Introduction

Conflict and Post-Conflict Journalism

Worldwide Perspectives

Kristin Skare Orgeret

> Peace is a difficult thing to measure. It is a bit like counting the people who did not die and the wars that did not happen. We give such an importance to the word peace but we do not tend to notice it when it occurs, or report on it. Sometimes it takes reminding ourselves of how terrible the war once was to see the peace growing around us (www.fallen.io).

The above is taken from the powerful interactive documentary "The Fallen of World War II", written and directed by Neil Halloran (2015). In addition to capturing the staggering numbers of fatalities, the documentary accentuates the unstable zones between conflict, post-conflict and peace, often a somewhat blurred (and not even necessarily unidirectional) period where much is at stake in terms of deciding what direction the future will take.

In recent years the concept of "post-conflict" has been popular in discussions of international relations, political initiatives and peace research, but as much as it describes an unstable phase, it is often unclear what precisely is meant by the term. Williams calls the concept of post-conflict a new addition to post-war vocabulary and argues that whereas it does not have "any exact meaning", it is used "vaguely for everything that helps reinstate the 'good times'" (Williams 2005: 546 in Ismail 2008). Post-conflict may interchangeably be used as a synonym for nation building, state building or peace building, and sometimes post-conflict reconstruction is considered as a part of the more general peace-building process, not as its synonym. Some of what Vincent Chetail (2009) calls "the chronic ambiguity of post-conflict peace building" may, as he claims, stem from the fact that it designates both the process of establishing a sustainable peace and the political and institutional strategies to do so. Nevertheless, he continues, these different – albeit overlapping – meanings share two essential attributes and a more common purpose: post-conflict peace building is a

long-term process and it is multidimensional in name; the ultimate objective being to reconcile security development and justice.

It is within such greater understanding of the complexities of post-conflict processes and peace building that the present book finds its roots. It is the book's overall intention to introduce and further deliberate the role of journalism and the media, often ignored in discussions about post-conflict processes, into that broader complexity. Although the role of the media in both conflict and post-conflict settings remains a relatively unexplored era of research, this does not mean that the media have a limited impact in these situations. On the contrary, "media can positively influence reconciliation in the aftermath of violent conflict just as the negative use of the media magnifies and promotes conflict" (Yamshon and Yamshon 2006). Hence, journalism can not only help to distribute information but also counter hate speech and create an environment of balanced opinions, an "information equilibrium" (Koven 2004). Reconciliation is a long-term process and reconciliation based on ambiguity will not last. The notion and its interpretations must be publicly discussed, and here lies an important task for the media.

Post-conflict peace building

The term "peace building" appeared as early as the sixteenth century, but did not become a subject of study in its own right until the 1960s and 1970s 70s within the framework of peace research. Its conceptual origins lie in the distinction between "positive peace" and "negative peace" developed by the Norwegian sociologist and researcher Johan Galtung. Whereas negative peace is defined as the "absence of direct and organised violence between human groups or nations", the notion of positive peace is part of a longer-term conception according to which establishing a sustainable peace is made possible through cooperation between these groups or nations and the eradication of the root causes of the conflict (Galtung 1975: 29).

In 2007, Michael Barnett et al. look into the terminology used by twenty-four governmental and nongovernmental agencies to describe post-conflict peace building, and highlight the vast diversity of expressions used. Notwithstanding the difficulties in comprehension that such a multitude of concepts may cause, the plethora of terms reflects more profoundly the differences in the mandates and political interests of the

various actors involved in processes of post-conflict reconstruction (Barnett et al. 2007). For instance, as Chetail (2009) develops, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has a preference for the terms "stabilisation" and "peace support" in line with its military mandate, whereas the European Union uses the expression "civilian crisis management" within the framework of its European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). A UN Progress Report of the Secretary-General is often referred to in relation to the immediate aftermath of conflict as it lists five central areas of action in post-conflict: basic safety and security; political processes; basic services; core government services and economic revitalisation (UN 2010).

The African Union (AU) Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Framework was adopted in Banjul, The Gambia in 2006, and refers to the same five areas as the above-mentioned UN report, which it terms "constitutive elements" in post-conflict reconstruction, but in addition the AU significantly adds gender as a self-standing element. This is important, as experiences from post-conflict situations show how even in contexts where women did play important roles during the conflict and peace building, they are often marginalised in the ultimate political settlement (see, for example, Castillejo 2011 and 2013). Efforts to develop new political systems in post-conflict contexts should ideally emphasise the inclusion of female leaders and women's policy priorities in order to eliminate institutional barriers to women's participation in reconstruction and governance.[i] Furthermore, the African Union defines "post-conflict reconstruction and development" as:

> … a comprehensive set of measures that seek to: address the needs of countries emerging from conflict, including the needs of affected populations; prevent escalation of disputes; avoid relapse into violence; address the root causes of conflict; and consolidate sustainable peace (AU 2006).

In order to ensure that the broader society feels ownership of the processes leading to sustainable peace, and that external actors get as realistic as possible an impression of the situation, it is important that a multitude of local voices and experiences is included in the stories about conflict and post-conflict. Other important tasks facing countries in crisis or recovering from recent hostilities are restoring effective governance and building public trust in government. The history and political culture of the state need to be taken into account. As conditions in post-conflict countries vary widely, rebuilding trust will require different approaches, but accessible

communications and getting one's voice and perspectives heard are seen as fundamental prerequisites of post-conflict reconstruction.

The role of journalism

Diverse, multiple voices are important for free speech in democracy and, equally, for a broad understanding of knowledge and autonomy. The media may play a role specifically in supporting the peace process, allowing for participation, dialogue and reconciliation and strengthening civil society. Hence, the classical societal roles of journalistic media are seen as important in supporting the transition to a stable and democratic society. The core societal role of the media may be summarised as follows:

1. To provide information about people's rights
2. To discover illegal actions and protect people from corruption through the so-called watchdog function
3. To function as a two-way channel between those who govern and the governed
4. To serve as identity suppliers: the media should reflect how people see themselves and offer a wide spectrum of possible roles for people to take up

The media have a significant position in addressing issues of identity in post-conflict society, as well as communicating the story to the rest of the world. Johan Galtung stresses the role of reconciliation in the processes a war-struck society ultimately has to go through. This includes building stable relationship between the antagonists, or in the words of Lederach, "to address, integrate and embrace the painful past and the necessary shared future as a means of dealing with present" (1997: 34-35). The media may serve as a platform where both the victims and perpetrators of human rights violations can share their experiences in order to get a clearer picture of the past to facilitate genuine healing and reconciliation. The role of visual images is important as they may help us to remember as well as to forget the conflicts or wars afterwards.

According to Laplante and Phenicie, post-conflict conflicts may be attributed in part, to the media's failure to adequately mediate conflicting views of a country's history. As Laplante and Phenicie continue, internal conflicts do not occur spontaneously, but tend to have a history. Not only can the media influence society before the conflict by recognising and properly addressing the issues at stake, but they can also have an influence afterwards. Nora Kuusik (2010) shows how not giving people the

possibility of political participation, and not allowing them to express themselves freely, is a significant cause of conflict. Lack of information can, at any stage of a conflict, make people desperate, restless and ready to manipulate the dispute. The ability to make informed decisions, as Kuusak reminds us, "strengthens societies and fosters economic growth, democratic structures and the positive outlook on the future".

On the one hand, free independent and pluralistic media provide a platform for debate and exchange of knowledge and opinions. On the other hand, the terrible experiences of Rwanda and the Radio Mille Collines which actively fomented ethnic hatred, driving the Hutu people to kill at least 500,000 Tutsis in 1994, showed that media can be misused for propaganda purposes, to spread rumours and incite hatred. Simultaneously media have the potential to advance or to minimise the impact of harmful symbols in adjusting social relationships. This tendency creates an inherent conflict in the media's ability to help achieve (or to hinder) peaceful goals. Thus the media's representations of identity, of history, of the justification of transitional measures – indeed, the narratives of the society itself, become critical in shaping the extent to which stability, reconciliation, new nation building, and community can be sustained. The media can be a forum where identity issues play out, and they can also provide the space for encouraging acceptance of certain narratives that are part of transitional (post-conflict) efforts.

The aim of the present book is to provide both empirical and theoretical input to the discussions of the role of journalism and media in conflict and post-conflict situations and in the often rather muddy waters between them. Together, the contributions to this book from different parts of the world emphasise that discussions about post-conflict situations will gain from including the media. At the same time, the contributions problematise the concept of post-conflict and powerfully illustrate that the phase between war/conflict and peace is neither unidirectional nor linear, as the use of the concept sometimes seems to imply. Reaching a peace agreement or arranging for the termination of hostilities is, in itself, no guarantee that peace can be secured. The examples from Afghanistan, Colombia and South Sudan in this book show this up clearly. Remaining post-conflict societal friction may even be as threatening to long-lasting peace as the war itself. Hence, post-conflict may be seen as

a "conflict situation in which open warfare has come to an end. However, such situations remain tense for years or decades and can easily relapse into large-scale violence" (Junne and Verkoren 2005). Post-conflict peace may be described as typically frail. The World Bank estimates that, on average, countries emerging from hostilities have a 40 per cent chance of relapsing into conflict within five years (2006), and around half of all civil wars are due to post-conflict relapses (Brown et al. 2011: 462).

As we will see in the following contributions to this book, just as all conflicts are different, each post-conflict situation is also defined by its context (see also Chand and Coffman 2008). Post-conflict transition may be broken down into three broad, sometimes overlapping phases: emergency-cum-stabilisation, transition and recovery, peace and development. Journalists also contribute to the world's experiences of conflicts and crises: from shaping global audiences' perceptions and knowledge about them, to influencing decisions about international national political or military strategies. In a crisis or conflict situation, international media can attract worldwide attention, and media and journalism can be of great assistance in conflict management and peace building locally, regionally and internationally. Weak or non-existing reporting may have devastating results. Sometimes it is necessary to be aware that media and international reporting or efforts to shape a media environment can definitely be manipulated, and that foreign correspondents sometimes adapt a frame expected by the public at home.

The Institute on War and Peace reporting has a set of "six duties" for journalists covering conflict and peace: understand the conflict and report fairly; report the background and the causes of the conflict; present the human side; report on peace efforts; recognise journalists' influence.[ii] The list emphasises that journalists, even facing increased external pressures as a result of the conflict, must maintain standards such as professional research and balanced coverage. Inspired by the so-called peace journalism paradigm of Johan Galtung, the list stresses the responsibility of journalists to cover the "trauma and the human stories of all the conflict's victims" and that true balance requires a look at alternatives to war.

Journalists are also products of the conflict that a country experiences or has experienced. The fact that journalists are often persecuted threatened or harmed

during conflicts may very well affect their ability to report freely. Conflict zone reporters face a multitude of dangers unique to their particular form of journalism. Female journalists are more exposed in conflict settings heavily dominated by men, and hence are even more vulnerable. Particularly when covering war and conflict, there is a need to get local and ordinary voices heard. This is the point of Shabbir Hussain (2014: 6), who argues that "though the media, when reporting on government officials, always refer to the 'ordinary people killed in the conflict', they never discuss what happens to the local population when military jets bomb the area and fire missiles". When common people in a conflict have no voice in the media, elitist and securitised versions get a monopoly in mainstream media discourse, often at the expense of more peaceful perspectives (for example, Hussain 2014; Ross 2006).

Worldwide perspectives

The first chapter of the book, Elisabeth Eide's "Afghanistan: Journalism in pseudo-post-conflict, conflict and post-conflict. A clash of definitions?" explores the concept of post-conflict. Applying criteria for specific peace milestones and possible indicators of progress, and using Afghanistan as an example, Eide discusses how the scores for Afghanistan are low. It is particularly the "economic recovery" and the "risk of recurring conflict", which are seen as the main challenges. She further points at how Afghanistan (and Iraq) have been subject to invasions by US-led Western forces, and a gradual withdrawal of (most of) these, and how such withdrawals often imply less Western media coverage of the countries invaded – hence, these countries develop into "post-conflict" as seen from the perspective of the withdrawing forces and their home countries, whereas the situation on the ground provides indicators of ongoing conflict. The chapter discusses the development of journalism as an institution post-Taliban, by way of the judicial, political, military and economic developments, and analyses some 2014 news/reportage from two particular outlets as a case. The reporting demonstrates Afghanistan's fragility and lack of security – for journalists as well as for people in general – in a situation which was at least planned to be post-conflict.

The instability of the so-called post conflict situation is also well illustrated by the case of the Republic of South Sudan which, after 60 years of civil war, emerged as the *world's youngest nation in 2011,* and which again moved from a post-conflict

situation back to open conflict in late 2013. The signing of a cessation of hostilities agreement on 23 January 2014 between President Kiir's government and the opposition forces led by Riek Machar did not prevent violence from erupting again shortly afterwards. The fact that insecurity and flux often spread beyond a nation state's border, sometimes to an entire region, is also shown in the case of South Sudan. In her chapter "Justified mission? Press coverage of Uganda's military intervention in the South Sudan conflict", Charlotte Ntulume discusses neighbouring Ugandan press coverage of the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF)'s involvement in the conflict in South Sudan. The study supports earlier conclusions that in times of war and conflict, journalists often depend entirely on official sources for information, and media serve as mouthpieces of the authorities by amplifying their voices and muffling those that differ from the official position. In such times, the "watchdog" in journalism takes a back seat as other concerns take precedence. As a result the news is framed along the lines of the authorities' standpoint and describes the mission first and foremost as a humanitarian cause. However, in a few cases the press, and particularly the nongovernmental newspaper *Daily Monitor*, in its editorials, attempted to explain the deployment and questioned the government's decision.

In some cases the instability of post conflict societies tend to spread to entire regions and even effect the larger world. Joseph Stiglitz has discussed how modern conflicts are often turned into post-crisis-crises. In their chapter "Who's to blame for the chaos in Syria? The coverage of Syria in *Aftenposten*, with the war in Libya as doxa", Rune Ottosen and Sjur Øvrebø examine how the civil war in Syria can be discussed as a post-crisis-crisis. The war in Syria is the worst humanitarian crisis of our time and has fuelled a massive exodus displacing an ever increasing number of people (12 million at the end of December 2015), creating the *largest* wave of *refugees* to Europe *since the Second World War*. In terms of terrorist attacks the war spreads far beyond the borders of Syria. Ottosen and Øvrebø investigate the relationship between the war in Libya in 2011 and the unfolding events in Syria in 2013. Their hypothesis is that Norway's role in Libya is underreported, and an underlying assumption is that because Norway played an important part in the Libyan bombing, Norway must also take some responsibility for the events after the bombing came to an end. Part of a propaganda war is to keep controversial issues hidden from the media. Investigating

the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten'*s Syria coverage, the authors find that in the majority of articles about Syria the connecting line between the regime change in Libya and the following events in Syria is not drawn. In the articles where Libya is mentioned, however, they find a certain willingness to draw historical lines to the Libyan war. The authors conclude that *Aftenposten'*s coverage of the Syrian conflict had a war journalism orientation with some elements of peace journalism in it.

Theories of peace journalism have also inspired Chapter Four, "Framing peace building: Discourses of United Nations radio in Burundi" by William Tayeebwa. The chapter discusses how in its post-conflict, peace-building operations in Africa the United Nations has been accused of promoting the Western model of "liberal peace building" as opposed to exploring alternative approaches proposed by national actors. Tayeebwa argues that in order to push its agenda in conflict and post-conflict countries, the UN produces radio programmes that it distributes to radio stations. The chapter analyses a selection of such radio programmes from Burundi and shows that although alternative approaches of peace building are discernible in the broadcasts, the dominant framing favours the Western-centric "liberal peace building" agenda.

To best serve the public as watchdogs and truth-tellers, news organisations need a broad display of voices and perspectives. Balanced gender representations in the media increase the citizens' possibilities for recognition and democratic belonging. In Chapter Five, "Women making news – conflict and post-conflict in the field", Kristin Skare Orgeret discusses what challenges and opportunities women journalists face when covering conflict related issues either at home or in a foreign context where gender roles may be very different from those of their home country. Based on interviews and discussions with experienced female journalists from seven countries around the world, the discussion evolves around questions linked to the particular challenges and opportunities faced by women journalists, and how their security can best be ensured when covering war and conflict zones. How do they experience differences between working in an open conflict situation and a post-conflict situation? A main argument of the chapter is that female journalists' conditions of employment, including aspects of safety, can serve as a pointer of democratic development, freedom of expression, civil rights and media freedom in general.

Women's perspectives are also the issue of Chapter Six, "Experiences of female journalists in post-conflict Nepal" by Samiksha Koirala shows how women often take over nontraditional roles brought on by the changes and transformations during the conflict. The chapter shows that despite the popular discourse of women being naturally inclined toward peace making, in Nepal such stereotypes were defied as women assumed active roles, either as negotiators or as party cadres and guerrillas, in the ten-year armed conflict of the Maoist war. The chapter explores the participation of women journalists in Nepali media, including their experience of reporting during the war. Through two case studies of Nepali journalists, the chapter examines the role of women journalists during conflict and post-conflict, and argues that Nepali journalism in general has not been successful in making post-conflict reporting balanced and gender sensitised, although some steps taken over the last few years have been in the right direction.

The following two chapters, Chapters Seven and Eight, discuss the tensions between local and global media agendas and media coverage. The chapters deal with journalism in the context of war and post-conflict in Colombia from two different perspectives. First, Henry Caballero Fula explains and analyses the emergence of a diverse indigenous journalism in Colombia from an inside perspective. His argument revolves around the issue of violence: how has violence against indigenous activists and journalists contributed to producing this particular form of communication? The indigenous media in Colombia raise some questions about understandings in the global North of journalism in conflict and post-conflict. Seen through the lens of the professionalisation of journalism, the indigenous journalism found in Colombia does not necessarily fit current definitions of "journalism". However, the chapter argues, much Northern journalism also emerged closely related to social organisations and political parties. Conceivably, the emergence of indigenous journalism can enrich current understandings of Northern forms of journalism such as alternative journalism, community journalism and citizen journalism.

Caballero concludes by reflecting on the role and importance of autonomy for indigenous peoples. This raises the question of how indigenous journalists can achieve a degree of autonomy within indigenous movements organised around

demands for indigenous autonomy in a context of conflict or post-conflict with extreme levels of violence against indigenous peoples.

Chapter Eight, "Global and local journalism – and the Norwegian collective imagination of 'post-conflict'" Colombia by Roy Krøvel, analyses Norwegian journalism on war and peace in Colombia, undeniably produced by specialised journalists situated within a Northern culture of journalism that highly value the idea of the autonomy of journalism. However, the chapter argues, this journalism is also embedded within a very Norwegian, collectively produced, imaginary of peace and understanding of the role of Norwegians in making peace "happen". This imaginary of peace works to frame Norwegian journalism on war and peace in Colombia and makes alternative perspectives less salient – and reduces indigenous peoples to voiceless victims of war. Krøvel concludes that the Norwegian journalism on conflict and post-conflict in Colombia tends to make indigenous perspectives on the peace process difficult to understand for a Norwegian audience.

In Chapter Nine, "Improving post-conflict journalism through three dances of trauma studies", Elsebeth Frey shows how the concepts of crisis journalism, conflict sensitive journalism and post-conflict journalism may overlap. The chapter links the traumatic stress that may appear in post-conflict as well as in a crisis situations, and explores the possibilities of an interaction between post-conflict journalism and trauma studies, where specific strategies are proposed to sketch out a (normative) hands-on framework for journalism in such situations. Frey shows how knowledge about resilience and trauma may make journalists more capable of understanding, and thus producing, more meaningful and sensitive journalism.

Trauma is also central in the last chapter of the book, Anne-Hege Simonsen's "Moving forward, holding on. The role of photojournalistic images in the aftermath of crisis". Simonsen shows how, in post-conflict situations, photographs may work as triggers of collective as well as individual emotions. Their powers depend on where in the post-conflict process their users find themselves and how far the process of negotiating the past has come. The chapter shows how, with its power to display moments and scenes that reach "beyond words", photojournalism plays a vital role in mediating conflicts and crisis, or what Zelizer has termed "unsettled events". But what happens after the event, when the "breaking news" moment has passed? The

chapter discusses how journalistic photographs work as tools of remembering as well as forgetting. Since journalistic photographs are not so much windows on the world as windows on the mind, Simonsen argues, photographs may empower people to move on, but also to keep conflicts alive.

The ten chapters in the book consider the problems and the potential of media in conflict and post-conflict. Jointly, they provide examples of how different conflict and post-conflict may be and that such phases are processes, but not necessarily linear. Furthermore, the role of journalism is crucial, both as part of these processes as such and in how they are communicated to society and the larger world. Rather than specific prescriptions, the chapters taken together propose ways of thinking about the role of journalism and media within the complex field of conflict and peace.

References

AU (2006) African Union Policy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD). Published by the Conflict Management Division, Peace and Security Department, Commission of the African Union. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Barnett, M., H. Kim, M. O'Donnell and L. Siteas (2007) What is in a name? *Global Governance*, 13: 35-58.

Brown, G., A. Langer and F. Stewart (2011) A typology of post-conflict environments. CRPD Working Paper No. 1, September Leuven: University of Leuven.

Chand, S. and R. Coffman (2008) How soon can donors exit from post-conflict states? Center for Global Development. Working Paper Number 141.

Chetail, Vincent (ed.) (2009) *Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: A Lexicon*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Collier, P., A. Hoeffler and M. Söderbom (2008) Post-conflict risks. In *Journal of Peace Research,* Vol 45, no 4.

Galtung, J. (1975) *War and Defence: Essays in Peace Research*. Vol. 1, Copenhagen: Christian Ejlers.

Halloran, N. (2015) The Fallen of World War II. www.fallen.io. [Accessed 20 October 2015].

Harp D., J. Loke and I. Bachmann (2010) Voices of dissent in the Iraq War: Moving from deviance to legitimacy. In *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 87 (3-4): 467-483.

Hussain, S. (2014) Reporting on terror. Why are the voices of peace unheard? *Conflict and Communication Online.* Vol. 13. No.2.

Junne, G. and W. Verkoren (2005) *Post-conflict Development. Meeting New Challenges.* Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

Koven, Ronald (2004) An antidote to hate speech: Journalism, pure and simple. Retrived from www.amarc.org/documents/books/media_conflict_prevention_EN.pdf.

Kuusik, Nora (2010) The role of media in peace building, conflict management and prevention. Retrieved from www.e-ir.info/2010/08/28/the-role-of-media-in-peace-building-conflict-management-and-prevention/.

Ross, S. D. (2006) (De)constructing conflict: A focused review of war and peace journalism. *Conflict & Communication Online* 5(2).

World Bank (2006) Conflict-Affected Countries. Washington: World Bank.

Yamshon E. and D. Yamshon D. (2006) Comics media in conflicts resolution programs: Are they effective in promoting and sustaining peace? *Negotiation Journal* 421-425.

Zelizer, B. (2010) *About to Die.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

---

[i] See: http://africacenter.org/security/topic/reconstruction/#sthash.zuu97usI.dpuf
[ii] http:ijnet.org/ijnet/training_materials/guidelines