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ETHICAL COMPLEXITIES IN COMMUNICATING CONFLICT

by

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Abstract: *The focus of this paper is to assess how media's representational practices shape and affect current debates on conflict. North-East India exhibits divergent social and cultural distinctiveness characterized by socio-political instability and unrest among the ethno-linguistic communities. These conflicts in the region are reflected in the patterns of conflict which are varied in their nature with each ethnic group having a distinct set of location specific concerns and grievances. While it is believed that the mass media can mould peoples' opinion and belief, it seems pertinent to examine if it actually communicate ethnic conflict with greater sensitivity and conscientiousness. It is argued that if the media could support forces that lead to conflict, it could also contribute towards mitigating conflict and foster peace in the region. This study assesses the ethical issues relating to the fundamental techniques of 'conflict reporting' vis-a-vis professional responsibilities of journalists which are grounded in economics and the politics of sensationalism on which the media industry thrives. Communication ethics is a much discussed topic encompassing the do's and don'ts of reporting conflict, however what is been overlooked in the ethical framework is how to best cover conflict. The current study focuses on media's role in communicating conflict that occurred in the year 2014 between the Bodos and Adivasis in Assam.*

Keywords: *Conflict reporting, Ethnic conflict, Communication ethics, Sensitivity, Bodos, Adivasis*

Introduction

Conflicts have become a defining aspect of the contemporary time. It is a dynamic process that occurs in any social situation where two or more social entities are linked by at least one form of antagonistic interaction (Fink, 1968). With individuals having different sets of interest, needs and demands probability of discords always exists. According to Machiavelli, the European theorist conflicts are a result of the human desire for self preservation and power. Episodes of civil wars, genocide, militant attacks, inter ethnic clash are some of the most enduring incidents societies face today. Conflicts occurs with a latent motive to achieve supremacy or equality of 'resources', which according to Eriksen (2001) could range from political power to recognition in society.

White (2001) considers the "them versus us" behaviour leads to violence. Sumner (1906) definition of ethnocentrism describes the ingroup - outgroup categories. Ethnocentrism is a universal characteristic of human social group where differentiation arises between ourselves and the others, the in group members maintains peace among each other while their relation with the others is of war. Jussim and colleagues (2001) believed that as resources for survival are scarce and groups compete over the same resources, the linkage between ingroup survival and destruction of outgroup is direct.

However a conflict can also occur within members of the same groups. Pruitt and Kim (2004) suggest five dimensions along which conflict escalates. One dimension is the number of participants involved in the conflict; second dimension is the amount of resources; third dimension is the number and nature of issues at play; fourth is the intensity of the tactics; the final dimension of escalation is the goals of the parties with respect to the dispute. The more emphasis on the above mentioned dimensions the more likely conflict escalates.

Northeast of India is a melting pot of various identities. The region has been looked down as the "problem child since very inception of the Indian republic" (Bhaumik, 2009) Conflicts in the form of insurgency for secession or autonomy, ethnic clashes and militant attacks are embedded in its history. The question of identity, clash over resources, the insider - outsider debate, negligence from the government, economic political deprivation, failure of governance are factors that has led to causes and consequences of the conflicts dynamics that the people in the states of northeast confronts. Social movements, ethnic clashes and militant attacks are in some way outcomes of deep rooted resentment among the ethnicities. In context of Assam, the region of Bodoland has witness gruesome inter group conflicts and militant attacks.

The discord has its roots in the Bodoland movement launched under the leadership of Upendranath Brahma in the year 1987. The social movement by the Bodos was launched with the demand for formation of a separate state, which rouse from a sense of victimhood and negligence by the dominant Assamese hegemony and the Government. The movement with due course of time turned violent with the rise of militant groups such as the National Democratic front of Bodoland (NDFB) and Bodo Liberation Tiger Force (BLTF) who

got engaged in attacks and counter attacks. The militant groups also began strategically attacking selected non Bodo population living in Bodo area.

In 1993 the government along with the All-Bodo Students Union (ABSU) and the Bodo People’s Action Committee (BPAC) signed the Bodo Accord with an aim to end the violent Bodoland movement. Again in the year 2003 the government and the BLT signed a new Bodo Accord for creation of a ‘Bodoland Territorial Council’ (BTC) “to provide constitutional protection under Sixth Schedule, to fulfil economic, educational and linguistic aspirations and the preservation of land-rights, socio-cultural and ethnic identity of the Bodos; and speed up the infrastructure development in BTC area”. Despite signing of the two accords the region of Bodoland remains turbulent with ethnic clashes between Bodos and non bodos as well as militant attacks. (Saikia, 2001; Das, 2014; Nath, 2003)

Ethnic conflicts in the region have occurred primarily between the Bodos, the Bengali speaking Muslims and the Adivasis. Bodos, considered themselves as the indigenous population and hence the ‘son of the soil’, whereas the Muslims of Bengali origin and Adivasis are considered as outsiders despite their long duration of stay in Bodoland. The conflicts among ethnicities occur along the line of control over resources (land rights) and indigenous immigrant issue. The ethnic conflicts in region dates back to 1993, the recent incident of bloodshed in the region occurred in August 2016 when 14 civilians were killed by militants in Balajan Tiniali market of Kokrajhar district. This study focuses on the conflict that occurred in the year 2014.

Table 1. Chronology of ethnic clashes in Bodoland

Year of Conflict	Ethnic groups involved
1993	Bodos and Muslims
1994	Bodos and Muslims
1996	Bodos and Adivasis
1998	Bodos and Adivasis
2008	Bodos and Muslims
2012	Bodos and Muslims
2014	Bodos and Adivasis

(Source: The Assam Tribune and Times of India)

On 23rd December 2014, militants belong to the NDFB(S) faction attacked people belonging to the Adivasi community. The attack was carried out as the militant faction suspected

Adivasi villagers of passing out information about the whereabouts of militant outfit to the police. The killing of Adivasi's sparked violence among the community and led to retaliation attacks on Bodo people. The militant attack and retaliation was widespread in the districts of BTAD and Sonitpur. The violence killed more than 80 people belong mostly to the Adivasi and Bodo community. Around 2,86, 270 persons were taking shelter in the 139 relief camps set up in the districts of Kokrajhar, Chirang, Sonitpur and Udalguri following the incidents of terrorist attack on villagers on December 23 and 24 according to the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA).

Curfews were imposed in disturbed areas and paramilitary forces were deployed. The investigation for the conflict was assigned to the National Investigation Agency. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and announced an ex-gratia of ₹2 lakh to each of the families of the dead and ₹50,000 to the seriously injured, while the Assam government has announced ex-gratia of ₹5 lakh to families of the dead and ₹50,000 to those injured. The army launched "Operation All Out" in search of the rebels where several militants were arrested and killed. The 2014 incidents of bloodshed of innocent people in Assam made the Central Government to renew the tag of 'Disturbed Area' for Assam, which was earlier abolished.

Literature Review

Journalism ethics today is influenced by normative ideas of liberal theory, objectivity and social responsibility theory, interpretive theory and ethics of community and care. From the liberal theory viewpoint journalism should be independent, inform citizens and be a watchdog of the government and abuses of power. The social responsibility theory favours publication of most accurate and comprehensive truth on matters of public interest. It also urges representation of the constituents groups in society and assist in the presentation of goals and values of society. Interpretive and activist perspective on journalism ethics rejects 'neutrality', where journalist are forced to take a stance and be partisans that seek to reform society by challenging the status quo. Communitarian media ethics assumes that the function of journalism is to facilitate interpretative dialogue among citizens that aims for civic transformation. (Ward, 2009; Neverla, Lohner&Banjac, 2015)

Reuben (2009) in his study links the principles of conflict theory to mass communication according to which conflicts can lead to outcomes that are either constructive or destructive. Conflicts are constructive when they resolve issues and destructive when it leads to further detrimental consequences. Based on studies by various scholars Reuben suggest that the news media serves as a mediator of disputes, stirring escalation that may be more constructive or destructive, depending upon what is reported. It can be constructive when it promotes greater communications between the parties, and destructive when it fuels a zero-sum mindset toward to the conflict, polarizes the parties, or denigrate one of the parties. The use of frame to report an incident also determines the escalation, use of frames such as battle metaphor; issue dualism can escalate conflicts destructively. Media's coverage of ethnic conflict can foster ethnocentrism that can polarize groups. Wolfsfeld and colleagues (2008) states that ethnocentrism leads to two modes of death coverage in violent ethnic conflict: the Victims Mode and the Defensive Mode of reporting. Such reporting supports already existing

negative, hostile, and ethnocentric attitudes about the conflict and its participants during conflicts.

How media frames events and its impact on audiences has been discussed extensively by scholars. Framing according to Entman "select[s] some aspects of a perceived reality and make[s] them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described." (1993) Framing is a process that involves content selection and exclusion, highlighting certain characteristic over others to communicate a particular point of view (Epkins, 2011) Frames have at least four locations in the communication process according to Entman (1993): the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture.

Communicators make conscious or unconscious framing judgments in deciding what to say, guided by frames that organize their belief systems. The text contains frames, which are manifested by the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments. The frames that guide the receiver's thinking and conclusion may or may not reflect the frames in the text and the framing intention of the communicator. The culture is the stock of commonly invoked frames.

Framing by media can decide the direction the conflict takes. According to Kaufman and colleagues (2013) "intractable disputes are usually associated with a complex and reinforcing set of frames about oneself, the others, risks, what information should apply to the situation, and how decisions should be made." They put forward six frames that are usually applicable to intractable disputes: identity frame, characterization frame, power frame, conflict management/process frame, risk/information frame, and loss versus gain frame.

Gultang presents a two way approach of looking at a conflict: the high road and the low road. In the low road approach media views conflict as a battle where the parties involved are usually reduced to the number 2, who are opponents in a struggle to impose their respective goals. The underlying reporting model is that of "a military command: who advances, who capitulates short of their goals; counting the losses in terms of nos. killed, wounded, and material damage." The zero-sum perspective draws upon sports reporting where "winning is not the only thing, but everything". The high road approach is where the media practice peace journalism with focus on reporting for conflict transformation. Peace Journalism as Galtung puts forward is reporting of conflicts where media explores the conflict formation, its causes and consequences; voice to all parties; focus on invisible effects of conflicts, uncover truths of all side and is people and solution oriented (2017)

With the incidents of conflicts occurring across society's media's role in communicating conflict has been discussed widely by scholars and practitioners. The study builds its discussion on the premise that media use of war tactics to report news stories is against communication ethics. According to Happer and Philo (2013) media plays a fundamental role in "communicating to the public what happens in the world. In those cases in which audiences do not possess direct knowledge or experience of what is happening, they become

particularly reliant upon the media to inform them.” Conflicts are tragedies that involve killings, bloodsheds, displacements, economic consequence and emotional turmoil.

It is in media “conflicts are defined, framed and visualized; elaborated, narrativized and evaluated: moralized, deliberated and contested; amplified and promoted or dampened and reconciled” (Cottle, 2006). Maneri and Wal (2005) regards mass media to be mirror of the society but a distorted one which implies a possibility that media’s distorted representation could emphasize prejudice among the public. Media mediates reality and the way they mitigate becomes a major factor (Galtung 1985). Media’s coverage of conflict has the potential to instigate conflicts as well as resolve conflicts. How and what media represents can shape people’s perception to a great instance. Media outlets are being treated as “actors” within international conflicts capable of shaping and refining opinions (Nawawy& Powers 2008)

Journalism is a “moral enterprise” (Seib, 2002). Media as Beker (2004) identifies creates public discourse and there exists ethical norms according to which media should report. “Ethics’ is a set of concepts and principles that guide us in determining what behaviour helps or harms sentient creatures.” (Paul & Elder 2006). The chief purpose of codes of ethics is to impact journalists’ actions – to enforce social responsibility (Boeyink, 1994). The U.S. based Society of Professional Journalists’ code of ethics has four main tenants: a) Seek truth and report it, b) Minimize harm, c) Act independently and d) Be accountable and transparent. In India the Press Council of India lays ethnical norms for the practice of journalism. “PCI adjudicates the complaints against and by the press for violation of ethics and for violation of the freedom of the press respectively” (Kumar, 2011). Code of Ethics demands journalists to report in an accurate, fair, impartial and be accountable to public. Media ethics are norms that provide guidelines on how a journalist should conduct his duty. There is an ethical aspect to all the processes that makes news fit for print/ broadcast; from gathering of newsworthy story to its presentation, a journalist is required to follow ethical norms to make decisions.

Media in the contemporary period has transformed into a complex entity and its credibility has been highly discussed and scrutinized. Factors such as ownership pattern, profit making agenda, suppression by various stakeholders has made unethical representation of news highly prevalent across media outlets. A study conducted by the Media Diversity Institute, the European Federation of Journalists and its Ethical Journalism Initiative campaign proposes guidelines for reporting of ethnicities. Ethical guidelines consider journalism as an important facilitator towards the wellbeing of society by fostering a climate of tolerance, building a culture of understanding between different ethnic, cultural and religious groups in society.

Responsible and ethical journalism has the potential to contribute to promoting intercultural dialogue and fighting discrimination among ethnicities. Ethical media reporting includes the realm of reporting factually on acts of intolerance, avoiding derogatory stereotypical presentation of members, being sensitive while depicting tensions. Racial and ethnic stereotypes in the media contribute to citizens’ negative perception of minorities. The powerful relationship between the news and how reality breaks along the lines of ‘good’ and

'evil' and 'us' and 'them' has been a recurring theme in contemporary academic, policy and media industry debates. (Rupar, 2012)

In case of conflict reporting there are various instances where media is used to sensationalise events and fuel up conflict situations. Rwanda genocide is one such example where media was used as a tool to propagate violence that led to massive destruction. In India the 26/11 and Gujarat Riots 2002 are instances which describe media's erroneous coverage of events. Many scholars view that mass media propagates conflict rather than peace. Media reduces conflicts to discourses of force and violence with petite knowledge about the dynamics of conflict and no ideas for alternatives to violence. Journalists who adhere to traditional standards of truth and objectivity tend to reduce conflicts to mere antagonisms in order to make news stories more thrilling and the conflict more understandable for the audience (Kempf, 2002). Journalism is "focused on conflict and not resolution of conflict. In journalism texts, conflict is noted as newsworthy whereas peace, however you define it, is not" (Filemyr 1996).

Johan Galtung (2017; 2000) accuses media of favouring 'war journalism' instead of 'peace journalism'. It according to him focuses on violence, emphasize on the differences between groups, present conflict as a zero-sum game and overlook the broad range of causes and outcomes of conflict. Bertil Lintner (2015) a Swedish Journalist believes that news on conflicts should be reported from the point of view of the people who are affected rather than glorifying the armies involved. Communicating conflicts demands paying substantive attention towards in-depth understanding of the reasons of conflicts, learning the historical and present context of parties involved and its consequence at societies at large rather than simply reporting about number of casualties in conflict.

One however cannot ignore the complexities that media professionals face while gathering and dissemination of conflict news to its audience. Although Kempf (2002) argues that journalists prefer war discourse. "Journalists usually share the beliefs of the society to which they belong, and - in particular - they share those societal beliefs which enable the society to cope with the conflict." Responsible journalism calls for a balance representation of social reality to maintain harmony. Responsible journalism entails the awareness that reporting of events has consequences in the larger society and needs to act accordingly. The present study attempts to analyse the approach media's adopts while representing conflict between ethnicities of Bodoland.

Research Design

The objective of the study is to assess how media communicates news on ethnic conflict and how does it frames the ethnicities involved. It is an attempt to analyse which perspective of journalism war or peace is reflected in the news coverage of conflicts.

To fulfil the outlined objective content analysis is adopted as the research method to analyse newspaper's portrayal of ethnic conflict and its dimensions. Content analysis is considered as an efficient method when it comes to studying media by communication researchers. Reading media text helps to 'infer about phenomena of who produce the content and predict

its impact on audience (Shoemaker & Reese,1996). Berelson (1952) as Macnamara(2007) cites, presents five different purposes that content analysis fulfil – “to describe substance characteristics of message content; to describe form characteristics of message content; to make inferences to producers of content; to make inferences to audiences of content; to predict the effects of content on audiences” It is crucial to analyse media text of what is being delivered to the audience who uses the content to frame perception about the conflicts.

Sample selected

Two newspapers are selected for the study, namely *The Assam Tribune* and the *Times of India* on basis of their prominence and circulation in the region. The researcher intends to analyse the coverage of the above mentioned newspaper of ethnic conflict that occurred in the year of 2014. Assam Tribune is a regional newspaper published under the Assam Tribune Publisher and was founded in the year 1939. The Assam Tribune is regarded as the highest circulated English daily in the Northeastern region of India. Founded in the year 1838 Times of India is the oldest English-language newspaper in India still in circulation. According to Audit Bureau of Circulations (India) it is the third-largest newspaper in India by circulation and largest selling English-language daily in the world. It is owned and published by Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd., with its headquarters in Mumbai.

The newspaper content for the months of December 2014 to January 2015 is considered for the purpose of this study. Based on the objectives of the study the genre of newspaper content to be examined is conflict stories. The selected content is further classified into analytical categories depending on the representation of the context in these units. The types of news items selected for the study includes Hard News story, Features, Editorials, and Letters to the Editors.

The study adopts non random sampling technique. Among the available non sampling techniques the researcher adopts the Purposive Sampling Technique. Purposive Sampling Technique is identifying the units appropriate to include in the sample (Neuendorf, 2002). Those news items which had reference to the ethnic conflict were considered for analysis.

The present study is based on the method adopted by three Professors of Mass Communication in the USA. Lee, Maslog and Kim in their study analysed newspaper coverage of four Asian local conflicts and the Iraq War taking Galtung’s peace and war journalism as framework. The coding categories for frames involves 13 indicators used to analyse the text of each story regarding which frame – war or peace journalism is reflected in the news story reporting conflict. The news stories will be analysed using two broad themes of ‘approach’ and ‘language’ applied in the story. The approach-based criteria included relevance of the following frames: (1) reactivity, (2) visibility of effects of war, (3) elite orientation, (4) differences, (5) focus on here and now, (6) good and bad dichotomy, (7) party involvement, (8) partisanship, (9) winning orientation and (10) continuity of reports. The language-based criteria focused on language that was (1) demonizing, (2) victimizing and (3) emotive (Lee, Malog & Kim 2006; Galtung 1985, 2017)

Keeping in mind the aim of the study to analyse newspapers role in representing the ethnic conflict of 2014, the above mentioned indicators has been modified to six indicators to fulfil the purpose of the present study. The indicators and their description are as follows:

- i. Effects of war: It includes two categories of reporting war.
 - a. Reporting of Visible effects of war (that is reporting about number of casualties, wounded, damage to property)
 - b. Reporting of Invisible effects of war (that includes reporting emotional trauma of victims, damage caused to society and culture)
- ii. Sources of information:
 - a. Elite oriented : the news report quotes elite people such as political leaders, military or police for sources
 - b. People oriented: the civilians who are victims of conflict are sources of information.
- iii. Theme of the story:
 - a. Focuses on here and now: the reporting is focussed mainly to a confined time that is only when the conflict occurs, with little emphasis on the causes and long-term effects of the conflict.
 - b. Focuses on Causes and Consequences of the conflict is when there is reporting about the background of such conflicts and their consequences in the society.
- iv. Party involvement :
 - a. Two Party Orientation: reporting only about the winning and the losing party in a conflict.
 - b. Multi party Orientation: represents all the parties affected by conflicts.
- v. Post Conflict reporting: Does media reports about the aftermath of conflicts focussing on rehabilitation and reconstruction of victims, implementation of peace treaty.
- vi. Language used to communicate conflict: if the news consists of demonizing, emotive or victimizing terminologies to depict the conflict and its actors.

Major Findings

A total of 132 news items; 68 in *Assam Tribune* and 64 in *Times of India* pertaining to ethnic conflict between the Bodos and Adivasis appeared in both the newspapers.

Table 2. Indicators of frames to represent conflict news

Indicators	Assam Tribune (n=68) Frequency (in percentfigures)	Times of India (n=64) Frequency(in percent figures)
1. Effects of war		
i)Visible reporting	28 18.30	22 12.64

ii)Invisible reporting	8	5.23	10	5.75
2. Sources of information				
i)Elite Oriented	29	18.95	26	14.94
ii)People Oriented	4	2.61	13	7.47
3.Theme of the story				
i)Focus here and now	20	13.07	22	12.64
ii)Focus on consequences	7	4.58	19	10.92
4. Party involvement				
i)Two party orientation	7	4.58	11	6.32
ii)Multi party orientation	12	7.84	12	6.90
5. Post Conflict Reporting	27	17.65	10	5.75
6.LanguageUsed(demonizing, emotive,victimizing)	11	7.19	29	16.67

The table above presents the frequency of occurrence of the six selected indicators in the newspapers. The indicators points which frames are used by the selected newspapers to communicate conflict. In the first indicator “*Effects of War*”, the category of visible reporting is used mostly by both the newspaper as compared to the invisible mode of reporting. However *Times of India* seems to have placed less importance on visible reporting and more on invisible reporting. They had more news stories describing state of victim’s terror, trauma, agony and fear psychosis caused by the conflict. As compared to *Times of India*, *Assam Tribune* covered more stories on number of casualties, damage to property in conflict areas.

The second indicator of source depicts both the newspapers depended mainly on the “*Elite sources*” such as political leaders, military, police, student’s organisation and few intellectuals for information on the conflict. On the other hand “*People oriented news*”, concerning the views of those affected was scarcely presented in *Assam Tribune* than in *Times of India*.

As regards to *Theme of the story*, news reports in *Assam Tribune* devoted less space for news detailing the “*Causes and Consequences* of the violence and more on “*Here and Now*” during the conflict phases, which consist of news on incidents of attacks, operation by government and military. Whereas *Times of India* paid considerably equal weightage on both the themes of the present context and background and consequence of the conflict. The causes behind the conflict as defines by the various sources were: Militant groups intention to drive non Bodos (Adivasis) from Bodoland, to grab lands of non Bodos etc. On the far reaching consequences of conflicts *Times of India* presented stories covering diverse areas. They had stories with headlines such as ‘*Violence hit treatment of cancer patients*’, ‘*Killings hits Operation Smile*’.

Both the newspapers seem to emphasize on “*Multi party oriented*” coverage focussing on all the parties involved in the conflict : the Adivasis, the Bodos, the NDFB(S) group and also other communities affected by the conflicts. *Times of India* equally carried news items referring specifically to the militants (attackers) and the Adivasis (victims) mode of reporting.

News on the “*Post Conflict*” scenario was extensively carried out by the *Assam Tribune* newspaper. The post conflict stories included news from relief camps, about relief measures provided to those affected, shortage of amenities in relief camps, government opinions on rehabilitation of affected. There were also news about coming together of the Bodo’s, Adivasis, and various organisations for peace meeting and good will mission. Stories on need to boost confidence building for the affected were also carried by the newspapers.

The language used to describe the conflicts and the people involved in the conflict were upsetting. The newspapers extensively used the term *Bodo militant / ultras* to describe the NDFB militant group. The word Bodo refers to an entire community of people inhabiting in Assam, and addressing a particular militant group based on their ethnicity by newspapers is erroneous. Such labelling of ethnic groups leads to demoralization of the groups. The *Times of India* headlines such as ‘*Adivasis hack 2 Bodos in Chirang*’, which during conflict phase can instigate discord between the ethnicities involved. Apart from it there was use of words such as massacre, slaughter to define the violence situation.

The overall analysis of the indicators used to frame the conflict scenario in both the newspaper points that there is relatively less significance placed on conflict sensitive reporting. Of the six indicators identified, four frames - the *frames of visible reporting; elite oriented reporting; focus of here and now reporting; use of demonizing language* reveals that the coverage of ethnic conflict in Assam by the news media has used higher number of stories framed as war journalism. The prevalence of majority of war frames in the newspaper content on conflict indicates towards inclination of media for war and not peace journalism, which is against communication moral values prescribed by journalism. Journalism whether it portrays war journalism even in its least form or there appears only one form of war frame indicator in its news space can have a devastating impact on the society, such is the power bestowed on media.

Conclusion

It becomes responsibility of the media professionals to ensure ethical and fair reporting during conflicts so that public perceives an accurate picture of the happenings. Referring to the Western media Ward (2009) argues that the current journalism practice follows mixed media ethics, which lacks consent on what principles are applicable across various media and different cultural context. What the world need from the media today is to report sensitively, representing all aspects of conflicts and voices of the sufferers. There is a need to construct peace narratives by journalist practitioners. While communicating conflict stories it is crucial for media to note that the news report if cannot end conflict should neither instigate it further. Reporters, as Ross Howard (2004) states need to understand more about what causes conflict, and how conflict develops and ends. Reporters should understand where to look for

these causes and solutions. By providing this information, journalism makes the public far more well-informed about the conflict beneath the violence, and can assist in resolving it. Agreeing to what Clifford G Christians (2010) states media ethics should be based on 'ethics of universal being'. The framework for media ethics should be universal ethics based on human dignity, truth and non-violence. Instead of stressing on implementation of journalism codes of ethics as check list of do's and don'ts, communication ethics concerning conflict situation should be concern in shaping media discourse that plays a constructive role in mitigating differences and minimizing harm. The framework of communication ethics needs to broaden from the confined spectrum of objectivity, accuracy of facts, war/ peace journalism towards a conflict sensitive approach. Ethical framework should enable and empower media to communicate conflicts proficiently and reinforce journalists' sensitivity to their influence on conflict coverage.

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