

Introduction

Media, Conflict, and Peace-Building

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1 Introduction

The media not only play vital roles in the mediation of conflicts and wars, they also are involved in discursive practices and cultural politics that predict the possibilities of social transformation and peace-building (Ivie 2016). The study of these roles in the context of local and global conflicts and peace-building efforts becomes more crucial in terms of how the professional practices of a journalist are defined. According to Carpentier and Terzis (2005), a journalist has the responsibility to adopt a particular model of war or peace reporting, such as those proposed by Galtung (1998) (i.e., peace-oriented journalism, which is generally perceived as people- and solution-oriented, or conflict/war journalism, which is violence-oriented, and tends towards propaganda). Citing Galtung (2000; Galtung and Fischer 2013), Nijenhuis (2014) argues that the media in the practice of war journalism are capable of exacerbating the conflict by:

focusing on violence, highlighting the differences between groups, and presenting conflict as a zero-sum game, while ignoring the broad range of causes and outcomes of conflict . . . Audiences reading war journalism are served a simplified black and white image, which makes them more likely to support violent “solutions” to the conflict. (65)

This suggests that the media, unfortunately, appears to prefer war journalism to peace journalism, and what is eminently perceived as “news” is when violent conflict is involved (Shinar 2013). To explain this phenomenon, Griffin (2010), notes that this is due to the fact that reports or images associated with violent conflicts reflect matters of life and death and generally attract more intense public attention and potentially influence public opinion. However, Galtung (1987) advocates peace journalism, where journalists take a non-violent perspective when reporting conflict. This will involve taking a proactive approach, framing stories in a way that focuses on peace, minimizing cultural differences, promoting conflict resolution, and espousing the culture of peace and reconciliation (Gouse et al. 2019, 437).

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Contributions to this book apply theories and approaches in linguistics (mainly discourse analysis and pragmatics) to examine and analyze media and online political discourses that exemplify conflict and peace journalism. While some of the chapters examine the implications and consequences of some particular worrisome representations of past conflicts and wars in their cultural and historical contexts, some others raise the alarm about possible future conflicts within the purview of war reporting. The keyword in most of the contributions, and especially in Parts I and II of the book, is “representation” or “framing,” which highlight particular evaluations and perspectives about persons and events in the conflict stories.

Part III of this book comprises critical analyses of journalism peace efforts and practical examples of the roles of media in the search for a peaceful resolution to some major ethnic and global conflicts. In the next subsections of this introductory chapter, I examine conceptual and theoretical issues on discourse and representation. I then go on to explain the logic of media representation, highlighting empirical studies about media construction of particular conflict situations, as well as roles played by the media in the practice of peace journalism. I conclude with a summary of each of the chapters.

2 **“Discourse” as Used in This Book**

In the context of this book, “discourse” is simply defined as language use in the news – particularly highlighting language choices, which, according to Fowler (1991), are far from being neutral. In other words, the choice of one word over another by a journalist or the use of a particular grammatical structure rather than other available options is significant – especially because of their power not only to shape public opinion about a topic in the news but also to mobilize mass actions.

Because journalists often function as mediators between political actors and the public, they have the ability to “process,” “select,” or “sort systematically” what should be considered as news (Fowler 1991). This suggests that news is not simply a value-free accurate report of what happened. Hence, in manipulating the news, a journalist produces a new media reality – ultimately to achieve the purpose of the report. This way, the journalist becomes not only a news-maker, but also a meaning-maker (Broersma 2008).

In terms of theory, the approach to discourse analysis in this book draws from the post-structuralist position that the knowledge of the world should not be treated as objective truth. This means that discourse (or language use) constructs the social world in meaning (Laclau and Mouffe 1985); and because meaning cannot be fixed, discourse is constantly being transformed, and different discourses are always representing particular ways of talking about and understanding the social world (cited in Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 5).

According to Suurmond (2005), the way we talk (or write) does not neutrally reflect the world of identities and relations, but rather plays an active role in creating and changing them. Therefore, the struggle between what we claim to know about the world, also represents a discourse struggle – the struggle between different discourses showing different ways of understanding aspects of the world and constructing different realities and identities for speakers (see Jorgensen and Phillips 2002, 6).

Although linguistic and discourse analytic approaches have not been popular in studying conflict, especially in the context of media, certain definitions of conflict have always associated conflict with talk or human conversations. For instance, interpersonal and group conflicts have been viewed as any type of verbal or nonverbal opposition, ranging from disagreement to disputes, mostly in social interaction (Kakava 2001). Thus, the understanding of discourse as social interaction and the analysis of the structural properties of conflict talk become a matter of theory and method in discourse analysis – where studies of conflict have shown that opinions, roles, identities, and ideologies, for example, are constructed and supported through conflict talk (see Billig 1989; Kakava 2001). Individuals' utterances follow different patterns and discourse analysis provides the framework for the analysis of these patterns, whether in social or cultural discourse, political discourse or institutional discourse, and these have their huge implications for conflict as well as for the peaceful co-existence of people in a society (Kakava 2001).

Going by the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe, I will agree with Suurmond (2005) that discourse analysis is not just another method of data analysis, rather it is a whole package of philosophical views on the role of language in human social life, integrating theoretical paradigms, methodological tools, and specific research techniques, although with its own weaknesses and strengths. "Among the strengths of qualitative and critical approaches (of discourse analysis) are the rich and informative results, the emphasis on dynamics instead of statics, and the primacy of the subject matter instead of the method" (19); hence, discourse analysis may be applied as a methodology for the study of national identities, for example – which is one of the potential causes of conflict. Such critical analysis can provide insights on how cultural or religious tensions may cause conflict through the analysis of the manner in which people speak about others or construct "other(s)" (21). The chapters in this collection, by adopting the various methods of analysis in the contemporary discourse research schools (e.g., Frame Analysis, Narrative Analysis, Conversation Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis) and applying the same to media discourse, contributes to insights to the significant place of discourse analysis both in theory and practice.

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3 **Conceptualization of Discourse and Representation**

In linguistics or discourse analysis, representation refers to the use of language in a text (written or spoken) to assign meaning to persons or groups and their social practices – to events, to social and ecological conditions, and to objects (Fairclough 1989; van Dijk 2002; Wenden 2005). As highlighted above, this definition is influenced by the social constructionist view of the role of language in social life, which posits that meaning is not embedded in reality but is construed and constructed through linguistic representation.

Since discourse is a form of social action that plays a part in reproducing the social world – including knowledge, identities and social relations, different social understandings of the world lead to different social actions, and it becomes clear that social construction of knowledge and truth has social consequences (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002). Fairclough (1989) has also argued that discourse is a social practice and, as one of other social practices, plays a fundamental role in constructing the social world. The relation between discourse and society is dialectical, whereby one influences the other and vice versa.

Although representations vary depending on the perspective from which they are constructed, Wenden (2005) argues that there is still the “politics of representation,” which is a discursive struggle for the “preferred” way of constructing reality, either by groups, politicians, or the news media. For instance, while the Iraq war was constructed in Canadian media as the “war on Iraq” (Härmänmaa 2014), various Arab media outlets framed it as an “invasion” or “occupation,” and North American media referred to it as “operation free Iraq” (Kellner 2004) or the “war on terror” (Barrett 2007) (see Chiluba and Chiluba 2020). Thus, representations comprising the production of versions of reality are often reflected in the choice of vocabulary and grammatical processes that are used to express individual or group opinions and evaluations. In other words, discourse or language use in everyday life, as in the media, is always reflective of different representations of life, expressing viewpoints and perspectives that may have huge implications for social security and peace.

4 **Media and Representations of Conflict**

Much of everyday conversations and public opinion about conflict or war is inspired by the mass media. Speakers and writers often refer to the television or the newspaper as their source of information and authority of knowledge or opinions about ethnic or national conflicts (van Dijk 2008). News reports and images of war are widely presumed to influence public opinion, perceptions and attitudes, potentially reinforcing or eroding public support for war policy,

which is why governments and political interest groups are interested in the content of the news, including photographs of particular conflicts (Griffin 2010). In many cases, governments have therefore worked hard to control, limit or delay some particular content from production and circulation. “Such efforts are aimed not only at shielding particular images from public view but at promoting and facilitating the distribution of preferred types of images (or news) and establishing an approved universe of imagery as accepted public record” (Griffin 2010, 8).

Much of the literature on the representation of war and conflict in the media has documented “a long-standing preference for war” by journalists who manipulated their reports in favor of a certain ideology of war (Shinar 2013, 1).

Citing the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, which was of an ethnic and religious nature, Shinar (2013) argues that “nationalist propaganda disseminated by major media channels sponsored by the Milosevic regime in Serbia, enhanced violent attitudes and behaviours on the part of civilians against rival minorities” (1). This suggests media messages didn’t further peaceful solutions to the conflict, but rather may have inspired hatred and division. This was an unfortunate instance of how media channels contributed to the destruction of Yugoslavia, and to an increase in extreme nationalism and division between groups who had hitherto lived alongside each other in a peaceful manner. Puddephatt (2006) notes that “It was a frightening example of how a society can disintegrate, how fear can be exploited by the power of media in the hands of those unscrupulous enough to wield it as a weapon” (2). In a similar case, Croatian journalists drew on global discourses of violence to justify and legitimize war crimes in the coverage of the war in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia (Erjavec and Volcic 2007; Kurspahic 2003, cited in Shinar, 2013). In Africa, the Rwandan genocide of the 1990s was attributable significantly to hate speech disseminated by the media (Viljoen 2005). Commenting on the genocide, Yanagizawa-Drott (2014) concludes that “access to such broadcasts served to increase organized and civilian violence; that they caused approximately 10% of the participation in genocidal violence.” In all of these cases, the media presented the conflicts as irresolvable, making war inevitable. In the Yugoslavian case, “war was neither inevitable nor the only means of resolving the conflicts that lay behind the break-up of Yugoslavia, and the local media played an important role in preparing the ground for war, by ensuring public opinion was mobilised behind the different participants. Media campaigns between rival media outlets prefigured the war itself” (Puddephatt, 2006, 8). As regards the Vietnam War, Cihankova (2014) blames the American media for “inconsistency” in their accounts of the conflict. Newspapers reported statements from government officials, not minding to what extent they were lied to, and correspondents were witnessing a different course of events than what they were told by the government.

Public perceptions of war or conflict are often the reflections of media framing and representations of the conflicts. Saramifar (2019) argues that framing political actors in a particular way, either through photographs or news content, generally persuades viewers or the general public to align with propagated narratives and frames. In the case of the Iran–Iraq war, viewers remained committed to the rigid categories created in the news, such as martyrdom and sacrifice being the common frames of dying in the war.

Unfortunately, living with certain ideological and sometimes dangerous perceptions of conflict/war may be far-reaching: people who have lived through conflicts may continue to relive the horrors of war, as well as remain in fear of resurgences. For instance, Abdulbaqi and Ariemu (2017) fear that reports of the herder–farmer conflict in Nigeria by the Nigerian media are typical of war journalism, which is likely to spur greater conflict. The study argues that the choice of words in the representation of the conflict is “divisive, stereotypic and conflict inciting” (78). Therefore, rather than mending division in the society, the media may be perpetuating it.

However, in spite of war journalism, there is also peace journalism that proposes a more positive outcome of media roles in the mediation of conflict and peace-building.

5 **Media and Peace Discourses**

Some studies (e.g., Puddephatt 2006) have argued that for a sustained media involvement in peace processes, the constitutional rights of the media/press must be respected by various governments and law enforcement agencies. Such a media environment must be empowering, being built on the recognition that the freedom of expression and the right to receive and exchange opinions, as well as ideas and information, are among the virtues of true democracy (Puddephatt 2006). The media have long been regarded as having a particular role to play in guaranteeing the individual right to free expression, as it is through the media that this individual right takes public form. Therefore, “in any peace negotiations, the role of the media should form a part of the agreement – all parties should be asked to agree to respect the independence of the media and to refrain from either using media for propaganda purposes or to resist from any attempt to intimidate, threaten or abuse media independence” (9). Puddephatt (2006) further identifies a fundamental limitation in the discussion of media roles in “peace journalism,” which arises from the confusion on the different roles of the mass media in conflict situations. For instance:

In addition to the representation of the groups they are reporting on – in this case parties to the conflict – journalists also present their own views and interests. In this respect the media itself becomes an actor in the conflict, for example when it takes an editorial

position or when the media focus on certain issues or aspects of the conflict leads to the exclusion of others. The idea that the journalist sits outside of the events they are covering, whatever their perspective on “peace journalism” is misleading. The media, in this sense, are themselves actors or agents in the conflict and their behaviour will have an effect on the way the conflict develops. Policy makers therefore need to focus on the media’s role in constituting the public sphere of society – how that can be fostered and nurtured in such a way as to allow non-violent resolution of conflict. (10)

Puddephatt’s position clearly highlights the precarious position of the journalist both as a professional and as an individual member of the society who has the right to subjective construction of reality, even in peace mediation. This brings to the fore the importance of the choices a journalist makes (including language choices), such as the choice of what to report and what not to report. This choice can either promote violence or contribute to mitigating it. Hence, Lynch (2015) defines peace journalism as “whenever editors and reporters make choices about what stories to report and how to report them – which create opportunities for the audience to consider and to value nonviolent responses to conflict” (193). And it is not just about the pursuit of violent conflict, rather it is for readers and audience to “consider the value of non-violent responses – it situates peace journalism in the realm of professional journalism, committed to factual reporting” (193).

Ahlsen (2013) adds that besides trying to explain the causes of conflicts, peace journalists “give voice to all perspectives – including nongovernmental organisations and people from all parts of civil society. They report on different efforts made to resolve the conflict, look closely at all sides, and choose their words carefully. In return, they are able to produce a more comprehensive report, and contribute to a more developed democracy where well-informed citizens can make well thought out decisions – that could possibly bring about peace” (4). Similarly, Gouse et al. (2019) view a “peace journalist” as someone that “proactively reports on the causes of and solutions to a conflict, giving voice to all parties through responsible, empathetic journalism” (436).

Literature abounds with scholarly research on peace journalism. Gouse et al. (2019) chronicle scholarly articles that investigate the attributes of peace and war journalism in newspaper, television and radio reports. Results suggest that most peace journalism studies examine media in the frontline – within direct violence as it is happening – and assess conflict most often by using the war/peace indicator of elite-oriented versus people-oriented. Mandelzis (2007) explores the positive impact of three Israeli newspapers in the aftermath of the Oslo accord of 1993 – how they “demonstrated a dramatic change in attitude and terminology: The familiar war discourse was rapidly being replaced by peace representations and peace images” (1). In a similar study, Gavriely-Nuri (2010) applies a cultural approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CCDA) to analyze the Israeli political peace discourse and finds

that the use of the term “peace” fosters the construction of the Israeli speaker’s positive self-image as peace-seeker together with the delegitimation of rivals; and also facilitates public acceptance of strategically problematic actions, primarily the use of military violence, by their presentation as part of the peace discourse.

It is therefore clear that scholarly conversation on conflict and war cannot be complete or lead to any significant conclusion without an equal and fruitful discourse on peace-building and peace processes. In the past, war and conflict have received more attention in scholarly literature than conflict resolution. The current volume contributes to scholarly intervention in research on media efforts towards peace-building and conflict resolution.

6 Summary of Chapters

The current volume is divided into three parts: Part I and Part II examine the constructions of conflicts in the media and analyze media representations of specific conflicts. While Part I focuses on the print media of newspapers and magazines, Part II pays attention to electronic and digital media. Part III, which is made up of five chapters and the concluding chapter, analyses “media discourse and conflict resolution.” In this part, the contributors provide in-depth analyses of media (positive) roles in the processes of peaceful resolution to a number of regional and global conflicts.

The analyses presented here further shed some light on the useful methodological synergy between linguistics, media studies and conflict studies. In the past, media representations of people and situations, for instance racism, asylum seekers, immigrants, Muslims, and ethnic minorities among others, have been extensively researched by linguistics and media scholars – applying methods in corpus linguistics, discourse/linguistic pragmatics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (see van Dijk 1991; Baker 2010; Baker & McEnery 2005; Chiluwa 2011; Ahmed and Matthes 2017; Cap 2018). In the current book, the authors have applied mainly linguistic and discourse analytical approaches to examine topics on media representations of violence, conflict and war. The insights from these studies and the methodological approaches adopted by the contributors to this book, I believe, will open up stronger interest and research collaborations among language and media scholars and researchers.

In chapter 1, Mark Finney and Sarah Fisher examine the *New York Times*’s representation of the Elián González custody case of 1999, and argue that discourses used by the *New York Times* in its coverage of the González case corresponded with the themes of the broader conflict between the United States and Cuba, and that American sources represented in the coverage exemplified predictable attitudes about Cuba and Communism. By applying

a discourse analytical framework, the study shows that conflict trajectories in democratic societies are influenced by news representations in so much that news is both influenced by context and also influences public knowledge and opinion.

In chapter 2, Enis Bicer, Lina Brink, and Alejandra Nieves Camacho explore the different meanings of Islamist terrorism and terrorist threats in four popular German newspapers, namely *Die Welt*, *Der Spiegel*, *Die Zeit*, and *Die Tageszeitung*. The study applying the sociology of knowledge approach to discourse (SKAD) finds that three interpretive schemes about threats associated with Islamist terrorism can be found – namely Islam and Muslims represented as antagonists to the Western “Us,” the erosion of state order and public security, and risks to the preservation of the current “open society” in countries that experience Islamist terror attacks. They argue for their different references to anti-Muslim stereotypes and racism.

In chapter 3, Innocent Chiluiwa, Isioma Chiluiwa, and Angie O. Igbinoba apply a combination of CDA and corpus linguistics to investigate the representations of the herder–farmer conflict in news headlines of seven broadsheet newspapers in Nigeria. The study argues that the frequent representation of the herder–farmer conflict as domestic terrorism, and the description of the herds-men as terrorists, prognosticates more serious violent conflicts in Nigeria. The study further argues that the whole truth about the conflict is not yet told by titling news analysis of the situation in favor of one party in the conflict. Furthermore, due to the prevalence of violence attributed to Muslims following domestic and international acts of terrorism, much of the world seems occupied with the views and actions of Muslims, calling particular attention to the Salafi sect.

In chapter 4, Ahmed Sahlane analyses how the Iraqi war was covered in Western media through the use of “pragmatic framing and visual rhetoric.” The study argues that the coalition mainstream media erroneously painted the picture of the US so-called sophisticated weaponry, chivalrous heroism and militarist humanitarianism, rather than reporting the true images of suffering, destruction, dissent and diplomacy. By muting dissenting voices, the pro-war coalition media frames manufactured an “interpretive dominance that was inextricably structured in hegemony and social control.”

Chapters 5 to 9 cover accounts and analyses of media representations of violent conflicts and wars focusing on electronic media and the Internet. In Chapter 5, Ada Peter and Innocent Chiluiwa examine the criticisms of NATO’s involvement in the Libyan crisis of 2011, concentrating on the textual structures and discourse strategies in the CNN reports that could have contributed to the transformation of the so-called “uprising” to a civil war (see also Bouvier 2014). Applying discourse pragmatic methodology, the authors propose new questions that may inspire arguments on whether semantic, narrative and

pragmatic acts impacted attitudes that might have validated and propagated the war in Libya.

In Chapter 6, Valerie A. Cooper applies quantitative content analysis and corpus linguistics and CDA to analyze the *Voice of America* and *China Radio International*'s thematic and linguistic deconstruction of North Korea's threats of a nuclear strike and subsequent test-firing of missiles in March 2016. The results show that these government-sponsored media outlets used similar linguistic techniques to assign or avoid blame in reference to North Korea, as well as to China and the United States.

In a report written by Alan Cowell entitled "50 years later, troubles still cast 'huge shadow' over Northern Ireland," and published in the *New York Times* of October 4, 2018, the author lamented that the constant asymmetric conflicts in Northern Ireland – "the troubles would not go away." The author cited a former civil rights Protestant and peace activist as lamenting that the Troubles "are so burned into our lives that they are part of our DNA . . . They are with us every day – especially those of us who were bereaved. It's a festering sore, because it's never been dealt with." Stephen Goulding (in Chapter 7 of this volume) continues this conversation and reveals how the media supports the legitimization of conflicts being promoted by "dissident republican organizations." Applying discourse analytical methods, the chapter demonstrates how the investigation of discourse strategies, topics and micro-linguistic features can provide insights into the framing and justification of the conflict. The study suggests that the dissident actors devote much of their communication to threatening the peace and acting as the mouthpiece for the legitimization of conflict in Northern Ireland.

In Chapter 8, Troy E. Spier applies Critical Discourse Analysis to engage with questions of ideology relating to the question of who a "believer" and an "unbeliever" is following the Arabic trilateral root word (i.e. $\sqrt{\text{KFR}}$) referring to disbelievers and states of disbelief. His data were obtained from the publications of two extremist Muslim online English magazines – *Dabiq* and *Inspire*. The findings of the study show that members of al-Qa'ida and Da'esh do not strictly consult the religious denotations of the trilateral root. Instead, they establish the "Self" and the "Other" dichotomy on pseudo-religious grounds and perpetuate stereotypes and contemporary prejudices that misrepresent those who adhere to the Islamic faith.

Fiona Chawana and Ufuoma Akpojivi question the feasibility of achieving social change through violence via the study of the *#FeesMustFall* social movement protests of 2015 and 2016 at the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa. The study shows that the movement used "systematic violence" to disrupt the state apparatus and also disturbed the university activity system that had hindered students' socioeconomic and cultural development.