The Media, War and Conflict: How They Adversely Affect Conflict Rather Than Foster Resolution

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Abstract: **Consider the relationship between war and the media by looking at how the media are involved in conflict, either as targets (war on the media) or as an auxiliary (war thanks to the media). Based on this distinction, four major developments can be cited that today combine to make war, above all, a media spectacle: photography, which opened the door to manipulation through stage-management; live technologies, which raise the question of journalists' critical distance vis-à-vis the material they broadcast and can facilitate the process of using them; and pressure on the media and media globalization, which have led to a change in the way the political process is conducted and the way in which military officials propagandize; and, finally, the fact that censorship has fallen out of favor, prompting the government to come up with creative techniques to control journalists. In today's conflict, the media frequently plays an important role. In essence, their role can take two distinct and opposing forms. Either the media participates actively in the conflict and bears responsibility for increased violence, or it remains independent and separate from the conflict, thereby contributing to conflict resolution and violence reduction. Whichever role the media plays in a given conflict, and in the phases before and after, is determined by a complex set of factors, including the media's relationship with conflict actors and its independence from power holders in society. The purpose of this article is to examine and comprehend modern conflict, as well as the role of the media in exacerbating or alleviating violence.**

I. INTRODUCTION

The media, whether local or international, will always face significant challenges in covering conflict. There will invariably be commercial pressure to focus on the most recent, violent, or dramatic incidents, at the expense of explaining the context and issues that may underpin the conflict. To explain the conflict in understandable terms, not only to an external audience but also to those affected by it, the media must be able to operate freely and without fear, as well as report on all aspects of the conflict. While policymakers including combatants play a role in establishing the conditions under which the media can operate, journalists and editors bear a great deal of responsibility.

The term mass media specifically refers to a communication channel intended for a large audience. Broadly speaking, mass media outlets include radio, TV, newspapers, magazines, books, video games, and online content including blogs, podcasts, and video sharing. Today, newspapers and news-oriented television and radio programs provide access to stories from around the world, allowing readers and viewers in London to hear and see voices and videos from Baghdad, Tokyo, and Buenos Aires. Books and magazines offer a more in-depth look at a variety of topics. Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia, has articles in various languages on topics ranging from presidential nicknames to child prodigies to tongue twisters. (Briggs and Burke 2005)

Media outlets can be used to keep tabs on government, industry, and other institutions. Upton Sinclair's 1906 novel The Jungle exposed the deplorable conditions in the turn-of-the-century meatpacking industry, and in the early 1970s, Washington Post reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein uncovered evidence of the Watergate break-in and subsequent cover-up, leading to President Richard Nixon's resignation. However, mass media outlets may be beholden to specific agendas due to political slant, advertising funds, or ideological bias, limiting their ability to act as a watchdog. (Mintz 2007)

But it's crucial to keep in mind that not all forms of media are created equal. Others make more sense as a platform for disseminating information, while some types of mass communication are better suited to amusement. Newspapers are a superior medium for the quick turnover of daily news since they are comparatively cheaper and quicker to produce than books, which are enduring and capable of holding a lot of information but are rather slow and expensive to produce. Television may be used to transmit live events to an audience throughout the country and offers a great deal more visual information than radio and is more dynamic than a static printed page. However, it is also a one-way medium, which makes direct contact between people exceedingly difficult. On the other hand, the Internet promotes open discourse on topics and gives almost everyone who desires a voice a chance to do so. The Internet is, however, also generally unmoderated. To discover valuable information, users may have to go through thousands of pointless comments or ignorant amateur viewpoints. (State of Media 2004)

In recent years, the role and operational sophistication of media usage in conflict have increased. To address the challenges of producing information before to, during, and after operations, special units have been established. This is thought to be important, particularly now that modern democratic cultures consider complete censorship to be unacceptable and more politically damaging than militarily helpful.

II. MEDIA, CONFLICT AND MODERN WORLD

Conflict is one of the modern world's defining characteristics. Since the Cold War's end, there have been countless conflicts that have resulted in the deaths of millions of people as well as the suffering and displacement of millions more. It is

impossible to precisely quantify human suffering as a result of conflict. To use one example, it has been suggested that over the last ten years, over two million children have died in conflicts, and over one million have been injured. More than six million children have been orphaned, and over six million have been disabled or seriously injured. (Knightley 2004)

One startling trend is the increase of conflicts, which has seriously harmed the state's capacity to provide for its people. Since the end of the Cold War, 59 "major" armed conflicts have been examined by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). In this context, "major" refers to events that resulted in more than 1,000 battle-related fatalities in a single year. The majority of these were intra-state. Many states have practically dissolved or are in a very fragile position as a result of these protracted battles. There is no rule of law, infrastructure has been destroyed or pillaged, and people have been displaced. Such wars worsen poverty, cause great human misery, harm the environment, force large numbers of people to flee, and pose severe issues for the international community. (Mathien 2001)

During war, civilian and military authorities may find the concept of a free press assigning independent journalists to seek information or images that they would prefer to suppress intolerable. War correspondents with the mission of verifying their information at the source first appeared in the mid-nineteenth century and quickly gained popularity. William H. Russell, who covered the Crimean War (1854-55) and the American Civil War for The Times of London, is one famous example. Whether to ensure battlefield success or to maintain morale among troops or civilians, governments quickly imposed harsh censorship on journalists. (Perlmutter, 1998)

During World War I, the war ministries assigned officials to various newspapers in order to maintain strict control over reporting. Journalists were kept away from the operations in the field. On both sides of the conflict, the press was seen as a tool for State propaganda, with texts censored and journalists intimidated. This is still true in many countries. Journalists are prohibited from entering the theater of operations, as in Chechnya, and are killed if they do. They also pay with their lives in places like Algeria and Sierra Leone for exposing particularly heinous acts. In times of war, press freedom and the public's right to know have yet to be realized. (Shaw 1996)

Though just a small number of these conflicts have garnered substantial attention from the international community, those that have had an influence are few and far between. The wars in the Balkans that marked the breakup of Yugoslavia and the genocide in Rwanda, which was itself a result of an internal conflict, have sparked intense debate about the roles and responsibilities of the international community. They have also caused significant divisions within the United Nations, making it more challenging for that organization to carry out its tasks effectively. The media had a negative impact on both of these conflicts, serving as a platform for aggressive nationalism in the former Yugoslavia and directly instigating genocide in the case of some Rwandan media. (Robinson P 2019)

During Rwanda's civil war, Radio-télévision libre des Mille Collines was an excellent mobilization tool. Following in the footsteps of a racist and inciting written press, the radio station waged a systematic campaign of incitement to racial hatred that was broadcast over Rwandan government radio transmitters. Radio des Mille Collines, a well-oiled propaganda machine, planned the large-scale massacre of Tutsis and moderate Hutus months in advance. It heightened existing tensions and urged people to be ready, then to take up arms, and when the time came for genocide, it coordinated the work of the killers, informing them, for example, of common graves dug but not yet filled and urging them not to spare children, broadcasting arguments day after day. (Chrétien 1995)

The very erratic manner in which the media covers wars all around the world may be one reason for this lack of comprehension. There is no doubt that the political gravity of some conflicts influences the responses of the most influential governments, which in turn influences how the media reports on conflict. However, it is also true that the way in which the media prioritizes covering one dispute over another affects how the international community reacts. The media seems to pay special attention to the anxieties of its native audience, which in the case of the most influential worldwide media tends to be the peoples of North America and Europe, who require a point of identity. This appears to be the common denominator. (McKeigue and Robinson 2019)

One effect is that while certain conflicts have received widespread notice due to media exposure, others have not due to neglect or lack of attention. Whether it is the war in the Congo since 1997, the resurgence of the Angolan civil war, or the interconnected conflicts in Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Liberia, many recent African conflicts that have claimed millions of lives have largely gone unnoticed by the world community. Similar to the second intifada between Palestinians and Israelis, the wars in the North and South Caucasus have resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths despite minimal worldwide outcry from governments or civil society. (Robinson 2017)

Free press or propaganda machine?

There have been advancements in the field of media coverage for every conflict since the introduction of war correspondents, including the First World War's use of a censored press to mobilize the entire country, the Second World War's use of radio and film for mass mobilization and propaganda, the Vietnam War's use of more mobile filming equipment and an increase in the number of foreign journalists sent there, live satellite links, and the introduction of CNN's 24-hour global news network in wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. (Curtis 2018)

Manipulating images

The first development was the invention of photography, which forced the military to think about photo-faking and decide what may and cannot be exhibited in order to avoid the appearance of any unfavorable images. The benefits of moving pictures for propagating ideologies and molding the populace were first

recognized by totalitarian regimes. A photograph or a section of film footage can be edited in a variety of ways to create images that automatically give the viewer the impression that "seeing is believing." The aestheticizing properties of the visuals can be used to inspire the spectator and embellish reality. You can present fiction as fact, giving it a documentary-like appearance. (Curtis 2018)

Western military forces have been attempting to control news images since Vietnam in order to euphemize violence by preventing the showing of dead people, including the enemy. The recent media-management effort in wars aims to demonstrate that war not only does not harm many civilians, but also does not kill and injure many enemies. During the 1991 Gulf War, the violence was disguised, even aestheticized, and turned into television entertainment disguised as television news. (Chen G, et al 2017)

The impact of new technologies

The second major advancement was satellite communications, which raised the question of how far journalists should step back from the story and report objectively. The profession's ethic was long dominated by the idea that the closer a piece of information is obtained and the faster it makes its way onto the newspaper page or television screen — with no risk of manipulation or new events altering interpretations — the greater the chances of that story reflecting reality and helping the public understand the situation. The resulting time crunch has impacted all aspects of journalism, and the media has always invested heavily in live-transmission technology (telegraph, telephone, satellite links). The 1991 Gulf War set a precedent for near-constant live coverage, thanks to satellite technology that freed journalists from reliance on local telephone companies. (Boyd-Barrett 2019)

Live-communication technologies do not improve the quality of the information imparted in this case. If a journalist cannot see anything, speaking to him live simply because his company has the technical means to do so is pointless. (Wolton 1991) During the previous war in Iraq, journalists were repeatedly put on the air when they had nothing to say other than hearsay. A live link allows the viewer to immerse themselves in television news. He sees episodes of life in the midst of the fighting in real time, but often at the expense of a critical distance that would otherwise provide him with a broader perspective on the war and what it is all about. (Paine 2003)

The impact of globalization

When one considers that media history is the history of an expanding and diversified range of information sources, the third phase becomes very evident. In practice, this leads to pressure that is increased by an increase in the number of journalists as well as by rivalry between networks and other media outlets. The strategy of providing one version of the facts to the country and another to the rest of the world is now untenable due to the growing globalization of information. Kenneth Bacon, a civilian spokesman for the Pentagon, admitted in 1999 that NATO had been less than accurate in its

news releases since the Serbs had immediate access to such material. (Herring & Miller 2018)

In these circumstances, the government may decide to display enemy bodies in an effort to give the public the idea that triumph is within reach, even though doing so runs the danger of stunning people and energizing the enemy's population and sympathizers, as happened in Vietnam. The public may then wonder how well the operation is going and worry about getting stalled, as was the case with Iraq in 2003, if they opt to allow only a few or no photographs of destruction and enemy casualties. The concept of embedding journalists was undoubtedly created to prevent Arab media from providing Western networks with photos that were not under US military control. That is perhaps the reason why individuals who provide information to the media have started to favor stunning footage. The Iraqi information minister illustrated with his ludicrous statements that old-style propaganda no longer made sense in an era where satellite networks were sending visuals that directly contradicted the propaganda line. He was imprisoned in his totalitarian vision of wartime information. Victory chants are no longer adequate. These days, dazzling and expertly crafted visuals that serve as the foundation for the skillful dissemination of untruths about war are required. (Anderson T 2019)

III. HOW DOES THE MEDIA GENERALLY COVER CONFLICTS

Media coverage of a conflict is usually determined by the scale of the conflict and the scale of the ramifications. A conflict between two local rival gangs, for example, would not receive the same media attention as a full-fledged war between sovereign states. The stakes of a conflict, in general, influence how that conflict is covered. There are several widely held beliefs about how the media covers conflicts. They are highlighted as below:

Monetization

The focus of the media is usually monetary in nature. Larger-scale conflicts are heavily covered because there is a greater public interest and thus more eyes to watch. The greater the viewership, the more sales media outlets make, either through direct purchases like newspapers or through ad sales. After the First World War, a British observer observed that "war not only creates a supply of news but a demand for it. So deep-rooted is the fascination in war and all things appertaining to it that...a paper has only to be able to put up on its placard 'A Great Battle' for its sales to mount up."During the Gulf War, twenty of America's twenty-five largest circulation newspapers increased circulation, while Cable News Network (CNN) increased its audience tenfold (Lasswell,1927) Majority of media houses nowadays are privately owned rather than the formally state run model. This means they are private businesses incentivized by the profit motive.

Sensationalism

This is why media coverage in conflict zones tends to sensationalize rather than present the facts as they are. For

instance, in the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, western reporters and journalists frequently cover the conflict from the "frontlines," where they appear to be constantly under fire. If a news anchor presented the same information to viewers from the comfort of their studio, it would be viewed as dull and uninformative.

Sensationalism is important, and it sells. In a media report of an event, sensationalism is the emphasis on propaganda over moderation, action over reason (Okwurumara, 2009). It is a deliberate attempt by the media to gain and maintain readership, listenership, or viewership through embellishment of news items for the purpose of exaggerating what happened in the media organization's or practitioner's or both's selfish interest.

By concept, the media is drawn to conflict because conflict situations attract readers or viewers, as the case may be. According to Pate (2002), conflicts will always be covered by the press (media) because they are newsworthy. According to Umar (2009), people find conflict stories to be quite engaging and stimulating because the media does more than just report or cover conflict; they interpret, amplify, and confer emphasis and importance on conflict issues.

Ideology

Furthermore, media reporting is influenced by ideology and propaganda in general. This is not my opinion; I have fairly reviewed detailed reporting on the subject. Consider the Russian-Ukrainian conflict once more. Belarus, a pro-Russian ally, does not publish negative media reports about Russia. According to the Institute for War and Peace Reporting:

For instance, as Russia continues its invasion of Ukraine, experts in Belarus say the country's media is increasingly echoing Moscow's propaganda war. Russia has used Belarus as a springboard and key partner for its invasion, and the country is now closely associated with the military campaign, despite President Alexander Lukashenko's repeated statements that his troops will not participate in the conflict. Observers have noticed a deliberate conflation of fiction and historical facts in the state media propaganda that both Russians and Belarusians are subjected to. The Russian media is flooded with slogans about the importance of establishing the so-called Russki Mir (Russian World), which can be defined as restoring Russian influence to the borders of its historic empire and the Soviet Union. The concept was adopted by Putin's administration to justify the invasion of Ukraine, and observers note that this was one aspect of Belarussian propaganda that was now mirroring Russian rhetoric." (IWPR 2022)

This concept is mainly more occurring where there is state run media. If a national media house is owned fully or partly by the Government it is highly unlikely that they would report negative news relating to said government. Media outlets have their own agenda. Should a conflict be popular in the area where the media outlet is, it is more probable than not that their coverage of said war would skew to portray the conflict as a

positive be it economically or politically. The same is vice versa. (IWPR 2022)

Can the media spark or instigate conflict?

This is a speculative idea. Because of their proclivity to peddle endless unverified statements as news, social media platforms such as Whatsapp, Facebook, and Twitter are the primary instigators of this. People who receive "fake news" that preys on a person's biases may find themselves in conflict where there was no factual basis for it. However, it is important to note that traditional media can also be a source of inspiration. In this case, we would be remiss if we did not examine specific incidents. (Ripley T 2018)

Jyllands-Posten published 12 editorial cartoons titled "The Face of Muhammad" on September 30, 2005, the most famous of which depicted the prophet with a bomb in his turban. Another depicted the prophet in heaven, pleading with suicide bombers, "Stop, stop, we've run out of virgins!" Two weeks after the drawings were published, a delegation of Muslim ambassadors petitioned the Danish government to condemn the cartoons and punish those responsible. The ambassadors insisted that the cartoons were "demeaning" to Islam and Muslims. Many Muslims considered them to be blasphemous. (Curtis 2018)

The government responded by claiming that it had no right to interfere with press freedom. This was still primarily a Danish story until the end of January 2006, when people began to die. The Danish and Norwegian embassies in Syria were set on fire on February 4, 2006. The Danish embassy in Lebanon was burned down the next day by a mob. 139 people were killed in protests against the cartoons from Nigeria to Pakistan. One minister in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh offered a $1 million reward for the beheading of one of the Danish cartoonists. A student then tried to stab the editor of the newspaper. In January 2010, a Somali man armed with an axe and a knife attempted to assassinate Kurt Westergaard, the cartoonist responsible for the image of Muhammad with a bomb in his turban. (Cottee 2016)

IV. CASE STUDIES

Rwandan Genocide

On April 7th 1994, an ethnic battle began in Rwanda that resulted in the death of one million individuals mainly from the Tutsi community and a few from the Hutus community. Such a scale had not been seen since the Nazi extermination Programme and the kill rate was five times that of the Nazi regime (Melvern Linda 2001). It is not difficult to isolate the key steps that led from the late pre-colonial period in Rwanda to the genocide a full century later. There was nothing inexorable about this process (Caplan, G., & Annan, K. 2007). The news media both domestic and International played a critical role in the Rwandan genocide. "From my vantage point as commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), I was able to watch the strange dichotomy of local media, on one side, fueling the killing while

international media, on the other side, virtually ignored or misunderstood what was happening" (Roméo Dallaire, 2007).

Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM), which began broadcasting to the entire country in 9 July of 1993 (Mironko 2007), was created by Hutu hard-liners; although the station was officially distinct from the government, it used many of the same staff and much of the same equipment as Radio Rwanda, and many of its founders had close connections with high government officials (Des Forges 1999). Experts recall that in 1993 when the ruling National Revolutionary Movement for Development was engaged in negotiations to end the civil war, its official radio station, RTLM, was broadcasting hate and preparing its listeners for the violence. The radio broadcasts took it to another level as journalists drifted from the cardinal principles of objectivity and social responsibility and promoted hate.

The radio was supported by an extremist newspaper, The Kangura (James Tasamba, 2021). The RTLM radio station was using insensitive language against the Tutsi community that resulted in Hutus carrying Machetes and transistor radios to aid in their killing. Ten percent of the violence which took place in the course of the Rwandan genocide can be attributed to broadcasts of the so-called "hate radio" station, RTLM (Drott, 2014). Of the genocide perpetrators, 15% cited radio broadcasts as key influence towards the carrying out of violence (Scott Straus, 2007). For 100 days when the genocide took place Rwandans observed, participated and otherwise lived through national extermination.

In Rwanda's print media of the 1990s, the publication that had the most impact on the country was the bimonthly newspaper Kangura (Kabanda, M., & Annan, K. 2007). The newspaper was known for its hate against the Tutsi and any Hutus who were out to seek change, freedom and democratic openness. Kangura's cartoons depicted RPF soldiers slicing up a Hutu baby for dinner as its mother looked on in horror. The caption read, "The RPF Democracy in full function: equal shares for all." In the article, 'The Appeal to the Conscience of the Hutu', Kangura writers insisted that Tutsis were seeking supremacy and preparing to decimate the others. (Maria Armoudian, 2014). The newspaper advocated for a purified Rwanda, a Rwanda that either segregated, eradicated entirely or closely monitored the Tutsi community. In general, these journalists blamed the Tutsis for Rwanda's political problems and its misfortunes. They advocated for total extermination as the only way to do away with the Tutsis' apparent 'heartlessness' and 'cruelty'. This made the Hutu people feel justified in their killing of Tutsis as something that was right. To the Hutus they felt they were carrying a patriotic duty. In the Rwandan case we observe how the media was used as a tool to invoke violence against fellow men while spreading propaganda all the while.

Israeli-Palestine Conflict

For many decades, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been a source of heated debate. There are two fundamentally different narratives of two peoples that play out in their respective media at the heart of the conflict. While such conflicts are undeniably complex and cannot be attributed to a single factor, the media is one agent that has had a significant impact on the parties involved. The Israeli and Palestinian media, whether through unintentional bias or intentional manipulation, play a significant role in fueling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Shanchar G., 2014). The region has been marked by hostilities and violence since Israel's declaration of independence. Even though the majority of those involved in both regions oppose their respective countries' militant tactics, the Israeli and Palestinian media create a hostile environment in which such violence can thrive.

Palestinian and Israeli media present a skewed narrative that encourages their respective audiences to see themselves as victims. By portraying the opposing side as the aggressors, everything their own nation does is justified in response to the violence perpetrated by their aggressors (Rinnawi, 2007). According to this logic, Palestinians and Israelis both regard themselves as victims and, as such, can never act unjustly because they both believe they have been wronged. As a result, Palestinians do not consider their rock-throwing and missile-launching to be wrong because they are oppressed; similarly, Israelis do not consider their blockade of Gaza and military airstrikes to be wrong because they are subjected to constant mortar attacks on their Southern villages and the occasional suicide bombing in their major cities. Israeli and Palestinian journalists who face the same terrors and share the same values as their constituents help to reinforce this victimization narrative in their respective media outlets.

Palestinian journalists, for example, believe that they are obligated to play an active role in realizing the Palestinian state's dream (Liebes, 2014). This sentiment alone is enough to deter many Palestinian journalists from reporting on their own people's wrongdoings. Accepting their nation's flaws may lead the Palestinians to further compromise land during peace talks. Both Israeli and Palestinian journalists serve their respective national interests. This national identification is one of the factors that contribute to the bias in Israeli and Palestinian media. Images of Palestinians throwing rocks at Israeli soldiers patrolling the borders are constantly shown in Israeli media, perpetuating the stereotype of violent Palestinians. Similarly, children in Gaza and the West Bank are subjected to negative depictions of Israeli soldiers in their morning cartoons; one example depicts IDF soldiers shooting and killing Palestinian children in an attempt to prevent them from reaching Jerusalem's al-Aqsa mosque (Victor B., 2003).

As a result of these negative portrayals, Israelis and Palestinians come to expect certain behaviors when they encounter each other. One of the most common types of media manipulation is omission, which occurs when important details and perspectives are left out. As a result of this manipulation, consumers have a skewed view of the situation. In the Israeli media, TV reporters do not show negative Israeli behavior, such as military and settlers' actions, nor do they report on the consequences of these actions on Palestinians (Peri Y., 2012). By omitting such crucial elements from the conflict's narrative, Israeli consumers are unable to comprehend what motivates

Palestinians to act in the brutal manner depicted in Israeli media. This belief that Palestinians will erupt in unprovoked violence against Israelis will inevitably lead to support for hawkish government policies that will keep the blockade of Gaza in place.

The media's natural proclivity for sensational journalism about violence also perpetuates the notion that there is justification for militaristic attacks in self-defense. The media's influence constantly reinforces Israelis' and Palestinians' negative perceptions of one another.

Kenya's Post-Election Violence

The media plays an important role during elections by informing the public and acting as a watchdog, but it has also been accused of inciting election-related violence in some cases through its reporting. Election-related violence is becoming increasingly common around the world, including in many African countries. Following Kenya's general elections in 2007, violence erupted after incumbent President Mwai Kibaki was declared the winner and sworn in hours later, after a three-day wait. The opposition accused the government of rigging the election. At least 1,100 people were killed, 500,000 were displaced, and 2,500 were sexually assaulted as a result of ethnic violence in various parts of the country, while economic growth fell from 7.1 percent in 2007 to 2.5 percent in 2008 (KNCHR, 2008).

The media was chastised for its poor reporting and for amplifying hate speech, which inflamed tensions and led to retaliatory attacks. Through biased coverage, the media portrayed a volatile political environment marred by abhorrence, violence, and a tight race between two protagonists. Another example of media misrepresentation occurred during the Majimbo (federalism) debate, which truly defined the 2007 elections (MFAF, 2009). According to the ODM-friendly media, federalism meant devolution of power and resources to the grassroots, whereas the PNU-friendly media saw federalism as eviction of Kikuyus from the Rift Valley and other parts of the country (GoK, 2008).

Some media outlets, particularly FM radio stations, appeared to have encouraged hate speech, which elicited ethnic hatred and animosity, which erupted into open post-election violence (BBC, 2008). Prior to and during the post-election violence, it appeared that most media outlets lacked professionalism (Howard, 2008). Most media reports appeared to be inaccurate, unbalanced, and unfair at first. Facts were never verified, and victims of the conflict were treated merely as statistics with no identities. Furthermore, the media outlets appeared unprofessional in their handling of the release of election results. They released varying, piecemeal, and speculative results, which added to the anxiety and confusion of already anxious voters across the country. They also broadcast incendiary messages from politicians. This could have contributed to the perception that the election was rigged, fueling post-election violence.

The Iraq War

The U. S invaded Iraq based on their failure to pay reparations to Kuwait and declare their weapons of mass destruction to be destroyed, this was the beginning of it all. The Iraq War (Second Persian Gulf War 2003-2011) was a war of two phases, the first phase was the attack and defeat of the Iraq military, the second phase, which was much longer, involved the occupation of the U.S military in Iraq and was opposed by an insurgency. The second phase that lasted nine years was greatly aided by the media as they failed to objectively report the invasion. The international media reported on the Iraq war without fully understanding the primary reason why the people of Iraq continued to suffer despite the overthrowing of Saddam Hussein in 2003. The U.S. military were seen to be 'invading' their lands and overstaying their time during the new post-Saddam era (Cockburn, 2006).

The media showed an unforeseen power in its position during this war. Through propaganda reports serving from the Pentagon and Downing Street, the media which the public was viewing was both biased and, in many cases, untrue (Buttle, 2017). The American and British media gave the Iraq war a lot of air time, this was due to the benefit they obtained from the war itself going on. They gained a lot of substantial profit by using frames to instill fear. A study in Cardiff in 2003 found that BBC portrayed the most pro-war agenda of any broadcaster showcasing the Iraq invasion, of their cited sources 11% were of military origin or coalition government. In a speech at New York's Columbia University, John Pilger commented; "We now know that the BBC and other British media were used by the M16, the secret intelligence service. In what we called "Operation Mass Appeal", M16 agents planted articles about Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction, such as weapons hidden in secret underground bunkers. All these articles were fake" (Cromwell, 2012).

Such acts mentioned above show that through the mass media, the view of the war was created, shaped, reproduced and disseminated to fit the agenda of the U.S and British. The use of propaganda can be sometimes called public diplomacy, this is greatly seen in the coverage of the Iraq war, which only came to surface after the long occupation by the American troops. Public diplomacy entails one-sided communication and used mostly in international confrontations where governments seek to create favourable images of their nations. A study shows that the mass media did not adequately cover the primary reasons for the war in Iraq. It brings up the issue of racism and targeting the Muslim community in form satirical work for profit. It was discovered that reporters covering the war in Iraq were required by law to sign a 'set of restrictions on their reporting'. Kellner writes, "It was clear that the embedded reporters were indeed "in bed" with their military escorts since the beginning" (Kellner, 2004)

V. CONCLUSION

Consequently, the media has become a part of the conflict. They are now one of the military strategy's objectives. Military operations are supported by media plans, media relations are

handled by professionals, and the armed forces invest in internal training to make their officers aware of the importance of mastering the media process and cultivating positive relationships with journalists. The military has learned how to provide "products" (reports, press kits) that meet the needs of journalists. War can thus be reduced to a massive spectacle in which powerful images are churned out, the contents of which the military attempts to keep under control. This situation necessitates a rethinking of media practices. Old receipts, such as distanced reporting on various points of view with source identification, are no longer adequate. Because an apparently well-balanced presentation of facts results in a false equilibrium between a truth stated first and an untrue answer. This is why the profession must cultivate a more critical mindset in order to disentangle the strategic stakes of communication from the facts. The goal is to instill a mental practice in the public while reaffirming that media are not easily duped by communication strategies, of which they are the primary targets. We can imagine a systematic insert accompanying war accounts in the newspapers, aiming to reveal the means implemented by the actors to transmit their message.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Press Freedom

I opine that a free press would put in check misinformation and fake news. As discussed above State Run media is a preamble to a very misinformed population. This comes in the form that whatever might not jive with the government of the day would likely go by the wayside. State media also usually demonizes opposing opinions and these do inflame the public. By definition, Freedom of the press is similar to free speech. It means that people have the right to give information and express opinions through publication without fear of government censorship, interference, or retribution, such as physical violence or imprisonment.

According to a 2017 report from Freedom House, an independent watchdog organization, only 13 percent of the world's population enjoyed what the organization defines as a free press as of 2017. Norway and North Korea ranked first and last, respectively, in Reporters without Borders' 2018 World Press Freedom Index. This number is devastatingly low. For the sake of accurate news gathering that not only informs but also assists in conflict resolution this must fundamentally change.

Demonetize news gathering

The media is usually viewed as a tool of service to the people. In this sense, the profit motive should be taken out of news gathering and reporting. The same is rather difficult as any enterprise that is privately owned seeks to make a profit. The profit motive of the media has not only led to the employing of unqualified media persons but has made journalists clamp down on objectivity by engaging in corrupt activities. There is no straight forward solution to this though some media operations are run through grants from non-profit organisations

and due to having said grant they do not distill their reporting to fit a certain narrative with the aim to make money. It is a start, though I will be first to assert that it is probably not universally viable.

Identification of what is fact and what is opinion.

The media has a sacred duty to the population to report the unfiltered and unbiased truth regardless of which side of an argument the same serves. However, all persons have their own ideology and political leanings and members of the media are not unburdened of this.

For example if a political candidate comes from a particular city, it is not beyond the mold that media members in that city are likely to favour him. The distinction now comes in when said candidate is to have a report on him. The publisher must ascertain whether they are doing an opinion piece that is likely to be in his favour or they are doing factual reporting that is likely to be more objective.

The public needs to take responsibility in this regard and analyse what they read with a grain of salt. This is done through going an extra mile to confirm the viability of what they see or read.

Rigourous oversight and fact checking.

The media is quite extensive as there are a vast majority of outlets nowadays. This is at the local level, nationwide level and global level. As discussed earlier the most media members have an agenda as to how they seek to frame a story. This is especially more pronounced in a conflict where there are two sides of an issue. To get an unvarnished report industry regulators should set an oversight and fact checking mechanism. This is to ensure falsehoods are not published unchecked.

In the USA there are several fact checking website that assist readers to countercheck the authenticity of a media report. These include websites like, PolitiFact, Snopes.com & Factcheck.org just to name a few. Ideally it is again the public's responsibility to scrutinize those what they read, see or hear and ensure that the same is factual. And if, a media outlet is constantly being proven wrong when fact checked, a nuanced person would also learn which media outlet to avoid for their less than factual editorials.

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