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REPORTING THE
world

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REPORTING THE
WORLD

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CONTENTS

1. REPORTING THE WORLD, PART 1

Towards an effective ethical framework for reporting conflicts in the 21st Century

What is international news for? What threats and opportunities lie ahead for journalists who cover it? How can they continue to guide and orientate readers and audiences, in an increasingly interdependent world, amid growing competition for attention?

This project offers a group of selected journalists access to novel, challenging perspectives, authoritative sources and valuable contacts to help enhance and enliven their own reporting of world affairs.

At the same time, they will be conducting a dialogue about the underlying issues in international news, its purpose and how it can develop new techniques and approaches to engage successfully and ethically with sources, readers and audiences.

What is it?

- Reporting the World is a series of seminars in London on some of the most important international stories of our time.
- It will also take place via an innovative website, allowing each participating journalist an individual login to contribute to interactive areas.
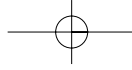- The series culminates in a roundtable to compare notes from the seminars, and from journalists' experiences in applying the perspectives and insights from each session to their own work.

> To identify these key choices is to move towards an effective working definition of ethical practice in news

- A findings document will sketch out a practical, ethical framework for the present day, connecting journalists, their sources, their readers and audiences and the consequences of their reporting.
- A guide to best practice created by journalists, for journalists.

This document

Reporting the World Pt 1 sets out some of the concepts the project will cover, illustrated with discussions of present reporting and drawing on the insights of Conflict Analysis in proposing challenging new approaches to international news.

The aim, both here and in the project as a whole, is to identify 'forks in the road' – the important choices journalists reach while covering and reporting international news – and to consider the ethical implications of following one route or the other, in each case.

To identify these key choices is to move towards an effective working definition of ethical practice in news, against which to assess examples of existing practice.

So the Reporting the World series is intended to equip journalists, and professionals from other fields, to know what they are looking for in high quality news which offers a responsible service to readers, listeners and viewers.

2. INTRODUCTION

Can international news survive?

No sooner had dust from chunks of the fallen Berlin Wall begun to work its way in to thousands of living room carpets across Europe, than heads began to be shaken in foreboding over the future of international news. No story could top that - and what seemed like the end of a grand narrative, if not the end of history, could, many felt, presage an inevitable decline in appetite among readers, audiences - not to mention editors - for reporting of world affairs.

Have those fears been realised? The evidence is ambivalent. Ian Jack, writing in the *Granta Book of Reportage*[1] in August, 1998, lamented the cost-cutting in London newspapers which led to reporters' jobs being slashed and overseas bureaux being closed down: "The craft of what the late Martha Gellhorn called 'serious, careful, honest journalism' has entered its own small crisis. Newspapers cutting their costs to meet reductions in cover-price revenue could afford fewer reporters. Executives did sums…

"The less visible benefits of the staff reporter are availability, commitment, persistence, skill, an expertise and authority in such subjects as schools, religion, science or China. These were often discounted. After all, how many actual or potential readers cared about China? What did the market research show? It showed that many readers barely glanced at a foreign news page.

"Furthermore, you could contract a freelance reporter or, better still, a freelance columnist (cheaper: columnists stay home) and fill the same space for two thirds of the cost or less. The old CP Scott dictum on the *Manchester Guardian* had been: 'Comment is free, but facts are sacred'. Now there was a paraphrase: 'Comment is cheap, but facts are rather expensive'".

Some days later, Linda Grant, in the *Guardian*[2], took up Jack's complaints: "Journalism, by the common consent of serious people, is in a spiral of decline, a dumbing down into trivia". From *Guardian* readers, "the most frequent cry [was] to demand the whereabouts of the powerful foreign reporting that they remember from the 1960s".

But the debate over 'dumbing down' also drew heavy fire from current broadsheet editors Peter Stothard of the *Times* and the *Guardian's* Alan Rusbridger. Stothard went digging in his own paper's archives to argue that important stories like General Elections were reported far more extensively and rigorously in the 1990s than in the 'golden age' of previous decades[3]. Rusbridger, in preparing a lecture in 1999 at Manchester Metropolitan University, had carried out a similar exercise. "A decline in foreign news? No. Decline in coverage of the 'high arts'? No, the opposite," he concluded[4].

Television coverage
The same arguments have raged over television coverage. Here is Danny Schechter, writing on *The Media Channel* website www.mediachannel.org about findings presented to a conference organised by Leicester University's Centre for Mass Communications Research in March of last year:

"Reports related the downgrading and decrease in programming about the rest of the world. In 1989 there were 1,037 hours of such programming across all channels on British
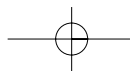
[network] television, but only 728 hours in 1999.

"Documentaries about the environment and human rights have been replaced by shows about wildlife and travel. That leopard you first saw in 1976 still lives."

Then, in July, *Media Guardian*[5] published an account of what the paper called "The Most Comprehensive Study Ever Into The TV News Agenda". This, the headline claimed, "revealed that, over 25 years, bulletins have become more tabloid".

Researchers Steven Barnett and Emily Seymour alluded to "the conventional view, being repeated with increasing vigour around dinner tables and in opinion columns… that television news is dumbing down.

"Some of the most prestigious names from the BBC and ITN have been adding their considerable weight to the depressing message that a growing emphasis on the sensational, the shallow and the parochial has been driving out the complex, serious and outward-looking: that British television news, once the backbone of an informed British electorate, has been heading inexorably downmarket".

> …there is a fine balance between making issues accessible and relying on the controversial or sensational to maintain the interest of the audience.

Quantity and quality

The pair actually found that, in the period since 1975, the proportion of network news given over to international coverage had either held steady or, in one or two bulletins, increased. The researchers, based at the University of Westminster and carrying out their study for the ITC and BBC, divided stories into three categories - broadsheet, tabloid and foreign - on network TV news. But their account for *Media Guardian* itself alludes to subtleties which may escape through such a net:

"The most difficult question about treatment, however, is over the vexed question of 'accessibility' or how a story is framed. We saw with the floods in Mozambique that some bulletins chose understandably to focus on the human tragedy while the BBC *Nine O'clock News* analysed the complex socio-economic and political context of the disaster.

"This is not a question of right or wrong. But there is a fine balance between making issues accessible and relying on the controversial or sensational to maintain the interest of the audience.

"And despite our broadly positive conclusion about the diversity and vitality of television news, there are indications that this notion of 'accessibility' may be starting to invade the editorial agenda".

Any statistical analysis of the international news available to television viewers is, of course, contingent on the individual's access to the huge range of coverage on cable and satellite channels. But this *qualitative* question, while more difficult to measure, will be as familiar to journalists on Sky News and CNN as their counterparts in ITN and the BBC.

The discussion of present coverage here is not, therefore, based on the accumulation of statistical data. Before we start counting things, we need to know what to count. This whole exercise is intended to help us decide what is worth counting.

Indeed, the sense of 'worth' is prevalent in this debate. Ian Jack concluded: "Reporting, the serious end of it, is also in trouble more generally. Something in the climate militates against those Gellhorn words 'honest', 'careful', 'thoughtful'.

"Today a spectre haunts the editorial floor - the spectre of the reader's boredom, the viewer's lassitude. If customers are to stay with the product, they need, or are thought to need, a diet of surprise, pace, cuts-to-the-chase, playfulness, provocation, drama, 'human interest'… A sort of warmth has been achieved

at the expense of credibility and trust".

Neither are such dilemmas confined to British journalism. A seasoned Australian newsman, George Negus, on quitting his job as presenter of the ABC's highly respected international current affairs series, *Foreign Correspondent*, in 1998, fired this parting shot: "Television journalism is a tightrope-walking act between what you think you should do and what you think the audience might want to see"[6].

But such qualitative assessments are weakened by being confined to the realms of the descriptive, even impressionistic. The aim here is to narrow down the vague category of what journalists 'think they should do' to a set of clear criteria, the better to commend it to readers and audiences as something they might want to see.

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3. A SENSE OF PURPOSE

– *The Ethic of International News*

There is a strong tradition in international news of the reporter driven by a powerful sense of purpose. Any decision to send a correspondent somewhere carries with it the unmistakable implication that we ought to know what is going on. With it often comes another implication – that 'we', society at large, usually through governments, ought to *do* something in response to what we learn about it.

Some journalists have set out to use their reporting to create pressure for a change of policy; latterly, many others have become uncomfortably aware of a sense of entanglement, that their coverage is somehow playing a part, whether they like it or not, in a process of cause and effect. There is, in short, a growing sense that news is itself a *factor* in the sequence of international events. This document addresses a number of important questions about it:

- •   What is the influence of news over the course of events?
- •   How, then, can journalists meet their responsibility for the consequences of their reporting?
- •   How can they engage the interest of the reading, listening and viewing public in the events and processes shaping our interdependent world?
- •   How can they get it on air or into print?
- •   In light of the answers to these questions, how does the ethic of international news need to be renewed in order to be effective and relevant in today's journalistic work?
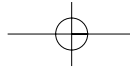
3.1. The 'CNN Effect'

Boutros Boutros-Ghali was still Secretary General of the UN when he made his exasperated remark that "CNN is the sixteenth member of the Security Council".

This notion, that powerful media players need only point their cameras at the effects of, say, a civil war, for under-secretaries of state to be sent scurrying across Washington in haste to 'respond', became a kind of Aunt Sally for a small but significant literature which reached its apogee in a book by Warren P Strobel, a long-serving American agency reporter, in 1997.

Late-Breaking Foreign Policy[7] concludes: "The news media have less influence over US foreign and military policy than many observers believe to be the case. Claims that this influence is growing do not hold up under scrutiny, and what appears to be media-driven policy eventually reveals a host of other determining factors… The CNN effect is highly conditional".

Unsurprisingly this is a more congenial view for policy-makers themselves than the situation implied in Boutros-Ghali's complaint. A suitably reassured James Baker, the former Secretary of State, praises Strobel's efforts as "carefully and effectively debunk(ing) the media-makes-policy myth".

One case which strengthened the media-makes-policy thesis at the time was the US intervention in Somalia in the dying days of the (first) Bush presidency. Emotional 'sit-reps' by network news crews were assumed to have prodded Washington's collective conscience and obliged the Administration to respond to a mood of 'something must be done'.

Subsequent studies, however, found that decisions by TV companies to deploy their own crews to the stricken country in the first place were prompted, in part, by briefings from Congressional committees and the State Department. Three years after the exercise ended in ignominious withdrawal, two researchers, Steve Livingston and Todd Eachus, wrote in the periodial, *Political Communication* that "news coverage trends do not support the claim that news attention to Somalia led to the Bush Administration's decision to intervene"[8].

3.2. 'Something must be done' in Kosovo

Alerting public and political opinion that something must be done has been part of the purpose of international news ever since the earliest war reporting, as Phillip Knightley, in his classic history, *The First Casualty*[9], suggests.

Even when the *Times* suppressed some of William Howard Russell's more horrifying dispatches from the Crimean front, "no doubt from apprehension of being declared unpatriotic", the editor then circulated them privately among Cabinet ministers, Knightley records, "beginning a process that was eventually to topple the government".

To this day, the media-makes-policy thesis still has many enthusiastic adherents. Last year the Freedom Forum, venue for this project, hosted the launch of Knightley's new edition, updated to include a chapter on reporting of the Kosovo crisis. A correspondent with a US TV network recalled a period in the Autumn of 1998 when "the international community was putzing around, wondering what the hell to do" about violence in the province.

The next step had been for journalists to bring coverage of 'atrocities' to Western living rooms, prodding the conscience of a disinterested international community and bringing it reluctantly to intervene.

By the time of the Knightley launch, though, another possibility

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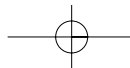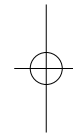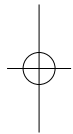
had occurred to many involved in reporting the events leading up to and including Nato's bombing campaign, summed up by BBC World Affairs editor John Simpson. "I think we were suckered", he declared, in a review for *New Statesman* of a book on the affair by Michael Ignatieff[10].

A major film by the BBC's *Panorama* team, with reporter Alan Little, suggested that at the very moment the US correspondent referred to, elements, at least, of the international community knew exactly what they were doing, they were far from disinterested and the intervention was already underway.

The OSCE's Kosovo Verification Mission, headed by William Walker, a high-ranking State Department official, was busy carrying out a lopsided brief which effectively cleared Kosovo of Yugoslav Army units and allowed the KLA to take over their revetted positions, thus entrenching the guerillas as a threat to Serb police and civilians. Having withdrawn the armoured divisions, only to find the enemy stealing a march, Yugoslavia then sent them back in. Most breaches of the ceasefire were still coming from the KLA but this intelligence, reported to the Nato council of ambassadors at the time, was never publicly disclosed.

This piece, *Moral Combat*, also suggested that in this same period the KLA were deliberately provoking or contriving newsworthy 'atrocities' for Western journalists to cover, the better to establish a justification for changing the nature of the ongoing intervention.

KLA leader Hacim Thaci admitted, in an interview for the programme, that he and his comrades had known in advance that civilians would bear the brunt of reprisals from Belgrade for the raids they were carrying out, in particular attacks on Serbian police patrols. And Dugi Gorani, another Kosovo Albanian member of the

Rambouillet negotiating team, recalled one western diplomat advising him that it would take five thousand civilian deaths before direct military help from outside would become a realistic prospect.

The trigger
ITN correspondent Bill Neely recalled: "If the war for Kosovo had a trigger, it was fashioned amid the snow and slopes of a tiny village the world had never heard of until the morning of January 15, 1999. The village was Racak. And Racak was one massacre [of Albanians] too many… As I walked into Racak that morning I knew this would change everything.

"The killings were numerous, carefully planned, brutally executed and crowned with a pile of twenty bodies in a ditch… And so the war came to Serbia. But not before the West did its own bit of denial in the face of overwhelming televisual evidence" [of Yugoslav brutality against Albanians].

Three months after the Knightley launch, another book raised suspicions over even this pivotal event. Little's film had included footage from an agency crew who were on the scene the evening before Neely, after inhabitants had evacuated the village but before the appearance of any bodies on the streets or in a ditch. International monitors, Little said, had inspected the village that night but reported "nothing unusual".

It also intercut interview clips with William Walker and two of his senior US colleagues. These colleagues, Balkans ambassador Richard Holbrooke and General Wesley Clark, Nato's supreme commander, recalled Walker ringing them up from the scene shortly before pronouncing the killings the result of a "massacre"; calls Walker himself could not remember making.

Now, in *Degraded Capability*[11], writers Edward S Herman and

"I think we were suckered"

David Peterson took up the story. The agency crew, according to this account, was from APTV and had been invited by Serbian police to accompany them on an operation in the Racak area to "arrest members of a terrorist group". One international wires service, Deutsche Presse Agentur, had described "savage fighting" between the Serbian police and paramilitaries, mostly in nearby woodland.

Herman and Peterson allude to several forensic reports which, they say, accounted for the wounds on the bodies as being caused in battle by bullets fired from distance, with telltale gunpowder stains on the hands suggesting they had been participants in a firefight, not civilian bystanders. The "mutilation" dwelt on in some reports was probably due to "animal bites".

"Stories abound", they say, "regarding the political pressure that was put on these experts", a group of Finnish investigators, to support allegations of a massacre - but their findings provided no such backing.

The writers conclude that the dead were almost certainly "KLA fighters rather than civilians", their bodies moved overnight from battlefield to village and dressed in civilian clothes to make it look as though they had been executed.

3.3. A media-savvy world
The practice of news reporting is based on the notion of 'reporting the facts' - as Neely puts it in his own account of Racak, "its often brief but raw power and its capacity, for those who want to see, for revealing the truth in a handful of frames".

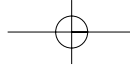What if news is, instead, part of a process working to *construct* the truth? If facts, rather than cropping up of their own accord, as it were, ready to be 'revealed'- are being created, or at least presented, in order to be reported?

Writing in *The Kosovo News and Propaganda War*[12], Neely himself dismisses cavilling about the Racak story as the work of French journalists, taking a cue from their country's Foreign Ministry and trying to play down the misdeeds of "France's old ally, Serbia". Other writers, commenting on the Little film, have doubted whether the KLA were sufficiently well coordinated to have carried out a planned campaign of provocation to 'lay on' atrocities for Western news crews.

In a different context, Nik Gowing, BBC World presenter and former *Channel Four News* Diplomatic Editor, issued a resonant warning against any such assumption when dealing with apparently unsophisticated parties to a conflict. In *Lessons Learned*, he contributed an important critique of reporting in the Great Lakes crisis of 1996-7 to a London conference, Dispatches from Disaster Zones, which offers the following advice: "Understand from the start that warring factions, even if their soldiers wear gumboots, have now acquired a sophisticated military doctrine and techniques for fighting low-level information warfare using manipulation, disinformation, misinformation and obstruction".

Is this, in any case, the point, or at any rate the whole point? We live in a media-savvy world, one in which individuals have internalised the narrative structures which best appeal to news - the stories reporters want to hear. Hence, perhaps, *The Truth About Rajmonda*, a remarkably brave and honest piece of reporting by a Canadian TV correspondent,

...telltale gunpowder stains on the hands suggesting they had been participants in a firefight, not civilian bystanders

What if news is instead part of a process working to construct the truth?

Nancy Durham, about a nineteen-year-old woman who presented herself as bereaved, her younger sister shot by Yugoslav forces, and about to take up arms with the resistance.

In a series of reports screened by broadcasters around the world, Durham tracked Rajmonda's progress through 1998 as she joined the KLA, then after the bombing, took the opportunity to visit her home village, a trip previously ruled out as too dangerous. She found the 'dead' sister conspicuously alive and well and, indeed, opening the door of the family dwelling. Rajmonda and another Albanian speaker explain in Durham's valedictory report that if the lie helped to bring about Western intervention, it was justified.

3.4. The feedback loop

The Truth About Rajmonda offers one of those rare, uncomfortable moments when news examines its own part in the sequence of cause and effect. Today, even modest experience at the 'newsface' is sufficient to bring the reporter into contact with many such instances, albeit not perhaps with such dramatic effects.

How can people who reporters meet on the job, like Rajmonda, know what facts to create in order to be reported in the way they believe will help their cause, whether Nato intervention against Yugoslavia; or, as in so many other cases, fifteen minutes of fame at the centre of a 'human interest' story? Only from their knowledge and experience of reading, watching and listening to previous reporting.

The 'CNN effect' or 'media-makes-policy' thesis models the newsgathering process as a linear sequence of cause and effect. It may be better understood as a positive feedback loop. Every time anything is reported, another layer is deposited in the collective understanding of the kind of facts likely to be reported in future - an understanding which then forms the basis of calculations by newsmakers large (like governments) and small (like Rajmonda). So the facts journalists find on location may contain a kind of 'imprint' left over from their own previous reports. Not just their own of course - but the total is the sum of all the parts.

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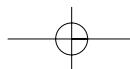
4. CONFLICT ANALYSIS [13]

The academic study and fieldwork method of Conflict Analysis offers many useful insights for journalists. News is about change - we pick up today's paper primarily to find out what has changed since yesterday. Inevitably, particular changes suit some people better than others. All change is *conflictual* - it follows that all news is, to a greater or lesser extent, about conflict.

What is conflict?
Conflict is a process through which two or more actors ('parties') pursue incompatible goals while trying to undermine the goal-seeking potential of the other(s).

'Conflict' is not the same as 'Violence'

In news, the word 'conflict' is often used to mean 'violence'. Understanding the difference is crucial to Conflict Analysis.

Conflicts can be positive and constructive by opening avenues of change if managed effectively.

Conflict situations
Conflicts are likely to arise and escalate in circumstances where:

- Resources are scarce (poverty, employment, housing, water availability)
- Poor or no communication exists between parties

- Parties have incorrect perceptions of each other
- There is a lack of trust
- Unresolved grievances exist from the past
- Parties do not value the relationship between them
- Power is unevenly distributed

Conflict outcomes
A classic exercise presented to students of Conflict Analysis starts with an orange, growing on a tree with its roots in one garden but sprouting from a branch overhanging the garden of the neighbouring household. Each believes they should have the orange. There are four basic types of outcome:

a) *One party prevails*
    The Rule of Man – the pair fight for the orange; might is right
    The Rule of Law – adjudicate, on some principle (eg property law, need, taste)
    The Rule of Chance – some random method, eg roll a die to settle who wins the orange
    Compensation – broadening, deepening (one household gets the orange, the other, something else)

b) *Withdrawal*
    Walk away from the situation
    Destroy or give away the orange
    Just watch the orange
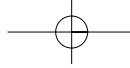
Put it in the freezer

c)   *Compromise*
     Cut the orange
     Squeeze the orange
     Peel the orange and divide the slices
     Any other division

d)   *Transcendence*
     Get one more orange
     Get more people to share the orange
     Bake an orange cake, raffle it and divide the proceeds
     Sow the seeds, make a plantation, take over the market

Basic thesis: the more alternatives, the less likely the violence.

There is one obvious problem in applying this classic exercise to 'real' conflicts – it assumes the neighbours are equal in the first place. One neighbour may be powerful enough to circumvent any discussion by the mere hint of force. There may need to be a process of empowerment for the other neighbour before any of the outcomes in types (b), (c) and (d) can become a realistic option.

The kind of conflicts covered in international news often lead to a negotiated outcome. This may be a settlement, containing elements of victory (and defeat - one party gives up on some issues); withdrawal (some issues shelved) and/or compromise. Such an outcome may, at least, keep the violence in check.

Sometimes there will be a *resolution*, emphasising transcendence, meaning, 'going beyond' – using creativity to devise a way forward no-one had previously thought of which addresses the underlying issues

Sometimes there will be a *resolution*, emphasising transcendence, meaning, 'going beyond' – using creativity to devise a way forward no-one had previously thought of

fuelling the conflict. These issues may be *transformed* and, now, able to be viewed and approached in a new light.

Approaches to Conflict
Competitive approaches are characterised by:

• Zero-sum gains (only 2 parties)
• Competition between parties
• Parties working against each other
• Parties trying to defeat the other(s)
• Parties trying to increase the costs to the other side(s) of continuing to pursue goals
• Settlements (at best) not resolution
• Low levels of trust
• Deterioration of relations between parties

Co-operative or collaborative approaches are characterised by:

• Positive-sum gains
• Parties working together to address problems jointly
• High levels of communication between them
• Increased levels of trust
• Improved relationships
• Mutually satisfactory outcomes – resolution and transformation

What makes a competitive approach more likely?
If people think of a conflict as having only two parties, they can feel they are faced with only two alternatives – victory or defeat.
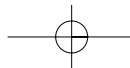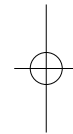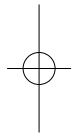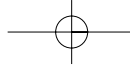
Defeat being unthinkable, each party steps up its efforts for victory. Relations between them deteriorate, and there is an escalation of violence. This may further entrench the 'us and them' mentality, causing gradually growing numbers of people to 'take sides'. They may ask themselves 'who will protect me?' and find the only answer is 'my own kind'.

Goals become formulated as *demands* to distinguish & divide each party from the other. Demands harden into a 'platform' or *position* which can only be achieved through victory.

Understanding violence
Conflict Analysis understands three types of violence.

Direct Violence – individuals or groups intending to hurt/kill people:
- Hitting, beating
- Stabbing
- Shooting
- Bombing
- Raping

Cultural Violence – images and stories which justify or glorify violence:
- Hate Speech
- Xenophobia
- Persecution Complex
- Myths and legends of war heroes

- Religious justifications for war
- 'Chosenness'
- Patriarchy

Structural Violence - cannot be (wholly) explained by the deliberate violence of individuals:
- Built in to custom, practice & organisation ("everyone does it"; "we've always done it that way").
- Poverty
- Systems based on exploitation (extreme = slavery)
- Excessive material inequality
- Apartheid
- Institutionalised racism
- Patriarchy
- Colonialism
- Corruption-collusion-nepotism

Vertical structural violence includes economic exploitation, political repression and cultural alienation; *horizontal* structural violence may keep people together who want to live apart; or keep people apart who want to live together.

So the effects of violence cannot be measured by assessing physical damage, death and destruction alone, an insight implicit in Gandhi's famous dictum: "I am against violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary. The evil it does is permanent".

Goals become formulated as *demands* to distinguish & divide each party from the other. Demands harden into a 'platform' or *position* which can only be achieved through victory
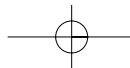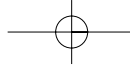
Visible and Invisible Effects

In war, people are killed, wounded, raped or displaced. For each one of these visible effects there are invisible effects which may be even more important in the long run. These include:

- The hatred that comes from bereavement or mistreatment
- Addiction to revenge and victory
- Myths of trauma and glory to add to violent culture
- Damage to social structure
- Society loses capacity and will to approach conflicts co-operatively; a spiral of social, economic and political destabilisation is set in place

What makes a co-operative approach more likely?

Recognising an expanded number of stakeholders and their goals expands the possible number of creative combinations of interests, which can lead towards solutions and transformed relations. This is a key to a co-operative or collaborative approach.

A conflict presented as two parties contesting the same goal (like territory, control, victory) is so naked there is very little to play on. When the conflict is more complex, constructive deals can be made, like X yielding to Y on one goal, Y to Z on a second, Z to X on a third.

Solution by *triangulation*, easily extended to *quadrangulation*.

> Recognising an expanded number of stakeholders and their goals expands the possible number of creative combinations of interests

5. FRAMING
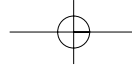
The 'positive feedback loop' discussed in this paper is a way of modelling the influence of news on the course of events which fits the practical experience of reporters working in today's newsgathering milieu.

When journalists choose which facts to report, and how to report them, they are carrying out a process of *framing* - some facts fall within the frame and some without, just like a frame round a painting.

It follows that framing decisions are among the most important journalists make in the positive feedback loop which connects them with sources, readers and audiences, and the influence of their reporting on the course of events.

This section draws on the insights of Conflict Analysis (above) to examine some of the key decisions which constantly recur while covering conflict; and their likely effects, in terms of the incentives they provide, in a feedback loop, to future behaviour.

From this discussion we can begin to define a sophisticated, up-to-date understanding of journalistic responsibility – overhauling the ethics of international news.

5.1. A zero-sum game

"This is a confrontation between the wills of two nations and movements, a struggle over the same piece of ground. And this is the history of the last ten years, maybe the last 22 years, or 52 years. It's a very long confrontation of these two movements".

So said Ehud Barak to *Newsnight's* Mark Urban, in an interview the programme broadcast on BBC-2 on January 5th of this year. The Israeli Prime Minister was framing the conflict with the Palestinians using what Conflict Analysis would recognise as a bipolar model - a zero-sum game of two parties, contesting a single goal.

A conflict modelled in this way resembles nothing so much as a tug-of-war. Two points can only be connected by one shape - a straight line. So any movement - any change - must take place along this one axis. Of the types of outcome posited by Conflict Analysis, this model leaves room only for three:

- One party can prevail, by force or legal argument
- The parties can withdraw
- Or a compromise can be found.

Compromise means *each* party accepting *less* of things it already knew in advance that it wanted to obtain - each giving to the other participant some ground in the tug-of-war to bring about a (temporary?) release of tension.

What happens when the bipolar framing is combined with the sense of purpose implicit in the very nature of international news? Here is Lord Copper, in Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop*, explaining the conflict in Ishmaelia, between Patriots and Traitors, to a bewildered William Boot:
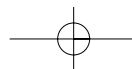
"Remember that the Patriots are in the right and are going to win. The *Beast* stands behind them foursquare. But they must win quickly. The British public has no interest in a war which drags on indecisively".

A caricature which endures because it remains recognisable to this day. The *Daily Beast's* "policy for the war" illustrates how two important framing decisions often go together. If the conflict is a zero-sum game of two parties it makes some outcomes more 'thinkable' than others - a 'quick win' for one party over the other is 'in the frame' and, to Lord Copper, a better story than an 'indecisive' search for compromise.

There is consternation in the Beast newsroom when the best Boot can tell them, from his position on the ground, is that Ishmaelia's weather is improving: "'I've got to write a first leader on the Ishmaelite question', said the first leader-writer. 'Lord Copper says so… I have to denounce the vacillation of the government in the strongest terms', he said. 'They fiddle while Ishmaelia burns. A spark is set to the corner-stone of civilisation which will shake its roots like a chilling breath'". (A close relation, perhaps, of our modern 'something must be done' in response to "the international community… putzing around, wondering what the hell to do".)

5.2. Goodies and baddies

A newsroom or a reporter may not set out to assign parties to a conflict as 'goodies' and 'baddies' respectively. But the ethic of international news, satirised in *Scoop*, means such a model may instead arise out of decisions about what to cover and how to cover it. Nik Gowing, in *Lessons Learned*, describes this as the 'black-hat, white-hat' analysis which, he says, informed many journalists' response to the Great Lakes crisis.

A conflict modelled in this way resembles nothing so much as a tug-of-war. Two points can only be connected by one shape - a straight line.

There are two questions here:

- What form does such a response take in terms of framing decisions, about what to cover (and what to leave out) and how to cover it?
- How do these framing decisions enter the positive feedback loop of cause and effect, by creating incentives for the future behaviour of parties to a conflict?

Framing decisions

It was, at least partly, international media coverage of the flight of refugees from Kosovo in March and April 1999 which led many journalists to the verdict, summed up by John Simpson, that "we were suckered". Discussions of this coverage in the period since the end of bombing have, between them, built up into a detailed critique of journalists' framing decisions. According to this critique, the following storylines were, respectively,

Framed In:

- Outflow of refugees of Albanian nationality, southwards into Macedonia and Albania
- Any stories told by these refugees about 'Serb atrocities', however lurid, with little discrimination between hearsay and properly substantiated claims
- Extrapolations from these stories of the scale of the crisis, in particular the numbers likely to have been killed or abused 'away from the cameras' in Kosovo itself
- The KLA as national liberation movement, free and spontaneous expression of the will of all 'Kosovars'
- 'The Serbs' as one aggregated bloc including the Yugoslav National Army (JNA); Serbian Interior Ministry Police (MUP); paramilitary groups and civilians;

Framed Out:

- Refugees fleeing north into the rest of Serbia
- Refugees, whether fleeing north or south, attributing their flight to a fear of the KLA or of Nato bombs - except as a 'claim' from Belgrade (rather than being investigated by journalists themselves)
- Serbs as victims
- 'Good Serbs'
- Splits among Kosovo Albanians, in particular any question over the KLA's credentials in speaking for the entire population
- Any peace plans from third parties.

Refugee outflow

In April 1999, a bipartisan American Congressional delegation, led by senior Republican Jim Saxton - a pillar of the Capitol Hill establishment - and travelling under the auspices of the International Strategic Studies Association, visited Yugoslavia. They found that "some one-third of the Albanian and other refugees appear, in fact, to be fleeing further into Serbia, to avoid the Kosovo Liberation Army... There is no doubt that the Nato

A newsroom or a reporter may not set out to assign parties to a conflict as 'goodies' and 'baddies'
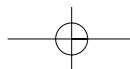
bombings have contributed heavily - perhaps overwhelmingly - toward the outflow".

RTS Television Serbia, derided by Nato leaders for the crude propaganda interspersed with its news, did carry pictures of refugees arriving in Belgrade. These people, who explained themselves on camera as having fled the KLA and Nato bombing, even appeared as an element in one or two packages compiled by reporters pulling together material in London newsrooms – with the usual caution given about their provenance.

In general, the line that Belgrade 'claims' the refugees were fleeing Nato bombing cropped up occasionally, but was seldom taken seriously by journalists gathering substantiating material. The few exceptions were conspicuous, and marshalled by Philip Hammond, in *Degraded Capability*.

Channel Four News interviewed one woman three days after bombing began, he reports, who boasted of having "survived the first air strikes". She spoke in Serbo-Croat - a Serb refugee representing another breach in the

> "some one-third of the Albanian and other refugees appear, in fact, to be fleeing further into Serbia, to avoid the Kosovo Liberation Army... There is no doubt that the Nato bombings have contributed heavily - perhaps overwhelmingly - toward the outflow"

dominant framing of the conflict.

Then there was a report in the *Sunday Times* on March 28, in which a woman looked "bewildered", according to the paper, when asked if Serbs had driven her out. "'There were no Serbs', she said. 'We were frightened of the bombs'". *The Telegraph*, Hammond noticed, on April 1, reported that "most residents [of Pristina] say they are fleeing of their own accord and not being forced out at gunpoint". He adds: "This revelation was buried in the twenty-second paragraph of an article headed: 'Thousands expelled at gunpoint'".

Hammond enumerates three other examples, before concluding: "No doubt refugees fled actual and rumoured violence by Serb paramilitaries, while many were expelled and deported. Yet it is also certain that many others fled from fighting between the KLA and Yugoslav forces, and from Nato bombing. In addition, as KLA soldier Lirak Qelaj admitted, 'it was KLA advice, rather than Serbian deportations, which led some of the hundreds of thousands of Albanians to leave Kosovo'.
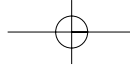
(*Guardian*, June 30). At the time this idea was dismissed as nonsense: it was only treated seriously three weeks after the bombing ended".

Refugee stories and the 'numbers game'

US Defense Secretary William Cohen told CBS News on May 16: "We've now seen about 100,000 military-aged men missing… they may have been murdered". Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, in a briefing at the Ministry of Defence in London on April 11, told journalists about a report he'd received by satphone from Hacim Thaci himself, inside Kosovo, which put the number of internally displaced people at 400,000 and implied that they might be facing imminent death by starvation. "In his words", Cook said, "they lack the basic elements for life and are particularly short of food".

Eventually, in August, 2000, the *Guardian*[14] responded to disclosures that the numbers killed in Kosovo were likely to amount to, at the most, "between two and three thousand", according to the Hague tribunal, including both massacre victims and fighters killed in battle.

The paper's op-ed section chose this day for the belated publication of a piece from Audrey Gillan, which shed some light on how earlier,

exaggerated figures may have gained credence in the first place. It offers a fascinating study of framing in action, not least because this very piece, when first contributed, was framed out by the *Guardian* itself.

'What's the Story' first ran in the *London Review of Books*[15], weeks after being rejected by Gillan's own editors. In it, she recounted experiences from her trip to Blace crossing, on the Kosovo/Macedonia border, and the difficulties reporters faced in distinguishing fact from hearsay.

On one occasion Gillan had witnessed Ron Redmond, the UNHCR spokesman on the ground, briefing reporters about new reports of mass rapes and killings from three Kosovo villages. "He spoke to the press of bodies being desecrated, eyes being shot out. The way he talked it sounded as if there had been at least a hundred murders and dozens of rapes.

"When I pressed him on the rapes, asking him to be more precise, he reduced it a bit and said he had heard that five or six teenage girls had been raped and murdered. He had not spoken to any witnesses. 'We have no way of verifying these reports of rape', he conceded.

"Western journalists accept [such] details without question", Gillan complained. Shortly after the briefing she stood by as a reporter from a 24-hour satellite news channel "reeled off what Ron Redmond had said, using the words, 'hundreds', 'rape' and 'murder' in the same breath. By way of qualification (a fairly meaningless one in the circumstances), he added that the stories had yet to be substantiated. Why, then, had he reported them so keenly in the first place?"

Aggregation

A piece for the BBC's *Newsnight* programme, screened as Yugoslav forces vacated Kosovo in June 1999, provided an apt illustration of the *aggregation* of all Serbs into one, demonised whole, capped with a 'black hat' - a framing decision crucial in modelling the conflict as a zero-sum game of two parties.

The report was filed from Urosevac as local Serb civilians fled in fear of violence by the Kosovo Liberation Army. In the link read by the presenter, we learned that Russia had, that very day, called for an urgent debate in the United Nations Security Council on demilitarising the KLA, as called for under Resolution 1244, which ended Nato's bombing campaign. The reporter's voice-over began:
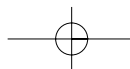
"Imagine the Serbs' reversal of fortune today. The rulers have themselves become refugees. Shedding tears of departure - and stashing the loot - two phones in the back of a car. But the Serbs are scared. Having bombed them from the air, the Americans are now having to protect them on the way out - with the deadline fast approaching".

Clip of interview with US Commander: "I told them at fourteen-hundred that they could move with the escort. They can move whenever they want to, we're not stopping them at all".

Reporter: "Such is the Serbian fear of the Kosovo Liberation Army and Albanian revenge that they're prepared to pack up in 20 minutes and accept an American escort. Their humiliation is complete".

Clip of interview with Yugoslav army soldier: "Yesterday we had KLA with guns, they took the post office, and a local ambulance..."

...the aggregation of all Serbs into one, demonised whole, capped with a 'black hat' - a framing decision crucial in modelling the conflict as a zero-sum game of two parties.

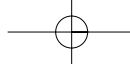*Reporter:* (over pictures of people boarding a bus) "Brutality has given way to self-pity. Following the Serb armour is a pathetic trail of Serb refugees. Overnight, the villains think they've become the victims in this war".

The "Serb armour" belonged to the JNA, the Yugoslav National Army, a largely conscripted body drawn indiscriminately from any and every one of the many national identities still represented even in Yugoslavia's attenuated latter-day form. This, the Serbian MUP (Interior Ministry Police) and various paramilitary groups were all lumped together in most reporting of the Kosovo story as 'the Serbs' - a demonised aggregate including, as is clear from this piece, the civilian population as well.

Distinctions collapse - the Americans bombed "them" from the air - meaning, at least in Nato's official version of events, strictly military targets. Now US troops are escorting "them" out of Kosovo; the "deadline" referred to was for the troops to leave, but the pictures showed families fleeing their homes.

The reference to "the villains" was over

pictures of civilians boarding a bus and to "stashing the loot" over a picture of a soldier putting two telephone handsets in the back of a car. If evidence existed for the allegation of looting, it was not adduced. Judging from what we were told and shown, the phones might, for all the reporter knew, have rightfully belonged to the family in question.

5.3. Consequences

How did these framing decisions enter the positive feedback loop of cause and effect, by creating incentives for the future behaviour of parties to the conflict?

As with Ehud Barak in Israel, Nato leaders framed the conflict in Yugoslavia as a zero-sum game of two parties. Writing in the *Sun* on April 5, Prime Minister Tony Blair declared: "In the battle between good and evil, we are on the right side". As before, this winnowed down the possible outcomes to three. With neither withdrawal nor compromise a palatable option, Mr Blair added, in the same piece, the equally familiar corollary: "And we will win".

The framing decisions taken by journalists covering the refugee outflow modelled the

conflict in the same way. It meant that when the government needed to boost its case for pursuing a military victory, it chose the refugee camps as an unproblematic setting to create new facts for reporters to report.

Downing Street Press Secretary Alastair Campbell, in a lecture after the bombing ended, shared his impressions from the frontline of what he called "the only battle Nato might lose – the battle for hearts and minds". In waging this battle, Campbell made clear that he and his colleagues had taken a highly active role in order to "hold the public's interest on our terms." So when the Prime Minister, on May 10, chided newspaper editors at a dinner in London for letting the plight of refugees slip down the agenda in favour of 'Nato blunders', the words were quickly followed by deeds.

A few days later, Mr Blair went for what was his second visit to the refugee camps, which duly pushed the story back up the news agenda, bringing further coverage framed in the same way as before. The visit looks, from this distance, like a fact created in order to be reported, based on

How did these framing decisions enter the positive feedback loop of cause and effect, by creating incentives for the future behaviour of parties to the conflict?
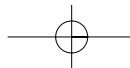
calculations about the likely response – calculations based in turn on Downing Street's reading of previous coverage.

Disaggregation
The same edition of *Newsnight* which offered the report from Urosevac, aggregating all Serbs into a single demonised whole, also brought viewers a very different account, from the programme's diplomatic correspondent, Mark Urban.

This told "the extraordinary story of how a group of Serbian monks stood up to the men of violence" at an ancient monastery in Decani. This, Urban declared, was "one of the few places here where the story of ethnic hatred between Serb and Albanian was checked by a barrier of faith and common humanity".

Speaking through an interpreter, the Abbot explained that, as Serbian paramilitary gangs went looting and extorting money in nearby towns and villages, his 21 monks had offered "food, medicines, support and especially we were speaking to the officials, to the police and army, to protect those Albanians who stayed".

One Albanian, Agim Morani, told Urban about an incident in which the Abbot had intervened personally to save him and his co-nationals from the paramilitaries, escorting

them to the safety of a nearby Orthodox church. "If he hadn't come, it is 100% certain we would be dead", Mr Morani declared.

Thousands of Serb civilians were now fleeing "retribution" from returning Albanians; the piece showed Italian K-For peacekeepers guarding the monks, "but now their prayers are needed by those of their own faith", Urban explained. "The KLA have not yet established much of a presence here, but where they have, Serbs have fled".

Local Albanians were "determined to repay" the monks' courage and kindness by protecting them, but "there is a real threat now from extremist Albanian armed groups - today the Serb bishop of a nearby town fled after one of his monks disappeared during the night. Elsewhere a monastery has been burnt down... Even if their [the monks'] acts have safeguarded their [own] future, the wider Serb community is disappearing by the day".

5.4. Peace plans – framed in or framed out?
Throughout the bombing, Nato commended the 'humanitarian purpose' of its action as first "averting", then, as the refugee crisis developed, "reversing" the "humanitarian catastrophe" of 'ethnic cleansing'.

It proposed instead to help establish a

Kosovo built around the essential principle that people should be able to live without fear in their own homes, regardless of nationality.

Urban's piece, filed on June 16, brought some of the first evidence of the impact of events over the previous few months on the chances of a 'multi-ethnic' society now emerging. By focussing on a peace initiative by a group of Serbs, it also supplemented the 'black-hat, white-hat' analysis by offering another way of seeing people caught up in the conflict – together belonging to the category, "common humanity".

Politicians and spokespersons from Nato countries drew a distinction - often implied, sometimes stated explicitly – between mere *political* priorities, sufficient for most situations – and their guiding principles here, which were not political but moral; a matter of 'justice' or 'good over evil', itself an essential building block of the bipolar conflict model.

There were journalists who scorned this rhetoric. One piece in a newspaper op-ed section was titled 'Morality? Don't make me laugh'[16]. But there were others who took this justification for Alliance policy on its merits and focussed on the *indivisible* character of these guiding principles. If it is morally, as against 'politically' right, for refugees to return to their

> "If he hadn't come, it is 100% certain we would be dead"
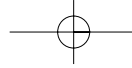
homes, it must be right for all refugees, not just those who fled during March and April 1999.

In other words, this analysis immediately opens a space to remodel the conflict as consisting of many parties with many goals. Even at the height of the bombing, the single European country with more refugees than any other was neither Macedonia nor Albania, but Yugoslavia itself – mainly from the Krajina and Western Slavonja, Serb areas of what is now independent Croatia, 'ethnically cleansed' in 1995.

Tony Blair, Nato Secretary General Javier Solana and Alliance spokesman Jamie Shea all faced questions, in 'live' briefings from Brussels during the bombing, over the plight of these refugees. Both they and the displaced people of Kosovo could, after all, be seen, not as two aggregated blocs of mutual enmity but as fellow members of "common humanity". A line in the voice-over of Urban's piece for *Newsnight*, but more importantly a framing decision, in choosing that story in the first place, long before the script was written.

The Brussels questions were inspired by a perspective circulated by TRANSCEND, the international network of scholars and

> This analysis immediately opens a space to remodel the conflict as consisting of many parties with many goals

practitioners for peace and development at www.transcend.org, taking this link of 'common humanity' as the keystone of a plan to transform the conflict. The essence of this plan was to provide for a parallel right of return for both sets of refugees, with symmetrical constitutional arrangements for an autonomous Kosovo within Serbia; an autonomous Krajina-Western Slavonja enclave in Croatia and an autonomous Croatian enclave in Bosnia.

A conference on security and development in South-Eastern Europe would follow, brokered by the OSCE or UN, together with peace dialogues at grassroots level to process and overcome the legacy of bitterness left by a decade of violence.

These suggestions were built on an initiative by former UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar, in correspondence with then German foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, in 1991. Perez de Cuellar warned the then European Community against a hasty recognition of claims to independent statehood by Croatia and Slovenia, "being a potential time-bomb" as the letter put it[17]. In the event the warning was disregarded and the recognitions went ahead, trigger for a

sequence of events culminating in the disastrously divisive referendum on independence for Bosnia.

Perez de Cuellar urged in vain the adoption of three basic principles:

- Any further intervention must be conceived as part of an "overall settlement" for the whole of Yugoslavia
- No one party should be favoured above the others
- Any plan must be acceptable to minorities.

In the range of outcomes posited by Conflict Analysis, such principles are the basis for *transcendence* – a creative outcome (ie based on new thinking), 'going beyond', delivering something more than, or different from, the opening demands of any one party.

The scope for transcendence depends on the number of creative combinations possible within the conflict model. Plans based on ideas for transcendence make no sense to news if framing decisions, about what to report and how to report it, are modelling the conflict as a zero-sum game of two parties contesting a single goal.

Peace perspectives, from the Perez de

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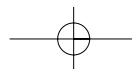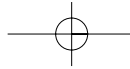
Cuellar principles to the TRANSCEND plan nearly a decade later, always seemed 'beside the point' while 'the Serbs' were aggregated into one demonised whole and assigned the 'black hat'. It is only by *disaggregating*, and modelling the conflict as consisting of many parties with many goals, that transcendence enters the news frame.

5.5. Transcendence in the Middle East
The upsurge in violence in the occupied territories - triggered by Ariel Sharon's visit to Jerusalem on September 28, 2000 - came after a long hot summer and a three-year drought which had heightened tensions over one of the most divisive issues in the conflict: access to water.

In many cases, those involved model their disputes over water resources as a zero-sum game between two parties. The disposition of water from the territories is dealt with in article 40 of the second Oslo Accord, signed in 1995.

One early Israeli view of this provision comes from a paper by Martin Sherman of the Ariel Centre for Policy Research:

"These agreements effectively imply the end of Israeli control over major sources of water presently utilized by her, imposing new and in many ways, unprecedentedly onerous limitations on the country's already over-extended supplies.

"The major focus is on the waters of the Mountain Aquifer, which are designated to be shared by Israel and the Palestinians. This aquifer is not only the principal source of drinking water for the Israeli urban metropolis, but is also a vital regulating element in the overall management of surpluses and deficits of other sources, such as the Sea of Galilee. Thus, in times of crisis, it is also a crucial factor in their long-term maintenance as viable sources of potable water.

"The fact that under the Oslo Accords, virtually the entire recharge area of the aquifer is to be transferred to Palestinian administration implies that Israel will no longer be able to determine the rate of exploitation or to contend with pollution of her ground water supplies directly. These factors will be largely dependent on Palestinian goodwill".

From the Palestinian perspective, in water policy as in so many other areas, tangible benefits of the Oslo process have somehow failed to trickle down to ground level. Maureen Meehan, writing in the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*[18], noted that "from the beginning of the 1967 occupation until today, Palestinian demand for water has increased significantly, while access to it has dropped exponentially". Even five years after Article 40 was signed, Meehan reports, "the jury is still out on how much control Palestine will ultimately wield over the precious resource that lies beneath its arid land".

She quotes Sabri Hamdia, a Palestinian resident of a village outside Bethlehem: "Why are we having to negotiate over our own natural resources? There shouldn't be any debate over the water basins lying beneath our land… I hope we're not obliged any more to provide the [Jewish] settlements with water from our own aquifer… we need it desperately ourselves".

Israel and Syria
About six months before this, foreign desks were preoccupied with the 'Syrian track' of the Middle East peace process, and commissioning material on some of the questions at issue for Israeli and Syrian negotiators, then meeting for face-to-face talks in the USA. The *Irish Times* and the *Guardian*

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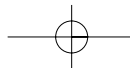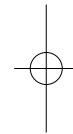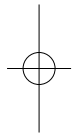
were two among many newspapers to focus on the politics of water as one important factor.

David Horovitz of the *Irish Times* had discovered that "while Israel was talking peace with Syria in West Virginia earlier in the week, at home its national water company was quietly drilling new wells to access underground aquifers in the Golan Heights, pumping out millions of cubic metres of water that would otherwise have flowed into Syria".

The effect of this is to model the conflict as a zero-sum game, characterised in the phrase, "would otherwise have flowed into Syria". The word, "quietly" even suggests a hidden agenda to scupper the chances of a settlement, leading Horovitz to conclude: "This revelation is likely to make the already tough negotiations about the Heights even trickier for Syria, at a moment when Israeli opposition to any withdrawal from Syrian territory is growing".

The *Guardian's* Ilene Prusher sent a fascinating dispatch from Ma'ale Gamla in the Golan about an expatriate English family, the Eastons, who had emigrated in the early 1970s. The "rolling, green hills" and "damp smell of a recent rain" made their adoptive home eerily reminiscent of the Old Country, Prusher wrote. The idea of handing the

Golan back to Syria was "a hard concept for the Eastons to swallow, and one they say they will fight as best they can".

Mr Easton was studying for a PhD in fish ecology and spent his days surveying the quality of fish life in the Sea of Galilee at the Israel Oceanographic and Limnological Research Company. He too was worried about water supply. Prusher quotes him: "I can see the Syrians building large pumping stations or taking water from the Jordan after a peace agreement is reached, and nobody will be able to stop them...

"That could very seriously affect our water, and 40% of the nation's supply is from the Kinneret [Sea of Galilee]. In an area where water is of major strategic value, it should be that they have absolutely no access to the Kinneret or the Jordan in the peace agreement".

While Irish Times readers might have gleaned the impression that Israel wanted to 'steal Syria's water', Guardian readers could have come away thinking that Syria wanted to 'steal Israel's water'.

For Israelis, the dividend of a deal with

...Irish Times readers might have gleaned the impression that Israel wanted to 'steal Syria's water', *Guardian* readers could have come away thinking that Syria wanted to 'steal Israel's water'.

Syria would be the prize of greater security – all the more durable for being obtained through negotiation, not battle. Giving back the Golan Heights was supposed to induce Damascus to stop backing Hezbollah and militant Palestinian groups, effectively closing down their capacity to harass Israel through paramilitary activity. But the abortive talks came just as Syria was becoming uneasy about her own water supply.
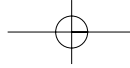
Syria and Turkey

In lieu of any settlement being reached in talks which have meandered on indecisively for years, Turkey has a 'gentlemen's agreement' to allow five hundred cubic metres an hour to flow down the Euphrates River into Syria. This and the Tigris cross Turkey's southern border and, with no access to Sea of Galilee, represent Syria's main supply of water.

A few months before the talks in West Virginia, the Department of Trade and Industry in London said it was 'minded' to approve a plan for the Export Credit Guarantee Department to underwrite a contribution from
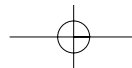
British companies, led by builders Balfour Beatty, to the Ilisu Dam.

This would complete the Anatolia project, a massive scheme to harness the two rivers, providing irrigation and hydro-electric power in the impoverished south-eastern portion of Turkey.

It would also, therefore, give Ankara total notional control over the volume of water flowing into Syria. The issue is complicated by its connection with the Kurdish conflict. The *Independent on Sunday*[19] reported on the ramifications of the DTI announcement:

"The Turkish government sees the dams as serving a political purpose as well… It is hoped that by flooding their homes, it will be able to move the Kurds off their traditional lands and house them in towns, where they can be more easily controlled…

"'The next war in the Middle East will be fought over water,' said Boutros Boutros-Ghali, when he was Secretary General of the UN. The CIA agrees – in 1992 it identified the struggle for water between Turkey and Syria as the most likely cause of war in the region.

"There have already been crises. In 1989, Turkey threatened to cut the flow of the River Euphrates into Syria because it was supporting the Kurdish dissidents".

Late in 2000, *Middle East Economic Digest* weighed in, just when the region-wide drought, which was sharpening anxieties in the occupied territories, was also jeopardising the 'gentlemen's agreement' between Turkey and Syria. The magazine alluded to continuing tensions in the period leading up to the West Virginia talks over the Golan Heights:

"When Syria withdrew support for the Kurdistan Workers' Party, which was headquartered in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, the Turks tracked down and captured Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan. There is some international opinion that Turkey was able to put pressure on the Syrians because of its control over the waters of the Euphrates".

5.6. Explanations for violence

This outline contains several framing decisions. Firstly it presents the water disputes involving Israel, the Palestinians, Syria and Turkey as linked. It also connects the issue with others of security and self-determination – together modelling the conflict as one of many parties with many goals.

But perhaps the most significant is to include resentments over water supplies, as they bear upon the lived experience of people on the ground, in the same frame as violence in the occupied territories. Conflict Analysis would understand the exchanges of rocks, bullets and shells as *direct violence* – and the inequalities and anxieties built into the region's 'water regime' as *structural violence*.

Many reports on this new phase of the conflict framed out structural violence in this sense, instead presenting (direct) violence as its own cause.

A piece in the *Sunday Express* of October 15 recounted an outbreak in Nazareth. Local Arabs blamed Israeli soldiers for starting it by firing on them – Jewish settlers blamed Arab youths for (literally) throwing the first stone. The obvious and inescapable next episode in such a narrative is more violence: "Now, after two weeks of bloody conflict that has brought Israel to the brink of war, [the Arab youths] declared they were prepared to fight their Jewish enemies to the death".

The conclusion: "Nazareth is a city riven by hatred, suspicion and fear. Any pretensions that Jews and Arabs can live side by side in peace have been forgotten here in the past two weeks".

If only direct violence is reported, it can appear that any one act is entirely attributable to revenge for previous direct violence, begging the question of how it started in the first place.

'The next war in the Middle East will be fought over water'
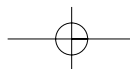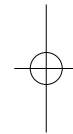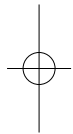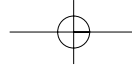
To have read this far is to have been reminded of contributory structural factors known to many, including any competent Jerusalem correspondent or foreign desk. But the effect of reporting decisions is to frame our thinking about the conflict at the most important moments.

A week or so later came a comment in the *Financial Times* by Dominique Moisi, deputy director of the Paris-based *Institut Francais des Relations Internationales*. This attributed the violence to "the fundamental opposition between Islam and western Judeo-Christianity" which had built "a wall of hatred with deep foundations: conflict between Arabs and Israelis is rooted in centuries of enmity".

The effect of 'framing in' issues of structural violence in these reports is to raise it as one factor contributing to the likelihood of direct violence – a factor which can be addressed through, say, peace negotiations – to ensure fairer shares of water resources or whatever else.

The effect of framing it out is to leave us with a limited range of possible explanations for why direct violence broke out in the first place. Moisi, along with many others, blamed inherited hatreds. The implication of his comments is that something innate and inevitable sets Arabs against Jews and is,

therefore, likely to continue to do so.

A gloomy analysis which suggests the only remedy is either to keep people apart, or, when applied to a bipolar conflict model, find out which side was guilty of 'starting it' and assign that side the 'black hat'; coerce it into 'backing down', and, if it refuses, to punish it.

Moisi continues: "... doubts about Mr Arafat's sincerity are growing in western diplomatic circles".

The *Sunday Times* wondered, "can such ancient enmities ever be healed? And why did the region suddenly erupt again?" This as "both sides of one of the world's most intractable conflicts were sinking ever deeper into a potentially lethal spiral of bloodshed, revulsion and revenge". The word, "both" confirming the bipolar conflict model.

In Glasgow, the *Herald* believed that a hastily convened "Arab summit offers little hope of overcoming ancient hatreds". Without

**Primordial hatred leads to brutality on both sides**

understanding how structural factors might drive people in a conflict arena, in this case the occupied territories, to commit direct violence, their behaviour can appear, in a recurrent motif in coverage from around this time, simply mad. An unreasonable motivation which makes it seem pointless to reason with the perpetrators, to listen to them or to negotiate.

The *Herald* went on: "bargaining is a way of life for all factions in the area, but what the United States often forgets is that there comes a point where ethnic fatalism takes over from common sense. It defies analysis of gains or losses in negotiation".

And the *Guardian* reported that the Middle East was now "in crisis [as] extremist settlers [were] accused of torture: primordial hatred leads to brutality on both sides… fired by their leaders' angry rhetoric and the horrific casualties of recent days, people are answering the call of ancient tribal loyalties".

The effect of 'framing in' issues of structural violence in these reports is to raise it as one factor contributing to the likelihood of direct violence
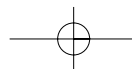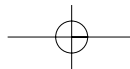
5.7. An experiment: two ways of framing the Israel-Palestine conflict

As the conflagration in the territories was at its height, the Memorial Museum for Peace in Caen, Normandy, commissioned, for one of its exhibits, a piece of news writing as an experiment in framing. The aim was to see how far decisions taken by journalists, on what to cover and how to cover it, could frame expectations about the conflict as, on the one hand, an inevitable slide into violence; or, on the other, still able to be moved towards resolution by creativity and negotiation.

The brief was to compile a piece based on each of these alternative frames, suitable to run as a 'meaty' 800-odd word page lead in a London broadsheet newspaper (the '*Guartelependent*', perhaps). Each was based closely on material which actually appeared in printed media on or around the occasion when two Israeli soldiers were killed in a police station in Ramallah, on the West Bank. (Among the exceptions is the element about the Hope Flowers School in Bethlehem and its founder, the late Ibrahim Issan, which is taken from a piece for the *Guardian* during a previous security blockade on Arab areas during 1999).

The two versions, which were subsequently posted to a global audience at www.mediachannel.org , are reproduced below:

a) WORLD LEADERS PLEAD FOR SANITY IN MID-EAST MELTDOWN

Prospects for Middle East peace lay in tatters last night after the worst day of violence in the occupied territories since trouble erupted a fortnight ago.

Two Israeli soldiers were killed by rampaging youths who broke in to the police station where they were being held after straying into a Palestinian area. Viewers tuned to television news stations watched in horror as a ringleader of the lynch mob appeared at an upstairs window, his hands dripping with blood.

Israel responded with rockets fired from helicopter gunships at buildings thought to have some connection with the attack. Targets included the broadcasting centre of Palestinian television, blamed for inciting local youths to riot, and the Gaza headquarters of Yasser Arafat, accused by Israel of failing to bring his people under control.

US President Bill Clinton, watching the diplomatic prize of his term in office slipping away, appealed for calm. "While I understand the anguish the Palestinians feel over the losses they have suffered, there can be no possible justification for mob violence", he said. "I call on both sides to undertake a ceasefire immediately, and immediately to condemn all acts of violence".

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright earlier called upon "the entire international community to join the United States in urging Chairman Arafat to take the steps necessary to bring this senseless and destructive cycle of fighting to an end".

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called the lynching and mutilation of the Israeli soldiers' bodies "a chilling act".

The soldiers, both reservists called up to active service in the last few days, had driven their armoured vehicle into part of the Arab-dominated West Bank town of Ramallah - whether by accident or design was last night unclear. Palestinian police arrested them and locked them in the cells as a 300-strong crowd, maddened with pent-up rage, gathered outside.

As the mob surged forward, guards reportedly offered little or no resistance. Then

> US President Bill Clinton, watching the diplomatic prize of his term in office slipping away, appealed for calm.
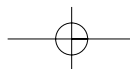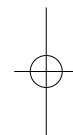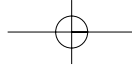
the crowd, who included waiting newsmen as well as rioters who'd stormed the police station, heard two shots ring out.

The two dead bodies were pitched over the balcony to the street below, where youths beat them with scaffolding poles and dragged them through the streets. Young men and women in western clothes cheered and clapped, smiling at the orgy of violence.

The gruesome spectacle of blood on Arab hands provoked Israel into her most forceful retaliation in fourteen days of conflict which has now left 89 people, mostly Palestinians, dead.

Targets for precision strikes ranged from the police station where the atrocity took place to three rubber patrol boats of the Palestinian Navy, moored in Gaza marina. Israeli tanks later circled Palestinian cities and the army clamped an internal closure on the areas, preventing Arabs from leaving their communities.

A smiling, defiant Mr Arafat was cheered by hundreds of Palestinians as he toured sites hit by Israeli rockets and visited the wounded at a Gaza hospital.

"Our people don't care and don't hesitate to continue their march to Jerusalem, their capital of the independent, Palestinian state", he said, adding that the Israeli actions were tantamount to "a declaration of war".

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak dismissed the claim as "nonsense, bullshit and propaganda". Interviewed by CNN correspondent Christiane Amanpour, the former General added ominously: "It doesn't amount to anything. It was not one in millions in what we can do if we are really in war". Israeli military spokesmen later added that their operations were designed to eliminate terrorism.

Many in the region described yesterday's chaos as a nail in the coffin of the peace process in which Israel, the Palestinians and the US have invested so much over the last seven years. The Palestinian authorities responded by freeing 31 jailed militants from the extremist group, Hamas, whose spiritual leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, warned Israel she would pay "a heavy price" for the rocket attacks on Arab soil.

The releases contravened the terms of the 1993 Oslo Accords and subsequent Wye River Agreement, under which the Palestinians are responsible for ensuring Israel's security and for clamping down on terror campaigns being plotted and carried out from within their autonomous areas.

Some analysts believe Mr Arafat needed a fight with Israel to shore up his wavering authority among his own people. At the Camp David talks earlier this year, Mr Barak offered unprecedented concessions by an Israeli leader, including some disputed parts of East Jerusalem. But the two leaders' positions ultimately proved irreconcilable, with neither willing to cede control over holy sites in the Old City.

Now, such talk seems to belong to a distant dreamland. In the here and now the ancient hatreds which divide Arabs and Jews speak more loudly than any rhetoric of peace. Yesterday's madness has all but drowned out the hopeful mood music of those few short weeks ago.

b) 'PEACE – NOW MORE THAN EVER' SAY ARABS AND JEWS AS DEATH TOLL INCHES UP

Middle East peace campaigners redoubled their calls for dialogue last night after violence in the occupied territories caused widespread destruction to property and claimed two more lives – bringing to 89 the number of people killed in the present round of troubles.

In Ramallah, Palestinian police said they'd intervened to try to save two Israeli soldiers, who'd driven their car into the West Bank town

> Many in the region described yesterday's chaos as a nail in the coffin of the peace process
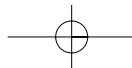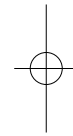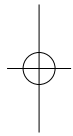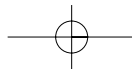
in an apparent blunder, from being dragged out and seized by locals angry over recent violence and living conditions under the US-brokered Oslo 'peace process'.

But, when a 300-strong crowd converged on the town's rundown police station, where the Israelis were taken for their own protection, officers were overwhelmed and could not prevent the pair from being shot and killed.

By this stage a television news crew, in Ramallah to cover the funeral of a Palestinian shot by Israeli soldiers, had been alerted to the stand-off by local activists, and headed instead for the police station. They were treated to a gruesome spectacle.

First, two shots rang out from within, then, shortly afterwards, a young man appeared at the window with blood smeared on his hands. The soldiers' bodies were tipped over the balcony to the street below, where they were beaten with scaffolding poles to cheers from some onlookers.

The scenes caused anger and frustration in Israel, where they were repeatedly shown on television news bulletins. But Uri Avneri, a founder of the Peace Movement, said the media had failed to prompt Israelis to reflect on their treatment of the Palestinians, instead presenting events in such a way as to instil "total contempt for the other side".

He predicted that calls for a hardline approach would be short-lived, and replaced by a strengthened resolve to make genuine peace, something opinion polls suggest is still favoured by most Israeli voters.

Three hours after the killings at Ramallah, Israeli helicopter gunships launched rocket attacks on targets including the police station itself, the broadcasting centre of Palestinian television which Israel blames for inciting riots with emotive reporting, and Yasser Arafat's headquarters in Gaza City. No-one was killed in the attacks after Israel issued specific warnings of intended targets.

But for many Palestinians the action underlined the arbitrariness and impunity of the occupying forces in territory Israel first gained in the 1967 war. Negotiations in the seven years of the Oslo process have concentrated on the proportion of land to be 'given back', in spite of UN resolutions which declared the occupation illegal and called on Israel to withdraw forthwith.

Troops closed off entire Arab communities yesterday, a frequent occurrence which adds to the unpredictability of everyday life for Palestinians. An army checkpoint just south of

> Some analysts believe fears and grievances over so basic a need as water prove that the conflict must be seen – and peace sought - in a wider Middle East context

Bethlehem obliged Ibrahim Issan to scramble over a nearby hill to reach his office at the Hope Flowers school, which places peace and co-existence at the heart of the curriculum.

When movement between areas is possible, Israeli volunteers teach Hebrew, science, English and computer skills to local children. In return they learn Arabic and Palestinian culture. Mr Issan founded the school to help overcome negative perceptions as a contribution to peace from the grassroots: "We have a lot of fanatics, but my dream is for Muslims, Jews and Christians to live together. It will not happen without hard work".

Classes were abandoned for the day only after soldiers refused to allow a water carrier to get through. Water is not piped to this part of the West Bank, another frustration underpinning the conflict. The writer Norman Finkelstein estimates that for every litre of water available to a Palestinian in the territories, an Israeli settler consumes 876 litres.

Some analysts believe fears and grievances over so basic a need as water prove that the conflict must be seen – and peace sought - in
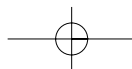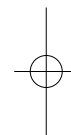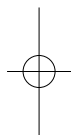
a wider Middle East context. Israel's chief concern is security – neighboured as she is by countries which still deny her right to exist. The kidnapping of three Israeli soldiers at the weekend by Hezbollah has fed these concerns. Syria supports the Lebanese guerilla group and wants the Golan Heights, more territory Israel annexed by force in 1967, to be returned. Negotiations brokered by the US foundered earlier this year.

The Golan forms the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, the 'Kinneret' which supplies 40 percent of Israel's water; downstream along the River Jordan lie the occupied territories. If Israel is to be relieved of pressure from Hezbollah she may have to return the Golan to Syria on terms which provide for some sharing of access to water from the Sea.

Syrians in turn are nervous about their water, most of which comes presently from the Rivers Tigris and Euphrates. Upstream, Turkey is now ready to complete a massive dam-building programme, which would give her total control over Syria's water supply. Besides providing irrigation, the Ilisu Dam would inundate areas where Kurdish separatism has flourished, an issue affecting other countries with Kurdish minorities including Iraq and Iran.

Johan Galtung, director of the TRANSCEND international peace network, called yesterday for a "Conference for Security and Co-operation in the Middle East", to consider all parties and all their issues together; with recognition on all sides of Israel's right to exist, and of the Palestinians' right to be represented by their own independent state.

Commentary
These were written as an experiment for discussion. In reality the material about water shortages as a contribution to Palestinian grievances might be more likely to appear as a sidebar or feature piece, linked to the main report by subbing and layout.

To omit such structural factors altogether is to fall back on the thesis that violence can be wholly understood as the *expression* of 'ancient hatreds', welling up from within. But to include this in the same frame as the (direct) violence is at least to usher in more creative possibilities for change.

We can now see that the violence is being *constructed* by intelligible, if dysfunctional processes – opening the prospect that negotiated adjustments in those processes may change the conflict. Change, remember, is central to the very idea of news.
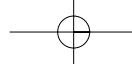
This may be helpful in commending

We can now see that the violence is being *constructed* by intelligible, if dysfunctional processes

international news as something the public will want to read, hear and see for themselves. The bipolar model summed up by Ehud Barak, with the conflict unchanged, in its essentials, for 52 years, makes it seem, in the *Sunday Times*' word, "intractable".

A foreign editor, wearied by doing battle in the daily meeting with what Ian Jack calls "the spectre of the reader's boredom, the viewer's lassitude", is unlikely to find intractability an easy sell, not least to colleagues who remember all too well the 'Bugger Bosnia' syndrome. A connection between Mr Issan and his erratic water supply at one end of a chain, and decisions in the DTI over the Ilisu Dam on the other, may be more promising.

Conflict Analysis leads us to understand conflict as a *development* issue – conflicts are endemic in any society and are essential to useful and constructive change. Whether conflicts become *destructive* depends on that society's resources to handle them non-violently. It follows that evidence of the existence of such resources could be commended as the newsworthy stirrings of change in a society beset by violent conflict. A framing in which it makes sense to hear from

the likes of the Decani monks in Kosovo or Messrs Issan, Avneri and Galtung here.

Middle East correspondents were kept busy over the New Year period of 2000/2001 by moves in the conflict including several large street demonstrations. Rallies by supporters of Hamas attracted widespread coverage in London newspapers, at least as an element of 'situation reports' wrapping up a number of overnight developments.

The event on December 29 was favoured with an address by telephone from the Hezbullah leader, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, urging those present to continue their uprising until Israel was destroyed outright. Another similar gathering three days later offered hints, according to the *Guardian*[20], that "Israel could expect a return to the tactic of using suicide bombers".

Sandwiched between these two was a women's rally organised by the 'Coalition for a Just Peace'[21]. On New Year's Eve, thousands of supporters, both Israeli and Palestinian, marched to the wall of Jerusalem's Old City, listening to speeches and watching as four demonstrators staged a daring and highly telegenic stunt – unfurling four massive banners down the wall from the top, bearing the slogans, 'Shalom', 'Salaam', 'Peace' and 'End the Occupation' in Hebrew, Arabic and English.

This was designed to attract attention to the Coalition's peace plan:

- An end to the occupation
- The full involvement of women in negotiations for peace
- Establishment of the State of Palestine side by side with the State of Israel based on the 1967 borders
- Recognition of Jerusalem as the shared capital of both states
- Israel must recognise its responsibility for the results of the 1948 war, and find a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem
- Equality, inclusion and justice for the Palestinian citizens of Israel
- Opposition to the militarism that permeates Israeli society
- Equal rights for women and for all residents of Israel
- Social and economic justice for Israel's citizens, and integration in the region

Was this more, or less newsworthy than the Hamas demonstrations? A large question – but one clue may lie in the fact that one of the main component parts of this coalition is

Mothers and Women for Peace, formerly the Four Mothers group. These were four women bereaved by the war between Israel and Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, in the occupation which Ehud Barak was elected to end – and did end – earlier in 2000.

Their campaigning was instrumental in changing a critical mass of opinion in Israeli society about the wisdom and sustainability of its armed presence there – the seeds of change and, therefore, of perhaps the most newsworthy event in the conflict in the period leading up to the Sharon visit.

Unlike the bloodcurdling remarks by Hamas and Hezbollah, a quick check by internet search reveals that no trace of the Coalition for a Just Peace event cropped up in London-based media. A question of framing which may have led to an opportunity being missed, to offer a novel and stimulating treatment of an important running story.
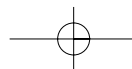
6. FRAMING OR SELF-CENSORSHIP?

No journalist can show or describe everything s/he sees, particularly in war. 'Watershed' restrictions and the editing-out of particularly gruesome images are another discussion – but any such discussion would almost certainly be over the extent, not the very existence, of such restraints.

It might be important for readers to know about the Coalition for a Just Peace rally, but also to be reminded, in a salutary counterpoint, that Hamas activists are reading their people's future from a very different script. At any rate a newspaper which contained only the former might be as guilty of misrepresenting the situation as one which concentrated only on the latter.

The discussion here, of the ethics of certain important framing decisions in covering international news in general, and conflicts in particular, does not amount to a call for self-censorship. The following text, adapted from the second-quarter, 2001 edition of Inside Indonesia magazine, at www.insideindonesia.org, may offer further illumination:

6.1. Trouble in Paradise – covering the violence in Poso, Indonesia

Turning gently in the sea breeze which cools the town of Poso in the afternoon, the cover of *Tabloid Mal* is dominated by a crude cartoon drawing of a round black bomb, its fuse fizzing, and the headline – Poso Bomb Mystery. Another local tabloid, *Formasi*,

> Neither mentioned the religious identity of suspects or victims – a restraint left over from the New Order, then a matter for the censor, now adopted as a self-denying ordinance

hanging alongside it from the canvas awning which shades customers browsing at the newspaper stall, is equally incendiary. Poso Reconciliation is Finished, its front page declares, in bright red capitals.

The fall of President Suharto and the repeal of his press laws triggered an explosion of new media, but no sooner was the Ministry of Information removed from the editorial process than Indonesian journalists entered a period of soul-searching about how to combine their new freedoms with a sense of responsibility.

Some coverage of the violence in Poso, in central Sulawesi, over the last two years shows these concerns. *Jakarta Post*, reporting on the third round of unrest in July of last year, told its readers 124 people had been arrested for their part in "communal clashes". The *Detikworld* web news serv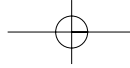ice reported that a number of soldiers were being questioned, their commanding officer explaining that some had seen their own homes burned in the trouble: "There are many whose families were murdered. That's why they helped and sided with those of a similar ideology".

Neither mentioned the religious identity of suspects or victims – a restraint left over from the New Order, then a matter for the censor, now adopted as a self-denying ordinance for fear of stirring up trouble.

Can journalists in Indonesia help to reduce tensions by being honest about them? Last November, a group of reporters arrived in the provincial capital, Palu, in a visit sponsored by the British Council in

Jakarta. Three weekly magazines were represented, along with a radio station and the new 24-hour Metro TV service, as well as the Antara news agency and four national newspapers.

Kompas correspondent Maria Hartiningsih was clear about her reasons for making the trip: "What really makes me want to do something with my reporting is that I saw a lot of innocent people become victims by the situation, especially women and children… I have a spirit to do something to contribute to the reconciliation of this nation."

At a rundown sports stadium on the outskirts of Palu which is now home to some 700 refugees, a clattering of carpentry tools interrupts Maria's conversation with a camp official. A group of men erect a makeshift partition to section off space for one of six or more families obliged to share a single room in sweltering conditions.

Not that she intends to wallow in the grief and trauma of the displaced. Though visibly affected by the scene, she explains: "I want to prevent (violence) so that's why it needs another technique to explore the story, not the hatred of the people, not the emotion, not the anger, but the hope maybe, hope of the people for a new life."

Further on, she encounters refugees living in very different conditions, thanks to a local grassroots organisation, Bantaya. A group of volunteers have banded together to care for people of either faith who were forced to flee their homes in Poso, some 220 kilometres away over the mountains.

Bantaya has persuaded landowners in Palu to lend fields for these unfortunates to cultivate. Maria is shown immaculately tended crops of black pepper and sweetcorn as well as a chilli harvest – ten kilos, enough to fetch thirty thousand Rupiah at local prices.

> **What would be the point of reporting peace work to heal rifts between followers of different faiths if the rifts themselves were suppressed?**

There are clerics, both Muslim and Christian, promoting understanding between their respective sections of the community. Kompas readers will learn about a Church congregation working as volunteers, together with Muslim colleagues, to build and clean local Mosques, for example.
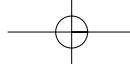
To tell these stories requires frankness about the interreligious aspect of the "communal clashes" coyly referred to by other accounts. What would be the point of reporting peace work to heal rifts between followers of different faiths if the rifts themselves were suppressed?

But these story elements also help to resist explanations for violence in terms of innate or essential antinomies between parties – the 'ancient hatreds' theory prevalent in conflict reporting from the Middle East, the Balkans and Indonesia itself. This can make continuing strife seem inevitable, unless communities are segregated and the borders patrolled, which brings its own problems.

The road into Poso is salami-sliced into Muslim and Christian slivers, separated by Brimob (Police Mobile Brigade) observation posts at intervals of as little as fifty metres. Maria's story suggests there is no inborn enmity which automatically sets devotees of the two religions at each other's throats. So how did they lapse into a cycle of violence which has seen hundreds killed, three thousand houses burned down and perhaps as many as twenty thousand flee their homes?

The road itself holds a clue, part of the Trans-Sulawesi highway connecting the island's main cities – a Suharto-era project which has brought the benefits of increased commerce as well as the problems associated with transmigration and development. The Pamona people who originally settled here learned Christianity a century ago from
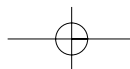
Dutch missionaries. New arrivals, mainly Bugis from Makassar but also a sprinkling of Javanese, tended to be Muslims – until the groups attained roughly equal numbers.

By convention, the Bupati or local government leader would be drawn alternately from one section of the community, then the other. But the road and other developments made the office a valuable bauble in terms of kickbacks and patronage. With the fall of Suharto, the Muslim incumbent, Arif Patanga, challenged the convention by proposing his son to succeed him. The younger Patanga seems to have set out to instrumentalise religious differences to stir up trouble in Poso with the object of keeping out the Christian candidate.

In the afternoon, the town is full of uniforms – local police as well as the Brimob, but also a large number of civil servants making their way home from the office. As a main administrative centre, Poso's livelihood depends heavily on public sector jobs. Simultaneous upheavals in both national and local politics were bound to have a profoundly unsettling effect.

At around this time, late 1998, a street brawl resulted in a Muslim man being cut in the arm with a knife. Instead of going to the police he rushed into a nearby Mosque and called on believers to rouse themselves against the Christians who he blamed for inflicting the wound. The first round of house-burnings, known latterly as 'Poso I', ensued.

This trigger incident, and the background of political unrest, themselves suggest an alternative explanation for violence. A conflict model begins to take shape in which both parties inhabit a number of shared problems. The Bupati was appointed from Palu, not elected in Poso, a deficient political system bound to encourage personal rivalry and 'top-doggery'.

Kickbacks from development projects were part of 'KKN', Corruption-

A conflict model begins to take shape in which both parties inhabit a number of shared problems

Collusion-Nepotism, a flourishing culture under the New Order with its lack of transparency and accountability. All conditions which encourage people to form and join groups to safeguard their interests, to stick together with those of their own kind – one factor propelling the injured man into the arms of his co-religionists instead of taking up his grievance with the authorities.

By illuminating these shared problems, journalists can expand the space to consider shared solutions, outcomes to the conflict which do not require one 'side' to 'win' and the other to 'lose'. As an alternative to apportioning blame, it makes it more logical to think of therapy than revenge or punishment.

About an hour's drive inland from Poso lies the town of Tentena, a Christian stronghold where blame is fixed squarely on the Muslims for 'starting it'. After Poso I, Christians turned the other cheek – then that cheek was slapped in Poso II, which justified them in seeking vengeance, we were told.

At Tentena, the mountains of Lore Lindu National Park meet the shoreline of Lake Poso, famed for its wild orchids. But this bejewelled prospect is disfigured by gutted Muslim houses, while others bear a spray-painted cross to ward off the same fate. In caves in the mountains, it is said, leaders of the 'Red Squad' met and plotted Poso III, the Christians' revenge.

This version of events came from a local guide who confidently asserted that Agfar Patanga had got clean away with his role as provocateur, and was now enjoying the comforts of a sinecure in Palu's local administration. Meanwhile, Christian militiamen Domingus Soares and Cornelius Tibo languished in jail – proof, he believed, that the justice system could not be trusted, putting the onus on Christians to defend themselves.
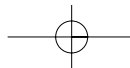
Which turned out to be a symptom of another shared problem – a deficient information system. No newspapers were on sale in Tentena; it is doubtful whether townsfolk know even now that on that very day, Patanga was committed for trial in Palu.

Rumours flourish – one reporter, Misbah, from Muslim magazine *Sabili*, heard from refugees at Parigi that Laskar Jihad militiamen were organising and that members came openly to pray at the local Mosque. They turned out to be white-robed students from the town's pesantren, or religious high school.

In publicising and correcting these misconceptions, journalists themselves can contribute to ameliorating shared problems. Is that the same as the reporter's traditional role of 'just reporting the facts'? For Maria Hartiningsih, this will not do – to report is to choose, and the journalist must take responsibility for those choices.

Either inflame a conflict with sensationalised tabloid headlines, or take responsibility for framing decisions which expand the space for solutions to be considered: "Every journalist has the ideology in here, and me too – my ideology is to contribute something for peace, to contribute something for justice".

…to report is to choose, and the journalist must take responsibility for those choices.

7. SOUTH AFRICA: BLAME AND PUNISHMENT

– OR SHARED PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS?

South Africa is another context where journalists have grappled with the consequences of framing decisions taken in newsgathering and reporting, in particular whether conflicts are *blamed* on one party or another, or presented as a set of shared problems, requiring shared solutions.

One example, from the build-up to the country's first all-race election in 1994, became the subject of an important study by Lesley Fordred, an anthropologist from the University of Cape Town. Once again the central issue was the explanation provided for an outbreak of direct violence. Late one Friday night, Fordred writes, "thirteen children and one adult were massacred by unknown rifle-bearers in a deserted mud hut outside a village called Mahehle, about 200 km south west of Pietermaritzburg in kwaZulu/Natal". This territory abutted the heartland of an ongoing violent conflict between supporters of the rival African National Congress and Inkatha Freedom Party. After this incident, Fordred comments, "once again, it seemed

the ANC-IFP conflict in Natal was going to drag democracy out of reach".

Indeed, the area's main newspaper, the *Natal Witness*, ran a piece in its edition of the following Monday morning, headlined: "Massacre blamed on 'fear of election'" - an explanation sourced to two local ANC party officials. The piece went on to suggest a direct connection between the massacre and the election: "In the incident, four gunmen opened fire on a group of mainly teenagers preparing for an African National Congress voter education workshop in rural Mahehle". Both main party leaders commented on the incident. "ANC leader Nelson Mandela yesterday blamed IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi for the deaths and said Buthelezi is fanning violence with his opposition to the election... Buthelezi yesterday condemned Saturday's massacre, saying such violence could further polarize South African society. 'We are never going to have peace and prosperity in South Africa by eliminating each other through such terrible acts of violence', he said".

Fordred observes: "'Balance' is attained through the identification of 'both sides' of the conflict, and sourcing of comments from each of them. Selections from their various spokespersons' comments attempt to define positions on the attack, rather than by searching for common ground: the fact that both the ANC and IFP condemned the massacre is completely ignored...

"Probing questions are not asked; names of the dead are not given; a reporter did not visit the scene; there is a heavy reliance on police information and on comments obtained by telephone and fax - a work routine that precludes the insights of villagers. And finally, the narrative itself - the construction of the sequence of events, and the suggestion of motivation - is taken directly from politicians in Pretoria".

Fordred goes on to describe how she accompanied the paper's assistant editor, Khaba Mkhize, as he went to Mahehle to file a follow-up report. Several different nuances emerge.

His piece begins with suggestions that the killing of unarmed children was a tragic mistake. In a fraught situation, the presence of unknown people in a deserted hut on the edge of a village conveyed the impression of menace: "The unseen occupants of the hut were apparently braaiing mealies on a fire. This caused some people to panic, believing that an attack was being planned" and having no way of knowing those inside were unarmed.

A detective investigating the killings told Mhkize: "'It appears the attackers were not aware of who was occupying the house. Judging by the long-range shots that hit the mud walls, it is safe to deduce that they later stormed the house because there was no return of fire".

The piece also quoted a local farmer, Ephraim Nxsane, who lost two grandsons in the attack. He attributed the group's decision to camp out on a summer's night to "youthful excitement" at the imminent electioneering and the prospect of connecting themselves - albeit distantly - with the legendary figure of Nelson Mandela.

Mhkize's report is carefully even-handed in relating another observation made at the scene - that holes in the hut's mud walls were made in some cases by G3 and in others by AK47 bullets – weapons of choice for the IFP and ANC respectively.

The effect of this is to begin to move the narrative away from an episode in an ongoing tug-of-war, or series of blows exchanged by two parties, with one fingered as 'guilty' of this particular atrocity. Instead it directs us to consider how the conflict itself, with its

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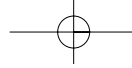
attendant fears and resentments, is causing tragic errors of judgement, and consequences - the killing of unarmed children as young as 12 - that nobody intends or wants.

Conflict Analysis

Mkhize's framing decisions expand the space to look for reconciliation as a component of change in the conflict – a key resource for a society to handle conflicts non-violently. In Conflict Analysis terms, this is the "exculpatory nature-structure-culture" approach: providing ways for aggrieved parties to process their experiences without adding to the hatred and bitterness which is then transmitted into further violence in future.

"A structure-oriented perspective converts the relationship from inter-personal, or inter-state/nation [here, inter-group] to a relation between two positions in a deficient structure. If the parties can agree that the structure was/is deficient and that their behaviour was an enactment of structural positions rather than anything more personal, then turning together against the common problem, the structural violence, should be possible"[22]. A logic which eventually led South Africa to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as an experiment in moving on from the structural violence of Apartheid. Fordred records Mkhize's keen sense of responsibility in making these framing decisions: "Our journalistic mistakes are not visible," he tells her, "like the doctor's mistake that gets buried... But in actual fact our mistakes start wars and civil wars."

The effect of this is to begin to move the narrative away from an episode in an ongoing tug-of-war, or series of blows exchanged by two parties...
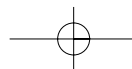
8. INTERIM CONCLUSIONS

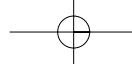… and subjects for discussion in the seminar series and at the roundtable:

- In a media-savvy world, any possible source for news may also be an experienced reader, listener and viewer

- Sources, journalists, readers and audiences are counterparts in a feedback loop of cause and effect, in which 'the facts' of any story contain the imprint of previous stories

- This is one way in which framing decisions journalists make, about what to report and how to report it, influence subsequent developments in the same – and other – stories

Some key framing decisions crop up over and over again in covering conflicts. To identify these is to take a significant step towards establishing clear criteria for assessing international news against a sense of purpose and responsibility. They include:

- Does news frame a conflict as a tug-of-war, a zero-sum game of two parties contesting a single goal?

- Or as a round table, with many parties pursuing many goals, opening up more creative possibilities for change?
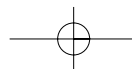
- Do reports mention only direct violence, as a series of tit-for-tat exchanges?

- Or do they also 'frame in' development issues, as examples of structural violence?

- Is the effect of the reporting to suggest that (direct) violence is an expression of 'ancient hatreds'?

- Or that it is being constructed by intelligible, if dysfunctional, processes – and therefore capable of being removed by intervening in those processes?

- How is Britain - how are readers, listeners and viewers - connected with the problem – and the possible solutions?

- Do we only hear from extremists and from 'official sources' on either side – or do we seek to draw connections which illustrate the prospects for change opened up by perspectives and actions at the grassroots?

- Can we offer a balanced report simply by giving the hardened platforms, or positions of each party? Or do we need to frame in perspectives based on offering ideas for change, if necessary from third (or more) parties?
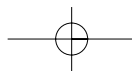
Is the effect of the reporting to suggest that
(direct) violence is an expression of 'ancient hatreds'?

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