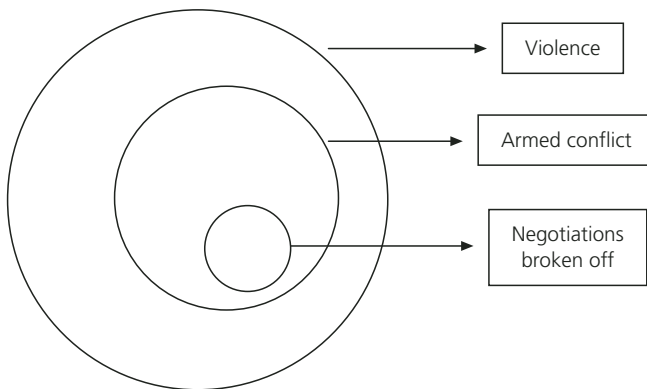
The discourse of prevention lost its reason long ago. Thinking responsibly, it can only be understood as a tool for the future, since at the moment there is no possible prevention due to the fact that direct, structural and cultural dynamics of violence combine in a tale of shame and pain that has surpassed every limit of decency. Still, the question of a possible peace accord remains largely unconsidered. The heat of war has not allowed the time for a necessary reflection: the one that leads us to understand that, more difficult than achieving peace is the challenge of administrating peace. Creative prevention would find a good space for action in post-conflict situation for an environment eroded by violence such as Colombia: not because little can be done, but because a lot has to be done in order to prepare a future of well learnt lessons.

But the rhetoric of prevention has to be confronted with the discourse of the press in order to achieve the main goal of this paper. For the case analyzed, the operation has to take into account a brief consideration: the evidence of the relationship between press and power in Colombia.

The analysis will be referred to a specific fact, as stated above: the break-off of peace talks between the guerrilla of FARC and the government of Colombia. These are just two of the actors of the violent confrontation, but were the only ones committed to a formal dialogue, since January 1999. The contacts with other organizations have been informal, at least, or non-public. The *Ejército de Liberación Nacional - ELN* (National Liberation Army) has only had approaches to dialogues, and no formal (or public) contacts have been held with the AUC.

In such terms, the coverage of facts has occurred on a specific dynamics of a specific situation that can be seen as a fragment of

reality. From the overall picture of Colombian armed conflict and violence, the break off of the dialogues between FARC-EP and the government is just one of a myriad of events. Just to put it somehow, the armed conflict in Colombia causes “only” nearly 20 % of the almost 30,000 murders each year. This means that a comprehensive peace is much more than a successful negotiation, everywhere but particularly in Colombia. Nonetheless, media coverage on “peace” only focused on the immediate event that could affect the dynamics of violence: the broken off negotiations.



Both armed conflict and the end of talks are part of the whole picture of violence. The latter is even included in the first, to be more exact. But media tend to present the fact (the news) as the picture of a whole violence, in an inductive operation that tends to make forget that peace is a complex, multiform achievement, and not only the success of some peace dialogues. It is to note that Colombian media present the peace talks under the generic term of “peace process”, a conceptual mistake. Peace negotiations are only a part of the whole process of building peace, not the process itself.

*El Tiempo*, the main newspaper in Colombia, falls into this mistake. From this, some conclusions might be extracted in terms of comparing the discourse of prevention and the way the specific fact is presented.

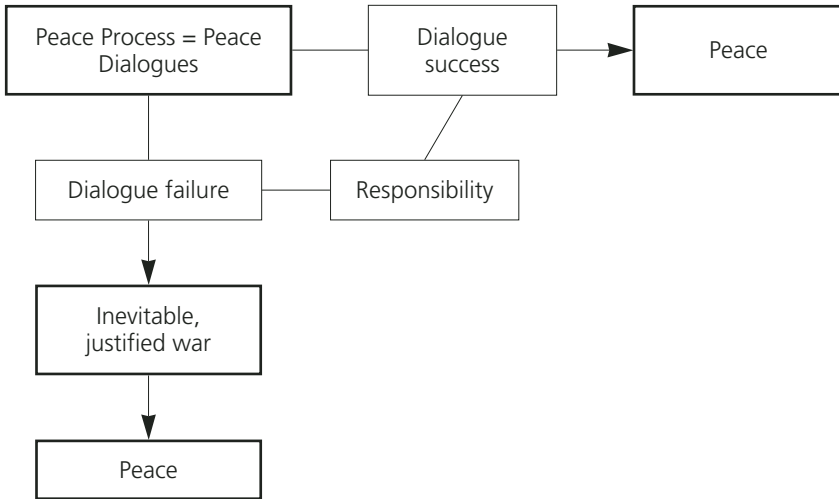
Some clarifications must be made:

1. *El Tiempo* is a newspaper of national circulation, the only daily publication with a national outreach. No other newspaper is a serious competitor for *El Tiempo*, which constitutes in fact a monopoly of daily information.

2. One family, the Santos, owns *el Tiempo*. They have had active participation in politics, from the presidency to ministries. One Santos is currently running for vice-president, as the running mate of the candidate that is now top in the polls. Information and power go hand in hand.
3. For the purpose of this paper the information taken as press text was the one published on Thursday, the 21<sup>st</sup> of February, 2002, the day after the breaking off of peace talks between the FARC and the government.

Some conclusions might be extracted:

1. The conceptual framework is erroneous, for the fact becomes the whole. It seems assumed that the achievement of peace depended on the success of negotiations. If logic overcomes, then the success of negotiation would lead to peace. No negotiation would mean no peace, which actually may be true, for no war can be present in peace. Nevertheless, no violence is the condition for peace, not only the absence of armed confrontation. The deductive operation of media, as stated above, is what leads to the affirmation "Peace Process is Over", and not to the more correct one: "Peace Talks between FARC and Government Interrupted".
2. The references to terror are constant, a day after the FARC were considered a political faction and not a terrorist organization. In fact, the press echoed Mr. Pastrana's status derogation of FARC. The guerrilla group was all of a sudden called a terrorist group, which constitutes a closed door for the possibility of going back to the negotiation table. Negotiations can only occur between political actors, and not between a legal political actor and a terrorist faction. A sort of post 11-S syndrome rarified the environment of war in Colombia, and the terrorist euphoria led to see every violent action as a terror action. Not to say that the FARC actions are not terrorist actions, but to consider what occurs when words and terms change in a certain violent convenience. In fact, *El Tiempo* mentioned the hijacking of the plane as "the first real incursion of FARC in air terrorism", in a clear reference to the modality of using planes as terror artifacts, something not very clear in this case, but clear as a reference.
3. If the Peace Process and Peace Dialogues correspond, then the inevitable paths towards war and peace depend on the failure or success of peace talks.



Since in fact the peace dialogues failed, war inevitably had to take place. More than that, war could be justifiable, since a clear responsibility could be identified. The discourse of prevention has no space in such a scheme. When a responsibility is individualized, in terms of knowing who responsible is (FARC for the case), the logics of punishing are imposed, not the principle of co-responsibility, common to conflict prevention and conflict resolution. Obliteration of those responsible is then justified, and achieving peace through violent means becomes normal and expected.

4. 15 personalities in Colombian politics, including presidential candidates, were interviewed. All of them expressed their concern. Some defended the government's initiative and some did not. It is to note that the AUC commanders, declared military enemies of the FARC and illegal, were quoted with the same status as all the other fourteen legal characters in Colombia's political environment.
5. Word use frequency conclusions, a form of interpretation that pays attention to quantitative matters more than to the qualitative matters on which this paper has focused, could also be extracted. Nonetheless, the mere presence of expressions can give an idea of the tone used through the presentation of facts: "hypocritical", "slap back", "cruelty", "FARC used time to make a transit to terrorism", "traditional tendency to search for peace through dialogue replaced by preference of an open confrontation", "Card

of International Community is exhausted", "B Plan", "No option for government", "Pastrana heard the people's voice", "Call to arms", "40 million army", "Urban terror", "no fear of barbaric acts". Few examples of a discourse that, far from preventing violence, incites to violence, even justifying its use as the means against violence. No references to nonviolence, prevention or possible future dialogue were present.

As a concluding remark, it must be said that the unpredictability of conflict in Colombia is certainly a challenge for the discourse of conflict prevention in general. But it was stated: prevention is not general, but specific. Media, as mediators, could collaborate with prevention or at least support peaceful initiatives. The trend of events hardly seems to allow such luxury. But the debate must change its tone. Otherwise the hecatomb can only get deeper. Such a panorama would be, by itself, an invitation: to develop all kinds of conflict prevention discourses, and to media to mediate.





# **Listening to the Voices of the People: The Media, Peace and Justice. The Case of East Timor**

Teresa Cunha

Youth Action for Peace: an old pacifist movement

I would like to present a brief and simple reflection about my cultural background in NGOs. My political training, as concerns Peace Work and Conflict Management, was (and still is) mainly within the international NGO "Youth Action for Peace".

Youth Action for Peace is a European movement with quite a long history: it was created in 1923, in France. Our own legend says that during the First World War, some young soldiers from France and Germany, struggling in the front, were invited to meet for mass and celebrate Christmas together for some hours. After this encounter, they returned to the front lines and had to shoot each other under the orders of their commanders. The legend also says, that some young people, in this extreme situation, promised themselves to stop shooting, to desert and begin a movement for peace in Europe. This small group of young deserters called themselves "Chevaliers de la Paix" and their basic conviction was as follows: we cannot shoot and kill anyone that we have met and who has then become our friend.

The interesting thing of this concept of building peace is that it requires, as a first step, crossing borders, meeting people on the other side of the "line" and building a friendly relationship. It is very much based on a personal/individual approach, and very much rooted in the value of positive emotions. This story has a moral, as somehow they always do: it brings us one dimension of Peace Construction and Conflict Prevention: personal contact, personal relations, no matter the national borders and what is imagined as being national: unique, different, and by definition, in confrontation with other unique and different national identities, on the other side of the border<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See Pureza, José Manuel.

These “Chevaliers de la Paix” did not succeed in their mission. We don’t have any news of relevant changes in the external relations of their countries (Germany and France), and some years later, another brutal war began, more or less on the same battlefield.

But they didn’t stop their activities for peace and conflict prevention, and during the Second World War, the movement adopted another name and was found throughout Western Europe (Belgium, Switzerland, France, Germany, Netherlands, the UK and Italy). At that time, in these countries, and using Switzerland as the main crossroads for its actions for freedom, the Christian Movement for Peace (the updated “Chevaliers de la Paix”) was engaged in hiding Jewish people and helping them escape from the ruling Nazi and fascist regimes in Europe. In our historical narratives, this period was one when women started to become very important in the decision-making process and their actions very significant. Great leaders were known as very courageous militants. (I met some of them in 1992 in our International Congress in Berlin dedicated to YAP Women and Peace Building).

At that time, building peace was not only a personal measure and was not only based on emotions and friendship. The movement assumed peace as an action against oppressors and for conflict prevention. Taking public positions about political regimes and trying to be coherent via concrete, sometimes risky, actions, was the main way of contributing to peace.

More and more, the discourse on peace began to focus on structural violence in society, and the extent to which war is just the logical conclusion of all kinds of violence in society.

The changes in the world during the sixties and seventies brought another problem to the agenda of YAP: People’s Liberation Struggles. For the first time, YAP crossed oceans and became not merely a European but an international movement: one branch was established in Canada another in South Africa. Co-operation with grassroots organizations (for social changes and with links with national liberation movements) was developed in countries like Palestine, Algeria, India, Salvador, Malta, Lebanon, Guatemala, East Timor, Northern Ireland, Namibia, Western Sahara, Eritrea. Quite often these contacts and projects were mediated by what we call, in general, “progressive Christian communities”.

YAP was asked by these grassroots organizations to do two main things:

- To denounce their oppression as much as we could via the media
- To provide international forums or arenas for their leaders to do it with their own voices.

CMP did so and the early seventies gave us a wonderful tool: the European Youth Centre of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. The internationalism, the international solidarity started to be a relevant and strong framework of our peace work.

What is the importance of this development? From my point of view, it brought several strengths and several problems. Starting with the strengths:

- Peace, started to be considered as an issue, related to international relations between countries, worldwide; this is a political problem and not only one of irrational violence.
- Peace is linked with rights, which are “universal” in the sense that they are a common patrimony (like self-determination) of all peoples, nations, countries and persons. Rights have to be respected and guarantees of freedom, justice and peace are also a common and universal duty.
- Peace and building peace is perceived as a global question, touching and dealing with personal dimensions, societies, nations, and the international community. Peace is where and when rights and duties are mutual and reciprocal.

Aiming at peace for all, many studies, many demonstrations, much information was produced and disseminated, many seminars, many study visits, street actions, many exchange and development projects, many contacts were organized and made.

This special period brought two key issues to our NGO:

- How to overcome (solve) the contradiction between refusing violence and violent ways of conflict resolution or even conflict management, and the acceptance of, and even the support for, people’s liberation struggles, with their armies and military actions?
- How to include in our identity, mostly constructed in an western and European matrix and atmosphere, the contributions, discussions and the visions of the world, coming from our African fellows, Muslim friends, Asian and South American *compañeros*? How to make a synthesis and continue our action for peace?

After 1989 Hungary, Romania, Latvia, Russia and Ukraine joint the movement. The old CMP didn’t reject so many new identities and renamed itself as “Youth Action for Peace” after more than ten years of discussions and debate (started long before the fall of the Berlin wall) about our specificity and our mission, in this new and complex world. Nobody was really satisfied with this name because it does not reveal

any special vision of Peace and Peace Building. It only states a desire for action and gives this privilege to youngsters.

If our name doesn't say much of relevance about us, the preamble to our international constitution gives a framework for peace action and conflict prevention, supported by some values, that goes beyond this challenged identity:

"Youth Action for Peace is an international movement which aims for societies of justice, peace and human solidarity. It struggles against different forms of violence, exploitation, injustice and exclusion; against networks of ideological, religious, sexist, political, cultural and economic oppression and imbalance of natural surroundings. It supports all those, women and men, who want to take their destiny into their hands so as to organize collectively a responsible, liberating society".

In my opinion, work for peace and conflict prevention, in YAP, after eighty years of its founding, is based in three main convictions:

- a) Peace is much more than an absence of military war. So, in this sense, peace building has to be founded on global Freedom, Justice and Solidarity;
- b) Peace is a permanent struggle against any source of oppression or discrimination;
- c) Peace is a collective task which doesn't accept conformism.

The question of the environment is not sufficiently explicit in this text so I don't take it as real concern in the approach of YAP.<sup>2</sup>

What does building peace mean concretely? What do we do to somehow achieve these aims?

As I said before, in peace building, we continually deal with contradictions and ambiguities. It is, indeed, a very complex issue. In the daily life of an NGO, we have to face so many operational, ethical and cultural problems that we need to create a few references, limits and non-negotiated principles for ourselves. So, we participate in peace building, at three levels:

—Heterogeneous action for peace construction and conflict prevention, in local communities at the grassroots. This local action has to be very much based in the self-identification of the needs and skills of a certain territory and the people living there, and goes through a diversity of local development projects, personal empowerment and political awareness initiatives, like:

- Preservation of the ecological environment of turtles in Mexico,

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<sup>2</sup> But for me personally, is ever more crucial.

- The reconstruction of schools and medical centres in Palestine,
- Hosting children from the West Sahara refugee camps for schooling in Switzerland,
- Training unemployed young people and supporting them to create their own jobs in France,
- Provide Portuguese language courses to East Timorese students, in Portugal,
- Setting up a pottery cooperative in Cabo Verde.

At this level, everybody can decide and do what they believe to be relevant to their living place, and build up a “society of justice, peace and human solidarity”. Quite often these actions are quite efficient and recognized as useful and innovative.

This local work allows us to use our oldest method of building peace and conflict prevention: we exchange people, information, ideas and projects. We have quite an important network for these exchanges, and everyone, without any discrimination, can travel and host travellers.

At this level we go beyond the local community and are already on the path of internationalism, networking, extending good practices, creating transnational solidarity.

In total, YAP organizes almost 300 international work camps, every year in 27 countries from the different continents. We also organize international seminars, study sessions or conferences in different countries and continents. We exchange around 100 volunteers among the different local projects. We create a wider community via projects, but also via personal relations, affection, and emotions between people coming from very distant and distinct places in the world.

3. Finally I want to say some words about the ethical and ideological reference of YAP: Human Rights. We use the Universal Declaration or the European Convention of Human Rights, as the reference, normative and ethical text, for internally and externally legitimizing our action in building peace, in three different ways:

- a) Denouncing in international forums, like NGO Platforms, Conferences, and UN Committees, situations of oppression. The problem is to find consensus about what are the priorities, concerning situations of oppression; when achieved, this is often fragile and polemical.
- b) To take part in the international movement of opinion—in the words of Boaventura de Sousa Santos, this cosmopolitanism, this way of producing counter-hegemonic globalisation for Human Rights, claiming and fighting for the inclusion of every person in

the world, from any space, without any pre-condition, other than being a human being, in a common rule of rights. The indivisibility of Human Rights is also, a main concept in our approach.

- c) As a legal tool, to claim or fight for a certain right. This was quite important to obtain the right of asylum for Algerian refugees in France or for Albanians in Italy in recent years. It was quite important for our work in East Timor, for instance.

But, once more, we have problems, very often, to determine where are the limits; in what measure these charts

- help us to understand the world here and there,
- help when we have to decide what is the most common interpretation (the maximum of meaning) of a certain right or duty
- help us to remain efficient in our action.

A significant number of decisions and actions are made, based on the belief that what is written down in the Chart is a minimum. Associated to this we use criteria like social usefulness in the context, quite a lot of intuition... and a permanent political debate within the organization.

We hold extensive dialogues, and try to exchange ideas and perspectives, before acting.

We have huge discussions when we take a position, which can be considered quite important from the political point of view. For example, on the situation of Palestine, the official position is as follows: Israel is not respecting the International Agreements, and any peace plan has to stop all violence and assume the reciprocal right of existence. However among us this position is not a final one because while it is enough for some, for others it is too little.

Quite often our colleges from the southern branches clamour for more action and less statements.

## **The case of East Timor**

### *Until 1999*

Since the beginning of my work, I have always linked conflict resolution with peace building, because I believe that both go together.

YAP Portugal engaged itself within the international movement of solidarity with East Timor, of which the most important leader has been the CDPM<sup>3</sup>, since 1983.

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<sup>3</sup> Comissão para os Direitos do Povo Maubere - Comissao for the Rights of the Maubere People, based in Lisbon.

The situation during the Indonesian occupation was very hard for the people of the territory; not much information was available and we needed to confirm and update it, continuously. The main “weapon” we had, was the unfinished list of names, dates and locations of torture or murder, some testimonies and a few photos. With that material we tried to make the so-called “civil society” aware of what was going there, in East Timor. Journalists were an important part of the process and they were invited to press conferences whenever we had a little piece of reliable information to offer. We knew that public opinion plays an important role in this context. Knowing, which generally means *seeing*, is a pre-condition for acting.

East Timor was also a sensitive political question for Portugal and the Portuguese government. It was clear for the solidarity movement that we needed to obtain a clear position on East Timor from politicians and make it public, using the media as much as possible.

At the international level, it was important systematically to remind our friends everywhere that the principle of self-determination is an inalienable right of every nation, including East Timor; we also had to redraw the map of the planet to make the little island of East Timor visible.

We needed to approach different publics, repeating to everyone, with full conviction, that history hadn't ended and there was hope for human liberty, bringing justice to East Timor and its people.

Other nations and other peoples were under the same rule of occupation as East Timor and we knew that the proper strategy was to transform this “domestic” solidarity into a transnational movement, in permanent dialogue with the external diplomacy of East Timor. In this respect, this co-operation between the “solidarity movement” and East Timorese leaders was always close.

For this purpose of internationalisation, we gathered in different occasions and places, people from East Timor, Namibia, Southern Africa, Northern Ireland, Guatemala, Brazil, Eritrea, West Sahara, Palestine, and Indonesia. We learnt as much as we could about all these struggles: reasons, purposes, methods and aims. We created a special network and established personal, cognitive, political and cultural relationships. The empowerment was mutual and we constructed a common knowledge about what we can do, together, for peace and conflict prevention, outside of the formal (political or intellectual) arenas but very much rooted in every day peace action. We learnt how much one gesture *here* could bring at least hope, *there*.

The Council of Europe gave us, on several occasions, full support to do so: financing, providing all kind of facilities, including for getting visas for those living outside of Europe. In each seminar, conference or

symposium we invited the media and performed mostly symbolic street actions, to try to broaden the question of East Timor and the right of self-determination of every nation in the world. To reach as many people as possible was our goal, because we already knew that silence is the best friend of oppression, conflict and dictators.

One of the hardest lessons from this period was the following: is really difficult to break out the wall of what is considered important or not, to the media. Often they know almost nothing about the issue and to convince them to listen was a quite difficult job. Step by step, the silence had been broken and, as we know, some journalists, and the media in general, played a crucial role from the very beginning (the work of the four murdered Australian journalists in 1974) until September 1999 when UN troops entered East Timor to stop the violence and mobilize the necessary mechanisms to lead to a peaceful situation.

### *1999 and the preparation of the People's Consultation*

#### FIRST PHASE

In January 1999, a new hope for peace and for the end of the conflict was open by the former president of the Republic of Indonesia, Habibie. Finally a formal and a legal step were foreseen: a people's consultation about the future of East Timor. This was the main claim of the East Timorese People and the solidarity movement: a genuine act of self-determination outlined in the international law and supervised by the international community (UN).

The Agreement of 5 May signed in New York between Portugal and Indonesia under the auspices of the United Nations created the international framework for a Referendum in the territory of East Timor, about the future of the nation. I want to recall three things about this Agreement:

- First, the People's Consultation, as the referendum was called, had the aim of finding out through a democratic process, whether the Timorese wanted to remain in the Indonesian Republic with a political status of a "special autonomy" within the unitary republic of Indonesia or, if they wanted to reject this autonomy;
- Second, this Referendum to be accomplished needed, "immediately after signing of this Agreement, an appropriate United Nations Mission in East Timor"<sup>4</sup>, (UNAMET) which has to work in strait

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations (1999), *Agreement between the Republic of Indonesia and the Portuguese Republic on the question of East Timor*, article 2



co-operation with the Indonesian authorities, which were responsible for “maintaining peace and security in East Timor, in order to ensure that the popular consultation is carried out in a fair and peaceful way in an atmosphere free of intimidation, violence or interference from any side”.<sup>5</sup>

—Portugal and Indonesia should set up an Official Observation Mission to follow the different phases of the implementation of the People’s Consultation.

I recall these questions to make clear that the Portuguese government had, besides all the diplomatic work normal in such situations, the duty to provide official observers, and to be able, through their “observations”, to evaluate if the process of registration, campaign, ballot and vote counting was done according to the conditions previously agreed.

Portugal chose to organize an Official Mission of Observers including diplomats, security forces (army and police), representatives of the 5 political parties represented in the Parliament and representatives of national NGOs.

I was chosen as one of the representatives of the national NGOs platform to this Official Mission of Observation in East Timor in 1999.

To go to East Timor, in June 1999, raised several questions in my mind, of which two were preminent:

What will be most important to observe, to see?

And:

What will I do with my observations?

I knew about the climate of intimidation and permanent conflict. I was also sure that it would be impossible for me, being in the eye of the hurricane, to remain outside of conflict and violence.

So, how to prepare this experience of participating in a mission of conflict prevention? How to contribute to a *direct, secret and universal ballot, in fair and peaceful way, in an atmosphere free of intimidation, violence or interference from any side?*

I could identify some basic and fundamental actions such as:

1. To update knowledge about the situation in East Timor in as much depth as possible: for instance,
  - To estimate the number of Indonesian army and police forces and their apparatus in the field, the militia and their public statements, their leaderships and their localization

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<sup>5</sup> United Nations (1999), *Agreement between the Republic of Indonesia and the Portuguese Republic on the question of East Timor*, article 3.

- To better understand the patterns of acts of intimidation and murder, in remote villages or within cities
  - To assess the possibilities of external communication with East Timor, by phone, email, satellite, etc.
  - To find reliable contact persons in the field, to ensure access to relevant places, events, and persons, to find safe places in case of objective danger.
  - To record prices and general conditions of life.
2. To make contact with the other NGO observers and to check with them if we could agree in certain common procedures, such as having a contact person in Portugal to receive information and know what to do with it, as a backup or alternative source of information for the Portuguese government and the public.
  3. It was also important to talk deeply with Timorese representatives of CNRT, outside of the territory, to better understand the challenges and dangers of the Agreement and also to negotiate in what terms CNRT could be used as a channel of communication to the outside world.
  4. To read the notes of previous experiences in other stages of armed conflict such as Northern Ireland and Western Sahara, and recall the procedures of personal security and how to behave in a hostile environment. In the field, every procedure of security is simultaneously personal and collective because we depend on each other very much indeed.
  5. To take note of experiences that YAP has gathered in years of work in peace building.
  6. Finally, to read carefully all the documentation about the official observers, their role, their legitimacy and their limits.<sup>6</sup>

The main aim of participating in a mission like this one, was to contribute to the implementation of the New York 5 May Agreement, which could lead, I was absolutely persuaded, to the end of the conflict, to peace and to independence for East Timor. To guarantee physical and psychological security was thus, a duty and a responsibility.

## SECOND PHASE

So, it was really important to observe, to see, to touch the truth as much as possible. The truth was, basically, what Indonesians wanted to

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<sup>6</sup> Of course there are other personal procedures, like health, for example, that are not relevant to this reflection.

hide from foreigners. To reach this aim, to see the truth, it is necessary to have an *eye of the way* beside us, to guide our eyes, hearts, movement and questions. The *Mata Dalan*, as they say in East Timor.

To know the field is absolutely fundamental. To be able to move everywhere is essential. Without this linkage with the native people, we are lost in five minutes. In conflict (prevention) we cannot allow ourselves to be confused, cheated, or trapped. We need help from one who knows more about it than anybody; we need to find the proper, the right *Mata Dalan*.

Besides moving always and everywhere, I decided to take notes in a diary. Day by day, in the act of writing, I could also try to re-make or re-organize useful information for the following days. On the other hand, I could use it afterwards for further and deeper reflections about conflict prevention and peace building. Tracking a process, reviewing events and their connexions could help me and others to understand more about peace, or about absence of peace and what is necessary, to make the essential ruptures, in this logic of war and violence.

Being in East Timor during the summer of 1999, I could test my accumulated experience in peace building and conflict prevention that I constructed in the luxurious rearguard in Europe within YAP, during so many years.

#### PEACE IS A PERMANENT STRUGGLE AGAINST ANY SOURCE OF OPPRESSION OR DISCRIMINATION

East Timor had a visible and significant military presence. The East Timor Observatory estimated that there were a total of 32 500 military, police and paramilitary personnel in the territory. The proportion was, according to this Observatory, one official for every 25 inhabitants. The most impressive, was to find troops, recognizable by their radio antenna, in little lost villages of three or four bamboo huts in the mountains or in distant places on the southern coast.

The misery of the population was complete: the people lived from what the little gardens they cultivate could offer. Malnutrition, tuberculosis, malaria, dengue fever, diarrhoeal diseases and Japanese encephalitis were (and still are) endemic.<sup>7</sup>

The development, announced by Indonesian government during 24 years of occupation, concerning roads, electricity, and drinking water, can be summed up as: hundreds of kilometres of roads to give military and police forces access to some villages and check points.

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<sup>7</sup> See the East Timor Observatory newspaper HEA02-12/03/2001.

The availability of products in the main shops in Dili was scarce and of very poor quality (and virtually non-existent elsewhere). Drinkable water had to be bought in bottles and electricity was very irregular.

Accomplishing a phone call in East Timor in 1999 was an adventure and a test of patience and luck. The newspapers and TV stations were completely controlled by the government.

In East Timor the situation was harder than is imaginable: without free information, without means of access to other sources of information, poor and terrorised by military, police and militias, the Timorese people lived in one giant concentration camp, which was their own homeland. The people were always very reserved towards foreigners. The fear could be felt and recognized very easily. This was all very visible and very impressive.

Despite the continuous militarisation of the society during the war, which destroyed a significant proportion of social relations (local leadership, conflict resolution mechanisms, family loyalties), the people found ways to organize themselves in order to be able to respond efficiently to any situation of danger. They were starving, half naked and full of health problems, illiterate, but found means of efficient communication among them. They took actions, every day, to avoid more risk than was necessary. Their discipline was irreproachable during the dramatic events following the announcement of the results of the Referendum in order to avoid any possibility that the government of Indonesia would invoke civil war or any other argument, to remain in the territory and place the ballot in question.

Their aspiration for peace was greater than any other objective.

Beyond this incredible lucidity they were ready to provide foreigners with all the infrastructure they needed: information, food, maps, guides, interpreters, translators, drivers, cooks... To support observers and independent journalists, was perceived as a strategic role on the path for liberation.

May I say, that during 32 days in East Timor (August and September 1999), travelling every day in the mountains from Baguia near the Mate Bian to Tutuala in the eastern part of island, I only saw one journalist: a free lance Japanese photographer! After the murder of the local leader, Liurai Veríssimo, he disappeared.

But you saw violence on TV broadcast news. How, if my colleagues and I didn't see cameras and people looking for information and images? This is a mystery that I never solved.

Anyway, can you now imagine how much and how cruel was the violence in reality throughout East Timor?

The violence in East Timor at that time was such that I could never have imagined it. No one who was not a hero could have been prepared for it, or able to manage it and to transform it into a tool for peace.

PEACE IS A COLLECTIVE TASK THAT DOESN'T ACCEPT CONFORMISM

I came back, full of new experiences and full of the wisdom of my dearest friends, the eyes of my way, who stayed in East Timor.

I assumed the role of building peace and preventing conflict in East Timor by:

- Telling their story,
- Helping the world to not forget their courage and their capacity to change the destiny they never chose
- Stating that peace building is possible even under extreme conditions
- Saying that liberation concerns earth and soul, territory and society, politics and social relations:

*We should all understand that liberation of the fatherland [and motherland] is only half of the objective of independence. After independence, liberation of the people constitutes the other half of the objective of independence.*

Xanana Gusmão

## 5. Conclusions

After this experience in East Timor, some of the remaining questions about pacifism and conflict management, conflict transformation or conflict resolution and their contradictions have become even more acute.

- I don't pretend to find definitive answers, of course. However I want to raise questions permanently, before and after each step of peace building, within or outside YAP.
- I want to avoid reproducing the simplistic demagoguery and rhetoric (too often becoming the normative discourse), of those that never had to take the position of being there, in the eye of the conflict.
- I believe that it is necessary to be aware of limits, but also, to be aware of the potentialities of co-operation in order to construct a common world of peace.

- We also need, in spite of physical distance or cultural ambiguity, to permanently exchange ideas, information, projects, and people so as to build up networks.
- To prevent conflicts, it is essential to hear the people, their voices, their perceptions, their hopes. They must exist.
- We want an international community strengthened by an ecological vision of the world where everybody has the same dignity and can never become a commodity.
- Peace building is producing and redistributing richness in another type of market where price and value go together. There is no Peace without economical and cognitive Justice.

Peace building and conflict prevention need time, research, perseverance, lots of humility and extreme daring.

Report of a Seminar:  
**“The Role of the Media in Conflict Prevention  
and Peace Building”**

The Netherlands Association of Journalists  
The Hague, 20 February 2002

Commissioned by  
The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands

## **I. Introduction**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands commissioned the Dutch Federation of Journalists to convene a seminar on the role of the media in conflict prevention, conflict management and peace building.

Besides the organisation of the actual seminar this also comprised an inventory of available project reports, publications and articles as well as the activities of Dutch NGOs concerning media and conflict. This has resulted in an extensive Overview document containing detailed descriptions of available resources, as well as an extensive listing of cases on the subject of media and peace building. Additional copies of this document can be obtained by sending an email to *mvangeelen@fastmail.fm*.

Below you will find the report of the seminar, which took place in The Hague on the twentieth of February 2002. The seminar brought together media organisation representatives, policy makers, representatives of non-governmental organisations and journalists / media practitioners. The overall objective was to discuss the role media can play, or actually play, in preventing and resolving violent conflicts. More specifically answers were sought to the following questions:

- Do the media play a significant role in reducing/increasing tensions between conflicting parties?
- And if so, how can the international community stimulate the media’s role in reducing these tensions?

Introductions to the subject were delivered by two keynote speakers, namely Cees J. Hamelink, professor of Mass Communication at the Universiteit van Amsterdam and Ross Howard, project director of the Canadian Institute for Media, Policy And Civil Society (IMPACS). After the plenary session participants were split up in three working groups focussing on three specific geographic regions, namely the Balkans, the Middle East and Indonesia / The Moluccas. Following introductory presentations by the working group facilitators the participants formulated specific recommendations concerning possible media interventions by the international community in the regions concerned. In a plenary session at the end of the day the working groups reported back their findings to the chair. This was followed by a discussion on the findings of the working groups and additional key issues and concluding remarks by the chairman.

In this report you will find the summaries of the contributions by the keynote-speakers (sections III and IV), as well as the opening statement by Maarten Lak, Head Policy Planning Staff of the Ministry (section II). In section V you will find the most relevant findings / recommendations of the three working groups. Section VI deals with more general key issues and points of debate, which emerged from the plenary session. Attached is the full version of the speech by Ross Howard as well as the programme of the seminar and the list of participants.

## **II. Opening Speech by Maarten Lak, Head Policy Planning Staff at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands**

In his opening words Mr. Lak welcomed all the participants and introduced the two keynote-speakers: Ross Howard, project director at the Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society (IMPACS) in Vancouver, and Cees Hamelink, professor in mass communication at the Universiteit van Amsterdam. He remarked that the great interest in this seminar points to the relevance of the subject for the work of many of the participants, i.e. journalists as well as representatives from non-governmental organisations dealing with the media, research institutions, the EC Commission and ministries.

“In the last ten years or so we have witnessed a constantly growing role of the modern mass media —newspapers, radio and TV as well as the internet— in reporting on ethnic conflict, religious controversy, warfare and the like from all over the world. We all remember the Gulf War in the early nineties when, for the first time in modern age, one TV station —notably CNN in Atlanta— kept a



sort of monopoly informing a worldwide audience on the latest developments. More recent examples are the Kosovo war, the Chechen conflict and the 2001 war against Taliban and Al Qaeda and the daily reports on conflicts in a number of European, Asian and African countries.”

Mr. Lak argued that in distinguishing roles of the mass media, many will in the first place think of the ongoing ‘movie stories’ they present in showing emotional, often sensational scenes that may appeal to a ‘basic need’ of curiosity. Excitement and sensation are often keywords here. We all know examples from our own experience, Mr. Lak said. According to Mr. Lak the more traditional function of the media, that is disseminating information on what is going on in «hot spots» in the world, is of more relevance to today’s meeting. The audience is the international community at large as well as in the regions concerned, including decision makers, opinion leaders and activists.

Mr. Lak pointed to yet another function of the mass media that has come more to the foreground in recent years, namely the role they play in civil society by contributing to peace building and the prevention of renewed conflict. Organisations like UNESCO and numerous NGO’s are nowadays involved in projects and programmes to contribute to conflict prevention and peace building. “A country like the Netherlands has supported and still supports a range of activities in this area. This specific role of the media is often less known and not always transparent. This is the main reason that we have decided to hold this seminar and see if we can deepen our common understanding of mechanisms that work and those that do not work.”

Violent conflict is widespread and forms one of the biggest problems of this time. Although the short-term relief to war torn countries is vital, the affected populations need more than medical supplies, food and blankets. One of these needs is the need to be informed. Today, there is a general consensus that media can play a significant role in conflict situations, not only in provoking hatred and killing, but also in promoting conflict resolution, peace building and reconciliation. Research tells us that the most effective combination for successful communication is a well-thought out mixture of ‘entertainment’ and ‘desired outcome’ programming.

“Today we will discuss various possible approaches for media initiatives. By e.g. actively involving local media practitioners and establishing a proximity with the populations involved, advantages, like more accurate and culturally suitable content and a higher chance of future sustainability, are created. In some conflict situations,

however, it is impossible to establish such a 'presence on the ground'. In these cases the reconciliation or humanitarian needs programming must be beamed in from abroad, this approach is often taken by international broadcasters."

Mr. Lak explained that compromise is an essential element in all conflict prevention and media projects. Recent research has shown that managers of media interventions often find themselves having to strike a careful balance between maintaining a working relationship with local authorities and providing their audience with information to improve their well-being and to their ability to act in that sense. Mr. Lak quoted from a report by Media Action International: "Foreign media interventions in conflicts are fraught with potential difficulties and even dangers." For that reason, some international donors have focussed their attention on supporting local efforts instead. By making available space or airtime for the expression of grievances, the media can encourage a healing process. However, if the audience feels the message is imposed from outside, it is highly unlikely to be receptive. Mr. Lak stressed that in his opinion media interventions need local partnership if not ownership to be successful.

Mr. Lak concluded by expressing the hope that this seminar will provide all participants with a few practical conclusions and recommendations that may guide them in their day-to-day work. "We can all learn from successes and failures on which we will be briefed by such outstanding experts today."

### **III. Keynote speech by Cees J. Hamelink, Professor of Mass Communication at the Universiteit van Amsterdam**

#### *The Assumptions*

Mr. Hamelink started his presentation by distinguishing three important assumptions on which the discussion on media and conflict prevention in academic literature, seminar reports and popular writings is often based:

- More and better information is essential to conflict prevention. Once people know more about each other, they will understand each other and be less inclined to conflict. Therefore peace-building messages are essential to conflict prevention.
- It is also common to follow a core observation from the Constitution of UNESCO: war begins in the minds of men and therefore the

minds of men need to be influenced through the mass media. The implied suggestion is obviously that if the mass media can influence the minds of men in negative ways, the media can also —through positive messages— develop a culture of peace.

- There is a linear historical and moral progression in which humanity evolves from a state of war mongering towards a state of world peace. Peace represents an utopian vision to the realisation of which information/communication could and should contribute.

### *Critical Footnotes*

Much of the thinking on the relation between media and conflict is based upon an attractive but seriously flawed cause-effect model. Mr. Hamelink stated that the idea, that communication is the key variable and depending upon how it is manipulated peace or war are the outcome, has been disproved by communication research. Communication/information processes do not occur in the linear mode of a simple Pavlov-type Stimulus/Response model that assumes linear, causal relations between information inputs and behavioural outputs. These processes are more complex; involve feedback mechanisms and somewhere between the message and the receiver there are intervening black box variables that may create predictable, expected and desirable as well as unpredictable, unexpected and undesirable effects.

Concerning the first assumption Mr. Hamelink remarked that some healthy scepticism is needed. From this assumption it follows that if adversaries knew more about each other, it would be easier for them to reach agreement. He stated that it is difficult to find empirical evidence for this suggestion and one could equally well propound the view that social harmony is largely due to the degree of ignorance that actors have vis-à-vis each other. As an example he gave the fact that many societies maintain levels of stability because they employ rituals, customs and conventions that enable their members to engage in social interactions without having detailed information about each other. There may indeed be a conflict situation precisely because adversaries have full and detailed information about each other's aims and motives. Therefore, it can be argued that a functional level of secrecy can be helpful in containing potential conflict.

Mr Hamelink continued by questioning the second assumption: War begins in the minds of men. He explained that wars among members of the human species start with the material, physical fact or their bodies. Quote: "The human life form is —like other life forms— constantly involved in a struggle for life. Inevitable components of that struggle

are aggression, violence and war. Greek philosopher Heraclitus called war the father of all things: it is the permanent human condition. And centuries later Emmanuel Levinas writes that the human being is locked up into the state of war." Mr. Hamelink explained that in the struggle for life human beings, unlike other animals that are restrained by their instincts, must hope that rational considerations put limits to this struggle. As the human being fails so often in this effort, his/her competition and aggression tends to be exercised with violence that knows little or no restraint. Mr. Hamelink concluded that the expectations about the power of information/communication neglect the fact that conflicts often address very real points of contention and may be based upon the antagonistic interests of fundamentally divergent political and economic systems. If disputes are about competing claims to scarce resources (as often is the case) it is unlikely that distorted communication is the crucial variable or that correction of this distortion would resolve the conflict. As an example Mr. Hamelink made the prediction that the bloodiest conflicts of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are likely to be about water.

The idea, that history proceeds in progressive steps and that through enlightenment, rationality and particularly through science & technology humanity is on the road towards harmony and peace, is a myth. This myth of the progress in modernity was exploded in Auschwitz and Hiroshima. Quote "There is no linear progressive process, history is circular and moves around the same core: the human possibility. The suggestion of moral progress is misleading. Mr. Hamelink remarked that inhumanity is part of the human phenomenon. It is a human possibility. We should therefore primarily ask which are the material, physical conditions of this possibility.

### *Making matters worse*

Although Mr Hamelink was sceptical about the potential of information/communication as the key variables in conditions of peace and war, he stated that they can certainly make the human condition a lot worse. This has been demonstrated by the role that mass media have played in genocidal conflicts. In 1994, in just a few months, some 500,000 to one million Tutsi's were killed by Hutu's. Radio Television Mille Collines (the Hutu extremist radio and TV station) played an essential role in the massacre by repeatedly broadcasting messages in which Tutsi's were slandered and ridiculed and depicted as despicable.

Mr. Hamelink explained that this example points to one of the world's most critical problems: The alarming and worldwide increase of ethnic conflicts. With almost certainty it can be predicted that several

violent ethnic conflicts are still to break out in the near future. The potential for such conflicts is extremely high in different parts of the world. Around the world some 10,000 distinct societies have to find ways to live together in some 200 countries. At the dramatic core of ethnic conflicts is the grand scale perpetration of crimes against humanity. Crimes against humanity transgress taboos that apply in most cultures, such as the murder or torture of defenceless men and women, and the killing of children. Among the crimes against humanity —as defined by international law— are murder and extermination of civilian populations, genocide and apartheid.

Although crimes can be committed without apparent motivation, the exercise of gross violence at a grand scale —as in crimes against humanity— need motivating beliefs. These motivating beliefs, which Mr. Hamelink referred to as “elimination beliefs”, are usually spread through a systematic distribution of hate propaganda and des-information. In this propaganda the “other” is dehumanised, whereas the superiority of one’s own group is emphasized. The propagandists convincingly suggest to their audiences that the “others” pose fundamental threats to the security and well being of society and that the only effective means of escaping this threat is the elimination of this great danger.

According to Mr. Hamelink crimes against humanity are unthinkable without elimination beliefs, therefore all those who propagate beliefs in support of genocide, through whatever media, have to be treated as perpetrators of crimes against humanity and should be brought to justice. To prevent incitements to genocide Mr. Hamelink plead for an International Media Alert System that monitors media contents in areas of conflict. This system should spot —and subsequently expose— public expressions of elimination beliefs as early as possible. Those perpetrating those crimes should be prosecuted, and with the advent of the International Criminal Court there is a serious prospect of implementing this.

Mr. Hamelink admitted that towards the end of his presentation he still seemed to attach importance to the role of the media in conflict prevention. However, he made it clear that in his opinion serious conflicts are most often about material and physical interests and are not just the result of incitement through the media. Even so, the incitement to genocide in media is often the early sign of very dramatic events and the development of an International Media Alert System might motivate the international community to intervene in the early stages of the killing fields.

#### IV. **Keynote Speech by Ross Howard, Project Director at the Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society (IMPACS)**

The second speaker, Mr. Ross Howard, is closely involved in designing a «Framework for Media and Peace Building». This framework is meant to assist donors, international agencies and non-governmental agencies and media institutions, to recognize the potential of media in conflict resolution, and to evaluate what they can do in this respect. This framework will be posted on the IMPACS website soon. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) funded this effort.

Howard distinguished between *conventional* and *unconventional journalism*. In his view the conventional kind professes neutrality and personal disengagement and is still enormously important in reducing conflicts and bringing about stability within war-torn states. Around the world democracy nowadays varies almost directly with the presence of a competent, diverse and free media. If the media are competent — meaning accurate and reliably impartial— it provides early warning of potential outbreaks or renewal of violent conflict, serves as a watchdog over leaders and officials, and monitors human rights.

A diverse media reflects competing opinions and interests and enables citizens to make well-informed choices. An independent media is essential to the functioning of other civil society actors beyond the government, from community groups to political parties. According to Howard good journalism provides channels of communication, which counteract misperceptions. Quote: «Good journalism identifies the interests at stake, and provides a safe outlet for emotions, among other things.» He made reference to recent developments in Bosnia Herzegovina and Cambodia. According to Howard in Bosnia Herzegovina there is no comprehensive journalism training or education in place. The existing journalism faculties are politically tainted, obsolete and often incompetent. Many of the most talented journalists have emigrated and will never return, the younger generation of journalists lack mentors to teach them the craft.

While in Cambodia the UN-imposed constitution theoretically allows the most untrammelled free media in South East Asia, there is absolutely no tradition of independent or reliable indigenous newspapers. The papers are almost all partisan and constantly repeat innuendo and political libel as fact. Because there is no independent broadcasting authority the radio and television are generally bland, biased towards the government and totally uncompetitive. Quote: “It is clear that journalism development must go beyond journalists and technology. You need a media-supportive infrastructure, which includes regulations

and agencies, codes of conduct and statutes and political commitments to ensure a free and diverse media.»

For journalists who are in the «peace building business», whose intentions are clear and involve a committed response to conflict, some of the techniques of journalism are proving to be effective tools. According to Howard there are «media-smart people» who are doing some very impressive work by using *unconventional journalism* to ease conflicts. He stressed that their techniques deserve more attention. In most societies the ability of the media to reach large populations over large areas is simply too powerful to be ignored. Cheap technology has made the media so pervasive around the world that it is almost like air. Peace builders lacking other elements of social cohesion, such as responsible governments to work with, are learning to work with the media. It is becoming clear that the media can alter social and political behaviour to help resolve conflicts almost as effectively as they can enflame conflict, Howard said.

Obviously this kind of thinking goes beyond conventional journalism. The focus is on the effect of media rather than the mere presence of news media outlets and their practice. The intention here is to communicate information, which turns public sentiment towards resolution of conflict. This is what Howard called *intended-outcome programming*. The media becomes a facilitator of positive social change, rather than a professional, disinterested observer. The programming format for this kind of media usage can vary from conventional news-casts with a different focus, to popular music or soap operas, or children's entertainment which attracts audiences to the conciliatory message, and to unconventional media such as street theatre or posters, and to new technologies like the internet and the web. Overall, the intention is to achieve a synergy between the communications skills of media professionals and the people-centred approaches of conflict resolution. Under no circumstances, however, is the promotion of biased or knowingly inaccurate information, or viewpoints masquerading as objective journalism, a valid approach.

Howard mentioned a few successful examples of intended outcome programming. In the first place the BBC World Service broadcasts into *Afghanistan*. In the last 8 years until September 11 the BBC beamed programmes on subjects ranging from conflict reduction to mine safety to child nutrition to reducing violence against women, into Afghanistan from transmitters in *Pakistan*. All the messages and themes were developed within entertaining soap operas featuring family-life dramas scripted for radio. The BBC programmers found that the Afghani people were starved for entertainment, and through entertainment they received life-saving and behaviour-changing information. In *Macedonia*

the American NGO Search for Common Ground used a television format. Working with the producers of Sesame Street, film and animation are mixed to craft messages intended to reduce social tension and strengthen inter-ethnic relations. The story line involves five children from different ethnic backgrounds, living in the same apartment block.

Howard explained briefly the spectrum of five types of media, which can contribute to conflict resolution, as developed in the Framework study. At the one end of the spectrum are initiatives to overcome journalism crippled by its lack of competency, diversity, freedom and technology. This *rudimentary journalism training* (type 1) addresses unskilled, inaccurate, conflict-obsessed, or highly partisan media. A second type of media intervention focuses on more *responsible journalism* (type 2) which goes beyond basic journalism, and focuses on skills such as developing investigative, explanatory and specialist reporting, as well as well-informed analytical reporting. The intention here is to create a media sector that serves society by stimulating conflict resolution processes and upholding democratic governance. Type three is located between traditional journalism and pro-active uses of the media. Journalists are encouraged to consciously examine their role to recognize conflict resolution as part of that role. In this *transitional journalism* (type 3) development, journalists redefine whom and what is newsworthy, to better inform and encourage reconciliation. Sensitised media professionals may actively seek to put two conflicting sides together to stimulate dialogue.

Distinct from conventional journalism is the pro-active *media-based intervention* (type 4), designed for a specific audience and purpose. It is often the product of a peacekeeping force or a non-governmental organisation, often in a conflict or post-conflict environment. It can be media intended to counter hate propaganda, or to provide practical information such as election and voting practices, refugee reunification and information on health services. At the other end of the spectrum Howard situated *intended outcome programming* (type 5). Unlike conventional journalism this type of media is often produced by non-governmental organisations and involves content with a specific purpose. The content is determined by its appropriateness to stimulate dialogue and foster reconciliation and peace. The programming and delivery can be adaptations of a popular culture such as radio and television soap operas and dramas, street theatre, wall posters, and more. The initiative and programming may be closely allied with other actors and projects.

Howard concluded by countering critics who argue that advocacy journalism is sometimes going too far. He strongly underscored a quotation



by Robert Karl Manoff, the director of the Centre for War, Peace and the News Media at New York University, who said: «Those who profess so-called objective journalism insist they cannot intervene in events they are covering, nor take any responsibility for what happens. But does anyone really believe that the professional norms of journalism rate higher than fundamental human, moral obligations to end conflict?»

## V. Working Group Findings / Recommendations

### *Middle East*

The working group opened with a short presentation by Jan Keulen, a media consultant with a long experience in the Middle East. He explained that the Arab world is probably the region where democracy and press freedom have made least progress. People often do not believe what the media say because they expect it to be government propaganda. Al Jazeera provides more accurate information than nationally controlled networks, which explains why it is so widely watched. The BBC with its extensive Arabic service also has a substantial audience. An interesting by-product of the many foreign television reporters operating in Arab countries is that they provide an opportunity for local people to get on the job training in basic technical skills.

The situation in the Arab countries varies from zero press freedom in Iraq and very little freedom in Syria to various shapes and shades of partial press freedom in countries like Jordan, Egypt, Yemen, the Palestinian territories and Morocco. Yemen has very liberal press laws but the local culture emphasizes clan allegiance and does not favour press freedom. In the Palestinian territories television is far more important than newspapers, which only have a limited circulation. The official television network of the Palestinian Authority was regarded by most participants in the working group as a failure, despite the extensive funding from Western sources (programmes have a low quality and corruption is rampant). But there are also about 30 smaller private broadcasting stations in the West bank and Gaza. Some of them also relay Al Jazeera programmes. Hamas does not have its own TV-network but some of the smaller private broadcasters sympathise with Hamas.

Paradoxically in a country with a moderate, pro Western regime such as Egypt the tone of the press is everything but moderate. As analysed in a recent article in the *International Spectator* (February), Egyptian newspapers are rife with conspiracy theories and regularly blame Zionism, the CIA and the West for almost all the ills that befall

the Arab world. Thus the media in that country tend to reflect and reinforce misconceptions that seem to be prevalent amongst the public (despite the fact that the media are to a large extent controlled by a state with a moderate and modernistic outlook). While in most parts of the world (like for instance Zimbabwe) the lack of fair and objective media is directly related to a lack of democracy and freedom, the relationship between these factors appears to be more complex in Arab countries.

Concerning the impact of media on tension and conflict, the working group identified mainly examples of an inflammatory role in the Middle East. One of the few examples of a more positive role by media was the Palestinian Voice of Love and Peace broadcasting to both a Palestinian and an Israeli audience. The way media dealt with the emerging conflict between the Copts and the Muslims in Ethiopia and helped defuse tensions between these two groups was also a positive example. It was furthermore noted that Internet access is far less controlled in the Middle East than in a country like China. Although some Middle Eastern governments attempt to control access, there are usually ways around this. Thus Internet is increasingly providing an alternative and more open source of information. Poverty does of course limit the availability of computers. So Internet is not yet a mass phenomenon in that part of the world.

#### FINDINGS / RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Supporting local initiatives is one of the better —and cheaper— ways of setting up media projects. There are interesting private, local initiatives in a number of countries of the Middle East, including the Palestinian territories, which deserve support.
- Enhancing professional standards among journalists should lessen the inflammatory role played by the media in the Middle East. Schools of journalism play an import role in this respect. Western countries could offer to give students of such schools an additional training of, say, two months.
- More in general it was considered important to give special emphasis to the training of young people (journalists, editors, program makers etc.) as they often have a more open mind towards new concepts and ideas. Training courses for young journalists need not necessarily take place abroad. Courses could also be organised within the region.
- With regard to the training of more seasoned journalists and editors, it was recommended to remove them from their local setting and organise the training course in a Western country.

- This makes it easier for the participants to view local problems and conflicts from a different perspective.
- Training which is not followed by job opportunities can however lead to frustrations. Where possible training should therefore be combined or followed up by actual production of media content.
  - Entertaining programs like children's programs, soap opera's and drama productions that carry a reconciliatory message (edutainment) were regarded as one of the best vehicles to increase mutual understanding between communities and ease tensions. It was noted that there is great demand for such programmes. This approach is also less likely to encounter problems with censorship.
  - In view of the escalating violence between Israeli and the Palestinians there is no point in trying to set up dialogue projects at this moment, but certain types of media projects continue to be useful. Examples are the organisation of meetings between journalists from the two sides and projects aimed at showing Israeli journalist the predicament of ordinary Palestinian people and vice versa.

### *The Balkans*

The Balkans working group started with a presentation by Rudi van Meurs, a free-lance journalist and journalism trainer for Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Mr. van Meurs criticized NGO representatives and diplomats trying to force extra roles, like fighting corruption, stimulating inter-ethnic relation and preventing conflicts, on journalists. In his opinion all these subjects are in the first place in the interest of NGOs who secure extra money with these kinds of projects. According to Mr. van Meurs this discussion is actually a pleonasm, as all these different goals should be automatically served by good journalism. In his function as a journalism trainer in the Balkans Mr. van Meurs experienced how disruptive an excessive NGO presence can be. High NGO salaries disrupt the local economy and attract journalists who are much needed by the local media. Furthermore promising journalists are leaving almost every week to follow training programs abroad, mostly in the U.S.

### FINDINGS / RECOMMENDATIONS:

- There should be more priority for the training of the best (young) journalists in the region, preferably by local trainers. These master classes could establish groups of young, dedicated and critical

journalists who can serve the difficult development of the newly formed states in the Balkan.

- Concerning the problem of sustainability of media support projects it was noted that the viability of media projects can be improved by focussing on the same editors / journalists for an extended period. Another important recommendation regarding sustainability was to make sure that the trained journalists and editors can find employment in the local media sector before implementing training programs.
- When executing media support projects it is important to take a holistic approach; attention should also be given to the legal / political context and the institutional environment of the media sector in the pertinent country (e.g. journalists' associations, media institutes and press codes).
- In societies with a segregated media sector like the Balkans, joint publication projects like those of Search for Common Ground in Macedonia and IMPACS in South Asia (see the "Examples of Media and Peace Building Projects" section in the seminar reader), may sometimes yield positive results. It is crucial, however, that the specific cultural (ethnic, religious and otherwise) conditions are taken into account.
- More research should be done on the role of the media in conflicts.

### *Indonesia / The Moluccas*

The discussion in the Indonesia working group was preceded by two short presentations on the media situation in Indonesia and the Moluccas. Kenneth van Tol from CAF/SCO (a Dutch NGO which supports independent media in the South) explained that the Indonesian media sector is characterised by four main elements. The first is *indirect speech*. As a result of years of restriction of the press freedom, Indonesian journalists are used to disguise their messages with culturally desirable information. The second is *Bapakism* (paternalism). Indonesia is an extremely authoritarian society. Journalists find it very difficult to question the authorities. Corruption is widespread in Indonesia. In the media sector this is known as *envelope journalism*. Journalists often receive money to report (or not report) on certain subjects. The last element is a *culture of violence*. Probably as a result of the transmigration politics of Suharto Indonesia has a culture of ethnic violence. The spreading of rumours through the press often fuels this violence.

Victor Joseph and Rocky Tuhuteru, two Dutch journalists with a Moluccan background, plan to execute a project on the Moluccas which

will support both the Christian as the Moslem press on the Island. With support from CAS /SCO Mr. Joseph visited to the Mollucas to asses the current media situation. Mr. Joseph and Mr. Tuhuteru explained that the most important factor on the Moluccas is the complete division of the society, the land and also the media along religious lines. This is worsened by the fact that most people including journalists have lost friends or relatives. This causes mutual hate and suspicion and makes it extremely difficult to start reconciliatory processes through the media.

The Indonesia working group focussed on two questions. The first was:  
*Is there a role for infotainment in peace journalism?*

First of all the word journalism was changed to media because the term journalism would probably have started a long argument about what journalism exactly is and which roles it should play in a society. Overall the answer to the first question was answered positively and consequent discussion was aimed at defining that role.

#### FINDINGS / RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Emphasis should be put on common (local) human values. (Common to all Moluccans.)
- There is a role for «infotainment» in providing factual information.
- The use of local heroes, mythical heroes and musicians is sometime problematic because they tend to belong to the culture of only one of the conflicting parties.
- Meeting points of a divided society (markets, hospitals etc.) could feature as locations for drama/soaps dealing with the interaction between the two groups.
- A long-term commitment is a prerequisite! Temporary initiatives almost always lead to nothing.
- Extensive research is needed before executing projects (formative and summative research).
- Foreign organisations should work with local people: Local contend, local input and local appeal are of prime importance.
- Standard journalism stays important next to more innovative usages of media.

The second question guiding the discussion was:

*Do foreign media have a role to play in the way the Moluccan media deal with the conflict?*

The participants noted that a distinction should be made between foreign media organisations like IMPACS or CAF/SCO and foreign news media.

## FINDINGS / RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Listen carefully what local journalists want.
- Don't impose western concepts and journalism models.
- Terminology used in media projects should carefully acknowledge local conditions and sensitivities.
- For media assistance to the Moluccas the group proposed two key words: Simple and Sustainable
- Simple: focus on basic communication infrastructure, for example new tapes for the state television network, setting up an Internet provider etc.
- Sustainable: not completely depending on support from outside the Moluccas.
- A media centre can be especially useful for a completely segregated society like the Moluccas. Journalists from different sides can meet each other physically and talk. This is not possible in any other place on the Moluccas. A media centre could also function as a meeting point between Moluccan journalists and colleagues from the rest of the world (i.e. Indonesia). Thereby providing a source of information for foreign journalists on the Moluccan situation and vice versa.

## VI. Key Issues and Points of Debate

### *Discussion on journalism*

A major point of debate, which took a lot of time in the working groups on the Balkans and the Middle East, was the question whether journalists have a responsibility vis-à-vis society when reporting on conflicts. There seemed to be a difference of opinion between NGO-representatives, civil servants and journalists as to whether the media can play a role in decreasing or even preventing the outbreak of violent conflict. In this context a distinction was made between media in general and conventional journalism in particular. The following points were made in the plenary discussion:

- It was felt that the discussion should focus more on the role *media* perform rather than on the role of journalism as a profession.
- Most participants seemed to endorse a more pragmatic approach by supporting local initiatives using communication to empower vulnerable groups in a society, rather than going for a highly standardized type of journalism.

- It was noted that the media continuum, which was introduced in the speech of Ross Howard, could serve as a tool guiding the discussion on the responsibilities of journalists covering conflict. This continuum reflects a choice that a journalist has to make.
- There is nothing wrong with journalists who choose to stick to the first two stages (preferably the second!). But different journalists make different choices. This should not be a problem as long as journalists can choose for themselves and are not pressed by NGOs to make a certain choice.
- There is a possibility that the reports of journalists have an impact on the society. But conflict resolution practitioners, NGO workers and diplomats are asking journalists to be good citizens. This is the problem. Journalists can decide for themselves whether they are «good citizens». They are not going to preach civil rights or anti corruption on the instruction of others. They should decide for themselves when they take up this role.
- Diplomats and NGO representatives often ask journalists to get their message, often aiming at reconciliation and dialogue, across. But you cannot force people to act in a certain way, especially in a difficult situation as the Israeli Palestinian conflict, through the media

*In searching for a bridging point between these two contending views the following points were made*

- It was recommended to clearly distinguish between what is *conventional* journalism and what is not. What can you ask from conventional journalists: report on all matters, don't listen to the spin-doctors. To guarantee these freedoms journalists should be protected when they are threatened in executing their profession. On the other hand, you can't ask conventional journalists to prevent or solve conflicts. This is something they cannot do.
- Western media and media organisations generally have the resources to assist their colleagues in other regions, less-developed countries in the first place. In this way the western media perform two roles: on the one side they cover the conflicts of the world in a conventional way outlining the 'hard facts' of war. On the other side they sometimes support their colleagues who often have a delicate relation with the local political leadership.
- Journalists have the responsibility to report evenly on conflicts and to take a position to increase the understanding of the global situation by presenting many aspects of this situation. In this way

they can decrease the stereotyping and increase the understanding of the issues. This on itself goes a long way in reducing tensions in conflict. We should not go on stressing the dichotomy between good news journalism and peace building initiatives. There is an obvious link between the two. This does not mean that all journalists have to be mediators. But the ethics of good journalism do not prevent them to take these responsibilities.

### *Other issues*

- There are a lot of examples of the negative influence journalism can have on a conflict. These «lessons learned» should be disseminated among all parties concerned, i.e. NGO and media workers and national and international bureaucrats.
- It was noted that the sustainability of media projects financed by Western organisations is often problematic. A lot of money is wasted on projects which can never survive without foreign financial support.
- The overkill of violent conflict being reported on in the international news media causes a kind of acquiescence towards the occurrence of war. Among other things this causes a standardisation in the way conflicts are being reported on. There is a need for reporting on conflict from a different perspective. More attention should be paid to the horrible effects violent conflicts have on the populations involved.
- One crucial aspect which is often missing in conflict analysis and prevention is the reason why people really fight and kill each other. There is not enough attention for the structural, material conditions and causes that play a role in conflicts. The media should take up the responsibility to get this message through.





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