

University of Massachusetts, McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies
Graduate Program in Conflict Resolution

Reporting Violent Conflict: Conflict Resolution Journalism and its Impacts

Nepal, a Case Study

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Objectivity is the mantra of journalism. D. Mindich (1998) in his book 'Just the Facts' defines the components of objectivity as, "detachment, nonpartisanship, a style of writing called the 'inverted Pyramid', facticity, and balance..." (p.2). Mindich's account is the nitty-gritty of news reporting, considered essential. But, what about reporting sensitive news of violence, or the reasons behind violent conflict? Does the formula of reporting change? What is the impact of Conflict Resolution as a discipline on Journalism? How has conflict resolution added skills for conflict reporting, and has it enhanced conflict reporting? This masters' project aims to address these questions as they relate to the case of Nepal.

Nepal, a small country in South Asia, after going through a decade-long civil war, is in the process of finding positive peace. Though the conflict hit the country hard, it also taught some significant lessons in the study of conflict resolution and the role of the media in escalation or de-escalation through reporting. Study of the Nepali media during this phase is crucial not only to analyze the role of media during conflict, but to detect effective strategies for the future, should violence erupt again. These lessons are also valuable for other countries with similar context of violent conflict in order to help journalists play a constructive role in de-escalation.

Howard (2002) opines,

"The media is a double-edged sword; it can be a frightful weapon of violence when it propagates messages of intolerance or disinformation that manipulate public sentiment... It can be an instrument of conflict resolution when the information it provides is reliable, respects human rights, and represents diverse views."

This study seeks to find how journalism can be an instrument of conflict resolution. As Howard observed, journalism can inadvertently exacerbate conflicts, but it can also help de-escalate conflicts, if not resolve them. This thesis seeks to test the hypothesis that conflict resolution journalism helps de-escalate violent conflict by bridging the rifts between conflicting parties. The role of media is crucial, even in the post-violence phase, and societies like Nepal with such journalism find long-lasting resolution.

Breaking the Ice:

If you Google ‘conflict journalism,’ you will find over five million hits, suggesting that the correlation between ‘conflict’ and ‘journalism is definitely something to consider. This study explores the dynamics between conflict and Journalism and how Journalism can play a constructive role in de-escalating violent conflicts. Many scholars have sought to explain the relationship between the two.

Pruitt and Kim (2004) note, “Conflict means perceived divergence of interest” (p.7). Conflict can be defined simply as a human interaction where there are no visible compatible interests to parties, and the ‘Win- Lose’ situation is perceived. Journalism, for its part, is the process of editing and collecting information, and thus cannot be entirely objective.

Journalism began after the invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg around 1439, bringing a revolution in printing (Winston 2005). But modern journalism started late in the 17th century, throughout the world, including the United States of America. Winston (2005) further notes, “Publick Occurrences, Both Foreign and Domestic, the first colonial newspaper, was

published in Massachusetts in September 1690, ignoring a 1662 ordinance, which required it be licensed” (p.86). Within one hundred years of this publication, the concept of war correspondence was already a trend in Europe and America. The arrival of the telegraph is credited for making ‘conflict’ an integral part of everyday news. By the end of 18th century ‘conflict’ was not just a part of everyday news, but a priority.

The road not taken:

Today, most media houses flourish on conflict. The lead stories are often wars, crimes and disasters. Conflict is like a magnet that attracts people to the media. Ross (2003) opines, “News value dictates that conflict and violence warrant attention; happy coexistence does not” (p. 31). The readership or audience is the key to financial success for media outlets. Thus, media not only prioritizes conflict, but often intensifies it, while reporting. In short, media thrives through conflict and vice versa. Probably, that is why Bratic & Schirach (2007) posit that the media’s impact on the escalating of conflict is more widely recognized than the media’s impact on peace building.

Conventional journalism typically focuses on violent conflict and often in manner like a ‘soccer match,’ which barely visualizes the overall impacts of the violence associated with it. In other words, journalism pays less attention to those who are hurt, but concentrates on the act of violence. Bratic & Schirch (2007) further note, “A common journalistic principle is this: ‘if it bleeds, it leads,’ that means violent conflict would be headline news, not news of cross-cultural dialogue and understanding” (p. 9).

But, what if the media seeks reliability of the news and balances it with multiple views, and helps the general masses understand conflict? Can it be an instrument for resolution? According to Howard (2001),

“It can be an instrument of conflict resolution when the information it provides is reliable, respects human rights, and represents diverse views. It’s the kind of media that enables a society to make well informed choices, which is the precursor of democratic governance. It is the media that reduces conflict and fosters human security” (p.1).

Conflict resolution journalism is believed to be seeking non-violent and peaceful measures to address violent conflict through reporting, and is often called “Peace journalism,” and is credited to Johan Galtung. Hanitzsche (2007) notes, “The concept has been coined in the 1970s by the Norwegian peace researcher Johan Galtung who is the pioneer in the study of news values” (p. 2). According to Lynch and McGoldrick,

“Peace journalism does not just mean ‘reporting peace’. In essence it entails the application of insights from peace and conflict studies –the sum of what is known and has been observed about conflict, its dynamics and potential for transformation-to the everyday jobs of editing and reporting the news”(p. 248).

As noted above, peace journalism or conflict resolution journalism is relatively a new concept that focuses on the process of reporting conflict with an acknowledgement that the issue is sensitive, and thus needs to be approached conscientiously. Rune Ottosen (2007) captures the necessity of the term ‘Peace Journalism’ in one statement, “Galtung’s model builds upon

dichotomy and contrast between what he calls war journalism and peace journalism approach” (p.2).

Pilger (2010) emphasizes the role of peace journalism as, “War journalism reports what power says it does, peace journalism reports what it does” (p.3). Thus peace journalism does not draw a boundary within the field, but redefines and re-conceptualizes the traditional notion of war/conflict journalism, paying attention to the conflict as a whole. It tries to portray the pain of all the parties, and humanizes the victims. Galtung (2002) explains, “Peace journalism is people oriented in the sense that it focuses on victims (often civilian casualties) and thus give voice to the voiceless” (p.262). This approach helps expose the reason behind the violence and looks for non-violent solutions. Galtung (2002) further opines,

“Thus, the peace journalism approach assumes a moral and ethical point of departure, acknowledging the fact that media themselves play a role in the propaganda war, intentionally or unintentionally. The peace journalism approach may make the conscious choice to identify alternative options for the readers/viewers by offering a solution oriented, people oriented, and truth oriented approach” (p.270).

Aggressive and provocative news are the hurdles to conflict resolution journalism because it is believed that they bolster the hatred among individuals and groups. Despite the understanding that conflict resolution journalism is working towards peaceful solutions to conflict, understanding how conflicts escalate and de-escalate is essential to enhance the expected vital role conflict resolution journalism could play during violent conflicts.

Pruitt & Kim, Escalation and De-escalation:

Conflict, while escalating, takes three models according to Pruitt and Kim (2004): “Contender and Defender model, Conflict Spiral model and Structural Change model” (P.92). Parties view diverging goals and want to take something away from the other, at the others’ expense, contending and defending each others’ interests and/or positions. The conflict further escalates beyond contender-defender model and enters into a ‘conflict spiral’ when both parties are involved in circle of action and reaction. Contentious action provokes further contentious and heavier actions from the opposing party, taking the conflict to a level of escalation such that it brings ‘structural changes’ on the conflicting parties. Pruitt and Kim (2004) capture these structural changes in a sentence: “In addition to emotional changes (blame, anger, fear, and perceived threat to one’s image), psychological changes include dehumanization, de-individuation, and the development of hostile attitudes, perceptions and goals” (P.120).

To clarify, the Israel-Arab conflict could be an example. Both the groups have so much invested in the conflict that structural changes are probably immense, such that they now define themselves in association with the conflict. With few common interests or cross cutting bonds to balance out aggressive forces, the conflict remains volatile.

Pruitt & Kim (2004) further explain,

“...Escalation is like a rubber band. Up to a point, a rubber band may be stretched and, when released, still returns to its original form and shape. Beyond that point

however, further stretching, either breaks the rubber band or produces a change in its elasticity that prevents it from resuming its original dimensions” (p.152).

The media as a whole could be part of the escalation process at each step, sometimes fueling it further, frequently manipulating the information, and often to an extent that they end up driving a wedge between the parties permanently, much like ‘the rubber band’ which never ever gets its original dimensions back. When groups become highly polarized and cross cutting bonds or organizations are destroyed, it is believed that de-escalation becomes increasingly difficult. Pruitt and Kim (2004) put it as follows, “it is clearly easier to squeeze the toothpaste out of the tube than to put it back in,” (p.168). Ultimately, however, long conflict pushes parties to a perceived stalemate, which Pruitt & Kim (2004) describe as, “Perceived stalemate can result from any or all of the following conditions: failure of contentious tactics, exhaustion of resources necessary to employ such tactics, loss of support from allies, and the development of unacceptable cost or risk” (pg.188).

Throughout the escalation of conflict, and the phase of stalemate, there might be a space for journalism to play a constructive role by giving the true picture of violence and creating optimism for peace. According to Pruitt & Kim (2004), when a “Party has come to the grudging realization that, it cannot prevail at acceptable cost or risk” (p.178) it will accept de-escalation. That leads the party to contact the other side, communicate, cooperate on other issues, leading to real talks. A party might make a unilateral conciliatory move, like the 1977 visit of then-Egyptian President Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem, which paved the way to peace between Egypt and Israel. A party may also accept the mutual existence of the other, by humanizing the party and looking for acceptable face saving solutions to the conflict.

Pruitt & Kim (2004) explain, “All escalated conflicts eventually end, either by victory for one side, mutual withdrawal, an arbitrated settlement, or a negotiated agreement,” (p.168), but, De-escalation without doubt can start much earlier if journalism can clarify the real reasons behind the conflict and the issues associated with the violence, to the conflicting parties and to the masses, illustrating the benefits of settlement and peace. Nevertheless, even though journalists may work for the peace and try to convince the parties in conflict to start talks, parties may avoid these suggestions.

‘Image Theory’ offers an answer. It is believed that journalists have to understand the dynamics involved in violent conflict and the changes they could create in society. Understanding why parties act the way they do, and what could be done to overcome their problems, would probably help frame and reframe the news effectively to help de-escalate the conflict. Recognizing the behavioral orientation and relationship pattern between individuals or groups is considered by social psychologists to be vital for launching effective de-escalation through conflict resolution journalism.

Image theory and the Enemy Image:

Image theory was first introduced by Boulding (1959) as “the total cognitive, affective, and evaluative structure of the behavioral unit, or its internal view of itself and its universe” (p.120-121). The definition observes not only the self, but evaluates the world around by positioning the self at the center. The construction of enemy images and stereotypes follows, as Alexander, Brewer & Herrmann (1999) opine,

“Boulding felt that perceived hostility or friendliness and the perceived strength and the weakness of a unit were central features of the nation’s image of that unit. In subsequent work, particular attention was paid to the enemy image that forms when the other unit is perceived to be very strong and hostile” (p.77).

When the adversary is perceived as hostile, even the use of force is justified and viewed well-suited to the moral grounds that the group perceives itself on. Alexander, Brewer & Herrmann (1999) explain, “According to image theory, the structure of intergroup relationship (cooperation- competition, relative strength, and relative status) gives rise to sentiment and behavioral inclinations that must be balanced with the in-group’s positive and moral self-image” (p.77-93).

Image theorists talk about the ‘in-group’ (the group you are in) and ‘out-group’, laying out five basic images of the out-group. Alexander, M. G., Brewer, M. B., & Livingston, R. W. (2005) have captured the behavioral orientation and the out-group image based on the relationship the in-group has with the out-group.

Relationship Pattern	Behavioral Orientation	Out-group Image
Goal compatibility Status Equal Power Equal	Cooperation	Ally
Goal Incompatibility Status Equal Power Equal	Containment or Attack	Enemy
Goal Incompatibility Out-group Status Lower Out-group Power Higher	Defensive Protection	Barbarian
Goal Incompatibility Out-group Status Lower	Exploitation or Paternalism	Dependent

Out-group Power lower		
Goal Incompatibility Out-group Status Higher Out-group Power Higher	Resistance or Rebellion	Imperialist

The distinction of power and status is fundamental in determining the impact in behavioral orientation and positive self image of a group. As explained above, mere perception of the other as strong and hostile is enough to view the other as an enemy. Perceived incompatible goals adds another complexity in the difficult relationship, which is defined only by hatred. Pruitt & Kim (2004) posit,

“Once the party has formed a negative impression of other - once the image of other as an undesirable, unsavory, untrustworthy, unpleasant character has been shaped - selective information processing leads party to pay attention to, search for, interpret, retain, and recall, information in ways that confirm the initial negative impression” (p.156).

This selective processing of information leads the group not only to form a negative impression of other, but define the self as good. Alexander, Brewer & Herrmann (1999) note, “The enemy is seen as motivated by a very few, self serving interests, all of which are judged to be evil and immoral” (p.77-93)

This phenomenon leads the group to feel good about ‘self’ and to keep on rising, juxtaposed against the bad rating of the ‘other’. Stereotypes are generated with selected information about the image of an enemy. As Alexander, Brewer & Herrmann (1999) noted, “Stereotypes function

to represent intergroup realities...creating images of the out-group (and the in-group) that explain, rationalize, and justify the intergroup relationship and one's past, present and future behavior within it" (p77-93). It keeps on serving a group to believe that it is just and moral. The image of the other as an enemy, and oneself as a savior or a victim might lead the group to judge its own aggression, torture and even killing of others as normal.

Enemy images shape everyone in society, including its journalists. Intentionally or unintentionally, enemy images could swell through the news and editorials, creating obstacles to conflict resolution journalism. Since the 'self -image' is further shaped by selective information, the task of changing the person, as a whole, is not as easy as changing the frame of the journalistic article.

If we consider the self image of the group, which is in conflict with the outer group, the problem looks colossal. When self image turns into a group image, enemy images of the other group shape the group in a way such that the images become part of an identity, as in the Arab-Israeli conflict. This is a serious long term project in conflict resolution, such that the more protracted the conflict is, the steeper the climb will be to deconstruct images and stereotypes. Changing the perception of threats in a conflict to the perception of an opportunity most likely is an uphill battle, even for an expert on conflict resolution journalism.

Framing, Deconstructing the Enemy Images:

Conflict resolution journalism strives for and approaches conflict in a constructive and peaceful way. But the 'framing' of conflict itself stands as a hurdle to conflict resolution journalism. Yet

if framing is an impediment, it can also turn into a powerful tool for deconstructing enemy images.

So, what is framing? Reese (2008) states that, “Framing refers to the way events and issues are organized and made sense of, especially by media, media professionals, and their audiences” (p. 7). If framing has a role in organizing events in order to provide a sense to an audience about particular issues, it should have a role not only in shaping the in-group’s aggression or hostility towards an outer group, but also in defusing anger and ultimately deconstructing enemy images.

The way we frame or spin issues is an effective tool in gaining political, economic and social advantage, especially for a political party or a group, but it can also be a tool in shaping the thought process of an individual and a group for the cause of peace. Framing could find the missing block required to bridge the conflicting parties, which could be achieved through redefining and simplifying the events and helping parties and the general masses understand conflict. Tankard (2008) acknowledges the dynamics and multifaceted role of framing,

“Much of the power of framing comes from its ability to define the terms of a debate without the audience realizing it is taking place. Media framing can be likened to the magician’s sleight of hand: attention is directed to one point so that people do not notice the manipulation that is going on at another point” (p. 97).

If the images of ‘other’ could be hidden in news reports, editorials, and columns, the images of ‘us’ as a whole could be as well. The attitudes of journalists are revealed through the angle they choose, even in news articles, and that is through framing. Be it print, broadcast or online

journalism, framing is always in play. All different media have their own way of disseminating news, so that the framing and reframing of news differ considerably.

Communication can shape our thought process through framing, and it is equally true during conflicts. Stone, Patton & Heen (2000) opine, “When the other person heads towards a destructive direction, reframing puts the conversation back on course” (p.202-206). Framing and reframing become more effective with the understanding of how the news media differs in terms of disseminating news. Joseph Dominick (2007) explains that, “Print and online journalism are organized in space, TV journalism is organized in time” (p. 295-296).

As Dominick argues, print and online journalism focus on greater depth than television or radio. Television and radio journalism provide development on a story, avoiding the tedious details, because of the time limit as argued above. Print journalism offers the details and easy accessibility of a story anytime. But the Audio and visual dimensions of framing can have mass impact, even on illiterate people, who are basically immune to the effects of print and online journalism.

Whatever the medium, the idea of conflict resolution journalism has a framing strategy for reporting wars and conflicts. Framing makes a difference once it is acknowledged that media can play a constructive role in helping de-escalate violent conflicts. Howard (2005) opines, “The media educates, corrects misperceptions, identifies underlying interests, and humanizes the party to the disputes” (p.123)

As Ross Howard suggested above, when journalism is inclined towards reducing tensions between conflicting parties and helping society resolve conflict and, finally, to reach reconciliation, journalism takes a framing and reframing approach. This can help the public not

only understand the underlying causes of conflict, but also to alter previously held images and stereotypes, preparing to humanize the other group to them.

Analytical Framework:

The role of framing and enemy images is evident in a content analysis of the major national daily newspapers of Nepal. All news stories, features, opinions and editorials will be part of the analysis, taken directly from the archive of respective newspapers during January 2005 to December 2005, which is considered to be the most volatile period of conflict.

Taking the criteria developed by Johan Galtung (1986-1998), these news stories will be characterized as Peace or war journalism. “Ting Lee and Maslog (2005) further developed the criteria [conceived by Galtung] into thirteen indicators of peace journalism and thirteen indicators of war journalism...” (Dov Shinar, 2009). The stories of the Nepalese newspapers will be evaluated below with these indicators:

War Journalism

Peace Journalism

Reactive (waits for war to break out before reporting)	Proactive (starts reporting on conflict before the war breaks out)
Reports mainly on visible effects of war (casualties and damages)	Reports also on invisible effects of war (social and Psychological impacts of war)
Elite oriented (focuses on leaders and elites)	People oriented (Also focuses on people as actors and sources of information)
Highlights mainly the differences of conflicting parties that lead them to violent conflict/war	Highlights also on the commonalities and agreement between the conflicting parties that might lead to the solution of the conflict
Emphasizes only on here and now events	Also gives space to causes of conflict
Frequently tags the good and the bad, or victims and perpetrators in conflict	Avoids tagging the good and the bad or the victims and the perpetrators
Two party orientated (focuses on who	Multi Party orientated (give voice to all parties

won and who lost: victory- defeat oriented)	involved in conflict)
Partisan (reporting with bias for one side)	Non Partisan (neutral)
Zero- sum orientation	Win- Win orientation (solution oriented)
Stops reporting after the peace treaty	Keeps on reporting the rehabilitation and reconstruction
Uses victimizing languages like tragic, devastated, pathetic etc.	Avoids victimizing language, rather focuses on what is being done or could be done
Uses demonizing languages like terrorist, extremist, fanatic, barbaric etc.	Avoids demonizing languages, rather uses the names and titles the conflicting parties give to themselves
Uses Emotive words like assassination, massacre etc.	Does not use emotive language, tries to be objective instead

With these 22 indicators in mind, this project explores how proper, balanced and efficient ways of reporting conflict could help de-escalate conflict. Out of the total 26 indicators, four are excluded in the Nepal context since there was no peace treaty in period studied in 2005. These indicators will be used to analyze editorials over this period in Nepal to see their use of framing and enemy images, and how these have impacted escalation and de-escalation in the conflict.

Understanding the escalation and de-escalation model of Pruitt and Kim shows how conflict jumps from one level to another, and how that changes the group dynamics that take place within society during conflict. Image Theory gives us the missing link for the effective de-escalation of conflict in that it not only describes how groups drift apart, but also helps us understand why and how groups build up the image of an enemy. For de-escalation of the conflict, humanizing the other is very important, and that can be achieved through framing and reframing.

The theory of escalation and de-escalation is a diagnostic approach to the problems of conflict. Image theory is diagnostic in nature, but also prescribes some basic transformations that have to be achieved for de-escalation. Framing and reframing, on the other hand, is the prescribed tool

to achieve that state, which could be achieved only with a clear understanding of all the theories we have discussed above.

Together these analytical frameworks offer promising steps towards achieving the goal of helping de-escalate violent conflicts. But still, reporting violent conflict is like walking on thin ice. It all depends how a journalist understands the conflict and how language and sources are used. This will also be analyzed using the indicators of war and peace journalism during the coding process.

Coding process:

With Galtung's 22 indicators of war and peace journalism, the coding below will focus on the content of the news, such that each story/news will be examined based on the indicators. Each news story will be coded based on its score against these war and peace indicators, based on its dominant frame, to decide if it falls on the peace or war journalism side. If the majority of the story's paragraphs utilize what passes as peace journalism, the story will be considered as having a dominant peace journalism frame. Similarly, if the majority of the paragraphs demonstrate war journalism, then the whole story will be labeled as having a war journalism frame.

Case Study: Nepal, From Conflict to Post-Conflict

Nepal, a small country in South Asia, sandwiched between India and China, became a land of violent conflict for a decade. The Maoists revolution that formally started on 13th of February 1996, attacking on a police post in Rolpa, a remote district in western Nepal. This became a

matter of pain and sorrow for some, and a great revolution for others. The civil war within three years became so violent that the clash between Maoists and the security forces almost became an every day ordeal for Nepalese. The conflict displaced thousands and destroyed the basic fabric of Nepali society. Some unexpected incidents like the Royal Massacre of 2001, and the totalitarian new king and his hunger for power, the sacking of the elected prime minister and his government, further deteriorated the environment for talks. These incidents fueled the conflict such that the deaths record by INSEC (Informal Sector Service Center) is almost five thousand, between 2001 and 2002 alone. King Gyanendra Shah is believed to have escalated the conflict further by dismissing the democratic government. Ganguly (2005) posits,

“His dismissal of the legislature and seizure of power means that Nepal now finds itself, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, mired that much more deeply in a strange and bloody battle between the opposed and yet similarly antidemocratic ideologies of communism and royal absolutism” (p. 129-143).

The Communist party of Nepal (Maoists) was a democratic force established through the first election, which was seated in the House of Representative from 1991 to 2004. Unsatisfied with the pace and process of democratic change, a faction of the Maoists started an armed revolution with the goal of abolishing the monarchy, establishing a Peoples' Republic, and drafting a constitution through a Constituent Assembly. The list was handed over to the then Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba who was the head of the government with King Birendra as the head of the state. Ten years down the road, the civil war went violent and claimed the lives of around 13,000, according to the report published by INSEC.

The democracy secured after 1990 came to an end after the royal coup of February 2004. The new Monarch undermined not only the democratic parties but several peace initiatives through dialogue. Four rounds of track I diplomacy and frequent efforts of track II diplomacy from 2001 to 2004 failed to produce significant results. The king, supported by the military, moved forward single-handedly, reversing the gains made during democratic rule. Parajuli (2010) opines, “Consequently, two extreme forces — an ultra leftist force known as Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) and an ultra rightist force under the leadership of King Gyanendra — emerged and sought to reverse the political gains made after 1990” (p. 87-112).

But, entirely unanticipated by the king and the international community, the ten year long violent civil war came nearly to an end November 22, 2005 after seven democratic parties signed a 12 point understanding with the Maoists. The understanding turned into something concrete when the parties signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement on 21st November 2006, declaring an end to war. The movement, known as the ‘April Movement,’ toppled the autocratic monarchy and turned Nepal into a federal democratic Republic on 28 December 2007. The 239 year old Monarchy was formally abolished 28 May 2008 by the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly. The Assembly at present is striving towards the goal of drafting a constitution by May 2011. But there are other problems that would require timely attention and cooperation from all the parties. The integration of the Maoists into the national army of Nepal is one of the most contentious issues and has become a major hurdle for effective reconciliation.

A Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was also established, but until now has become a hollow promise. TRC’s investigation of human rights violations and crimes against humanity is crucial to attain positive peace. The Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction wrote the legislation for the TRC in May 2007, yet it is still pending in the parliament. Similarly, another bill for a

‘Commission on Disappeared Persons’ is also pending in the parliament. The delay, almost four years, is seen as the result of power struggles between the parties that leaves the country without the reconciliation body. Parliament has also failed to enact a constitution in the declared time frame and added a year on the previous dead line, which is running out this May again. Like other countries in transition from civil war to democracy, Nepal is mired in many political, economic and security issues.

Conflict and the Impact on Journalism

The ten year long civil war impacted every business to the extent that some entirely stopped investing in Nepal. But the exact opposite happened to the Media. After the conflict, investment in Media grew significantly. In 1996, there was only one television station, Nepal Television, a couple radio stations, and hardly a dozen daily newspapers (Press Council Nepal and Ministry of Information and Communications). By 2006, within the ten years of the volatile years, there was a media explosion. The annual report of Press Council Nepal in 2006 listed 2600 newspapers, among which 386 were registered as daily. Similarly, there are 373 radio stations and 26 television stations registered for service currently in Nepal (Ministry of Information and Communications, 2011). Approximately 100 radio stations and 10 television stations broadcast the news of the comprehensive peace agreement, which formally ended the civil war on 21st November 2006.

Facing enormous economic, political and security challenges, journalists are still moving towards a better role. But their responsibility to disseminate news identified by the constitution as the ‘watch dog’ often puts them at risk. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) lists 15

Nepalese journalists out of 836 killed worldwide from 2000 to 2010. Kunda Dixit, a prominent journalist for Himal Publications, was manhandled by Maoists in his own office. He writes, “Journalists who are supposed to cover the news are becoming the news themselves” (CPJ). Most of the journalists were killed either by the Maoists or the then- Royal Army during the civil war. CPJ lists Nepal as a country with impunity, where killers roam free after slaying journalists.

Conflict and the Impact of Journalism:

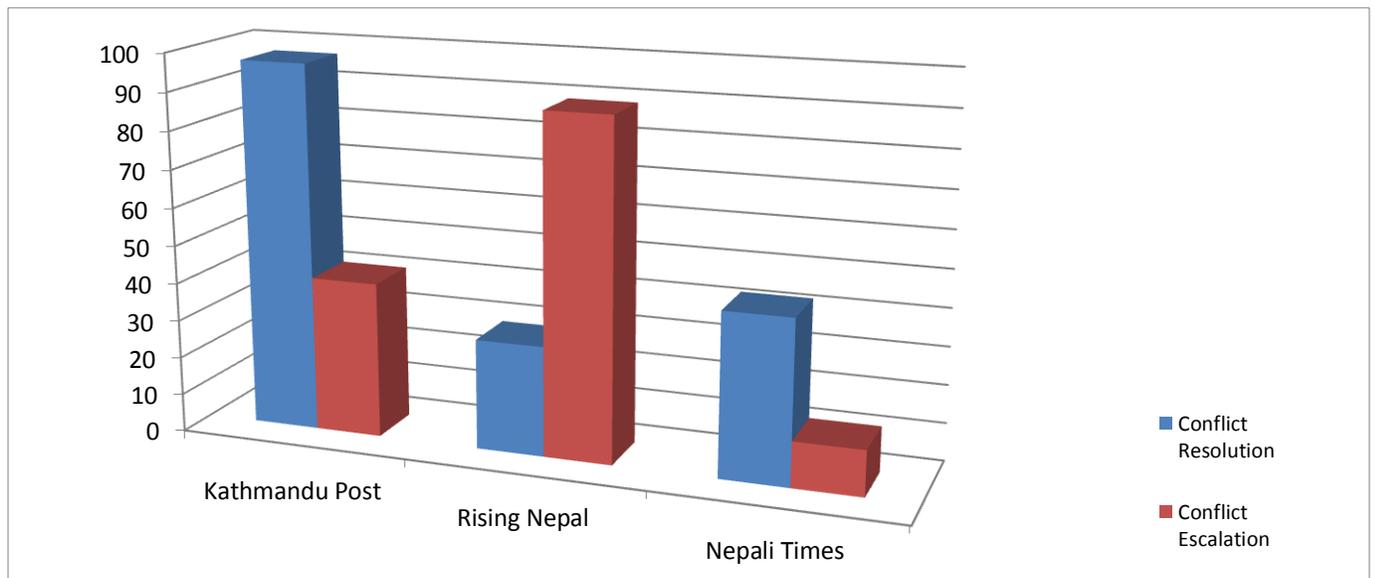
Though, radio, television and the newspapers all played a significant role in the Nepalese conflict, I would like to concentrate on three national dailies for content analysis, given their roles during a crucial stage of the conflict.

Among the dailies published in Nepali language, the Kantipur Daily, along with its sister publication the Kathmandu Post, had the most circulation at 210,000 (Kantipur Publication LTD., 2007). It is one of the most circulated local newspapers published in Nepali language simultaneously from Kathmandu (capital), Bharatpur (west), Biratnagar (east). Kantipur is also the first Nepali daily, published overseas serving the approximate 266,000 Nepali speaking population working in Qatar.

“With its wide presence in the country Kantipur would have a great impact...” states the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ, 2010). The Kantipur circulation figure is believed to be nearly matched by Gorkha Patra; journalists working with the newspaper put the circulation figure around 94,000 in 2005. These national dailies published in Nepali publish in English language as well, although they have much less circulation.

Gorkha Patra's sister publication, the Rising Nepal, is a part of the analysis. The Rising Nepal is selected in order to analyze the difference in the reporting and framing style, as they are closely associated with the government. Despite the fact that 'Gorkha Patra' is the oldest national daily, since 1901, it is taken as a mouthpiece of the government. Lastly, the weekly newspaper 'The Nepali Times' is a part of this study because it is widely circulated among the elites in the capital and read internationally, even though it is not a national daily newspaper.

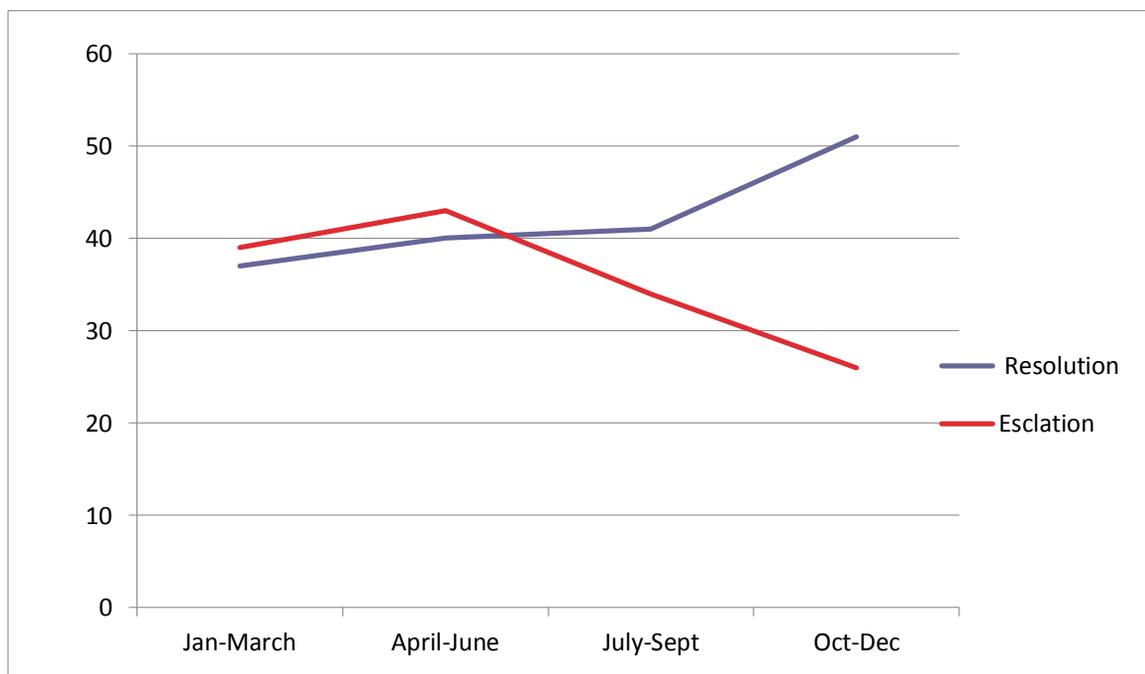
When coding the data, the stories from these newspapers were divided into two categories: those that fostered 'conflict escalation' and those that encouraged 'conflict resolution'. They were evaluated using the 11 indicators of war journalism and 11 indicators of peace journalism discussed above. This study utilized content analysis to code 311 news stories, which revealed the following:



Division of National Newspapers in 2005: Kathmandu Post (Neutral), Nepali Times (Neutral), Rising Nepal (Pro-Government)

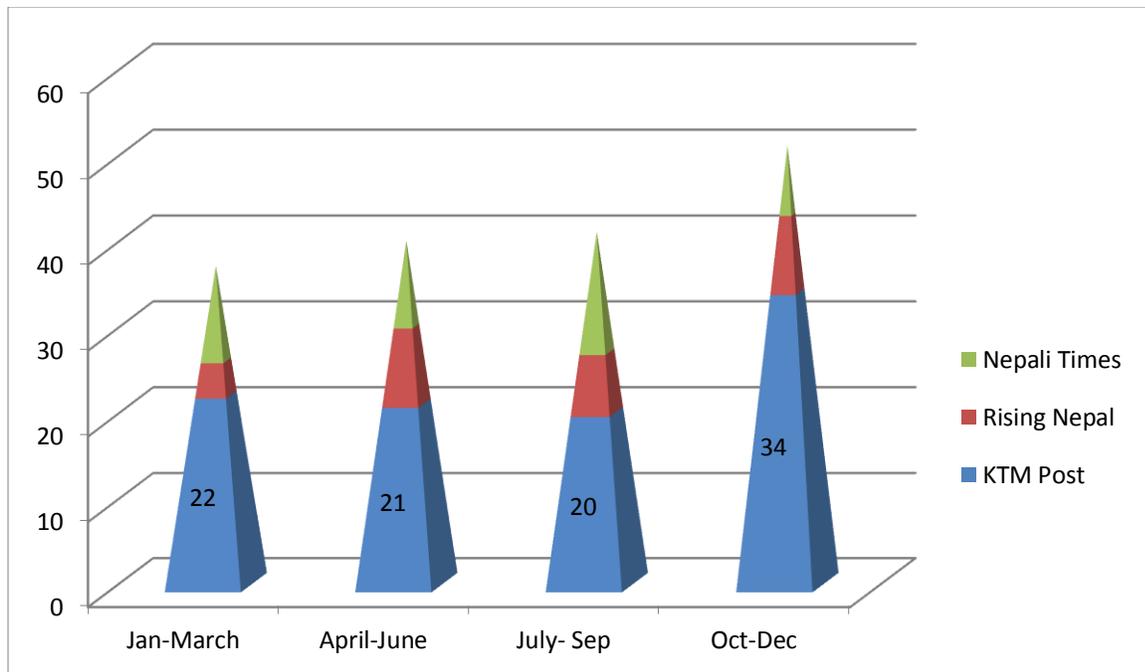
Out of the 311 news stories, 169 were categorized as conflict resolution. But the conflict escalation frame was also strongly reflected in the stories, amounting to 142 of the total. The Kathmandu Post featured more of a conflict resolution approach, while the Rising Nepal had a conflict escalation approach.

The Kathmandu Post had 138 stories published on conflict, of which 97 were news having an approach of conflict resolution, followed by 41 showing a conflict escalation approach. The Rising Nepal, the English news daily close to the government, had the most news published with a conflict escalation frame. Out of 118 reports, 89 were escalating conflict while 29, mostly news opinion, had an approach to conflict resolution. The weekly English newspaper, The Nepali Times, had a promising conflict resolution approach. Out of 55 stories published on conflict, 43 were categorized as having the indicators of conflict resolution, and 17 were conflict escalation category.



Conflict Escalating and De-escalating news published over time, 2005

The timing of the news publications having resolution frames was particularly interesting. The year 2005 was divided into four parts, 3 months each, to see any trends across the published news. Over time, all the newspapers grew increasingly peace oriented, as the number in the conflict resolution category kept on rising, with the Kathmandu Post and Nepali Times doing particularly well. There are no clear events that explain the rise in resolution news. The King dissolved the elected government in February for its inability to establish peace and order. But the King's government could not improve the security situation. The belief that the rebels would be crushed by the King's army turned into a myth by July, which marked six months of the King's direct rule. The Maoists for their part were unsuccessful in maintaining control over any significant areas as well. Since military intervention under the King's command was largely a failure, peace talks became the only alternative. The state of emergency was lifted in April, which the media had actively sought. After this success, journalists found an environment enabling them to act more fearlessly. This could be one of the major reasons that led the independent newspapers to write more on peace. The Rising Nepal, although it published news on growing concerns over peace talks, published much less compared to the other two Newspapers.



Conflict Resolution-Specific News published by News Organization in 2005

Data Analysis:

Newspaper content analysis using Galtung's categories of War and Peace journalism has given insights into the framing approach of the published news. The year 2005 was mostly dominated by news of de-escalation, but closely followed by conflict escalation news. The opinions published in the three newspapers turned in favor of long term peace, and the number of stories, as we see in the chart, emphasizing peace talks and focusing on long term solution to conflict grew. One of the factors influencing the increase in conflict resolution oriented news was the informal talks between the Maoists and the major parties. The newspapers were aware of such initiatives and reported about the possibilities of talks and the impacts these could have. By then the parties were openly criticizing the King's decision of sacking the elected government.

Politicians like the late Garcia Prasad Kerala, the president of the Nepali Congress, in 2005 emphasized that the chances of democratic parties working with the Maoists for democracy and Republic were getting closer day by day.

International pressure was another factor. The United Nations called for an immediate restoration of democracy. UN Security General Kofi Annan in a statement after the royal takeover said “steps should be taken immediately to restore democratic freedoms and institutions” (Human Rights Book 2006). The European Parliament and the US Senate were also against the Royal takeover. All these events for democracy and peaceful resolution of the problem were covered by the newspapers, emphasizing the need for talks. The US, UK and other countries suspended arms assistance after February 1st, which exerted more pressure on the King and helped those who were seeking peaceful resolution through dialogue. The context for peace talks was enhanced by all these factors, which was reflected in the independent newspapers in the news and opinions.

There were, however, a number of escalation-oriented stories published by the government-run Rising Nepal, trying to justify the action of the state, as expected. For instance, the use of word ‘terrorist’ to describe Maoists was a state directive that the newspaper obeyed while publishing news throughout the year.

Unlike Rising Nepal’s stand, the other two independent newspapers chose words carefully and did not tag the parties in the conflict as good or bad. Even though the government declared a state of emergency on February 1, 2005, suspending the freedom of expression to tame journalists, they did not cave in to the state’s demand of labeling Maoists as terrorists and the news on conflict de-escalation did not suffer during that time (February to April). Most of the independent newspapers, including the Kathmandu Post and the Nepali Times, started their

publications after the restoration of democracy in 1990. In fourteen years, the press freedom had already become a norm and there were journalists who felt strongly about it. The newspapers like the Katmandu Post and the Nepali Times could not be forced to take a state line because of the risk of losing their support, which the King was seeking then. The media had broader support from the international community, civil society, and the political parties, which balanced the aggression of the king's government, forcing it to be less adamant on implementing the King's controls.

The state of emergency banned interviews, articles, news, and personal opinions against the spirit of Royal Proclamation 2048. Armed military units were present in every independent media house, prompting a sense of fear and lack of safety. Yet the newspapers published the news with resentment despite government claims that anyone violating the notice would be tried under the publication act. The Kathmandu Post ran an editorial, 'Socks in Society', (February 5), which called on readers to wear clean socks. Probably, there were no editorials of this type that national newspapers had ever published. Some readers took socks as a symbol, but some took it as a satire on the press clampdown. Nepali Times, in its editorial 'Right here, right now' (February 25), bashed both the government and the Maoists for ignoring the public's call for peace.

The emergency was the deciding moment for the independent press to reevaluate and formulate its role for the future. The independent newspapers were publishing opinions and articles of the Maoists and Pro- Maoists and criticizing army and police atrocities and human rights violations through their independent reporting, which the emergency clearly prohibited for three months. After April the press supported the revolution of the political parties and became more critical about the King's Coup. Content analysis shows that the press was already on the track of pro-peace reporting since January. This suggests that it could have started well before 2005, at least

around 2003 to comply with the code of conduct released by Press Council Nepal. But the experience of three months of emergency could well have led the media to be explicitly peace oriented to ensure their own future.

When the democratic government was sacked, and the state of emergency imposed, the clash between the government and the Maoists intensified, pushing the publication of pro-escalation news to a record high in February 2005. Opinions like, 'On the Offensive' (Rising Nepal, February 21), and news like, 'A dozen terrorists killed in clashes with security forces' (Rising Nepal, February 13), 'Maoists shot dead deserter' (February 2) became every day occurrences. Even the Kathmandu post published similar news, 'Four Maoists and two civilians killed' (February 13), "Four rebels, security man killed," (February 15), quoting the Army. But the Rising Nepal always quoted the Army as the only source, while the Kathmandu post verified the clashes and the number of dead through their district based reporters. This is one of the reasons the Kathmandu Post scored on the neutrality aspect of the news, eventually publishing more news on conflict resolution. CPJ criticized these government actions and stated, "The independent press has been effectively shut down with blanket news bans introduced, military patrols placed at media outlets, and reprisals threatened against journalists" (CPJ February 3, 2005). The King declared that, "An independent press serves as the medium of raising the level of democratic consciousness. It plays a crucial role in the promotion of national interest." (Royal Proclamation 2005, February 1). The King, however, sent armed personnel to the media houses the same day. The very next day the editors of most of the national dailies and some weeklies were pressured to support the King's position, which claimed that his interest was the ultimate national interest, and the media was expected not to raise any doubts about it. The editorial published by the Kathmandu Post shows how self censored or censored media was. "As a legal

entity governed by the law of the land, we are not in a position to challenge the government. Nor do we intend to do so during the state of emergency. However, we strongly feel that the government should reconsider certain provisions to live up to the proclamation made by the King, and let media play its role in nurturing democracy. In order to make the press independent, the provision of censorship should be removed, and the right to information restored” (2005, Feb.7). But state media like Radio Nepal, Nepal Television, the Rising Nepal and its sister publication Gorkhapatra was still used more for propaganda after the coup.

During this time, the state kept arresting journalists for the news they wrote and raided FM radio stations for broadcasting news. This action and frequent threats from both Maoists and the Government must have forced self censorship. In April, the state of emergency was lifted, which boosted the morale of journalists to write without fear of reprisals. Pro-peace news publication, as reflected in the chart above, climbed significantly after April. Although violence continued after April, and journalists were arrested or terrorized by both warring parties for not writing news in their interest, we see strong pattern of de-escalation news on the rise.

As discussed above, international pressure, support from political parties, and civil society exerted pressure on the King’s government to lift the emergency. The media, aware of the dwindling international support for the King, started to be strong. It was aware that the King was unpopular in the country. The public lost trust in the King particularly because of his speech on the Royal Massacre of 2001, where he had said that “the explosion of an automatic weapon caused the death of the former King Birendra and eleven other members of the family.” Yet his coronation had taken place in tight security amidst the protest.

On top of these events, the coup added more people who opposed his rule. This led the media to ignore the regime's call and work freely. Other factors like citizens' demand for peace, the visible effects of economic downturn because of strikes, government clampdown on press freedoms all pushed journalists to write for peace, publishing more resolution oriented news. The growing insecurity because of the ongoing clash between the Maoists and the security forces, and the human rights violations from both the factions, was so serious that the citizens were demanding the peaceful resolution of the conflict. The media also carried the concerns of internally displaced people and other citizens rallying for peace. Also, many media programs with human rights activists and civil society members calling for peace made news, giving prominence to the resolution news.

But the real boom on the conflict resolution news publication started in July and continued until December, reaching unexpected heights. The chief factor explaining the trend of pro-resolution news was the September 3rd announcement by the Maoists of a three-month cease fire, sighting that "the Maoist party realized Nepalese desire for peace and a democratic republic movement" (statement by Maoist leader Prachanda, released on September 3). Though he does not clarify how he came to that realization, it could well be that he was convinced by the press which carried the news of citizens displaced by the conflict, and their call for peace talks. He definitely had his own informers, but they too were influenced by the media and its wide reporting on peace.

In addition, during previous peace talks the Maoists already had established working relations with selected journalists and human rights activists who helped them to understand and gauge the public demand for peace. Prachanda might have seen this as an opportunity to create a better image of Maoists in the eyes of national and international observers. The cease fire was the

demand of the seven parties, which was neglected by the government. This development brought the former enemies, the Maoists and the seven parties, to the table where a 12 point understanding was signed on 23rd November. This understanding was welcomed by the European Union, the United Nations, and India instantly, adding more news on the prospect of peace. “UN Security General Kofi Annan, on the same day, welcomed the accord between the seven parties and Maoists aimed at restoring democracy in the Kingdom” (Human Right Book, 2006). The government led by the King not only missed an opportunity for talks, but failed to understand the desire of its citizens for peace. The unilateral cease fire was later extended until January 3rd 2006, but their long wait for the government to reciprocate did not materialize.

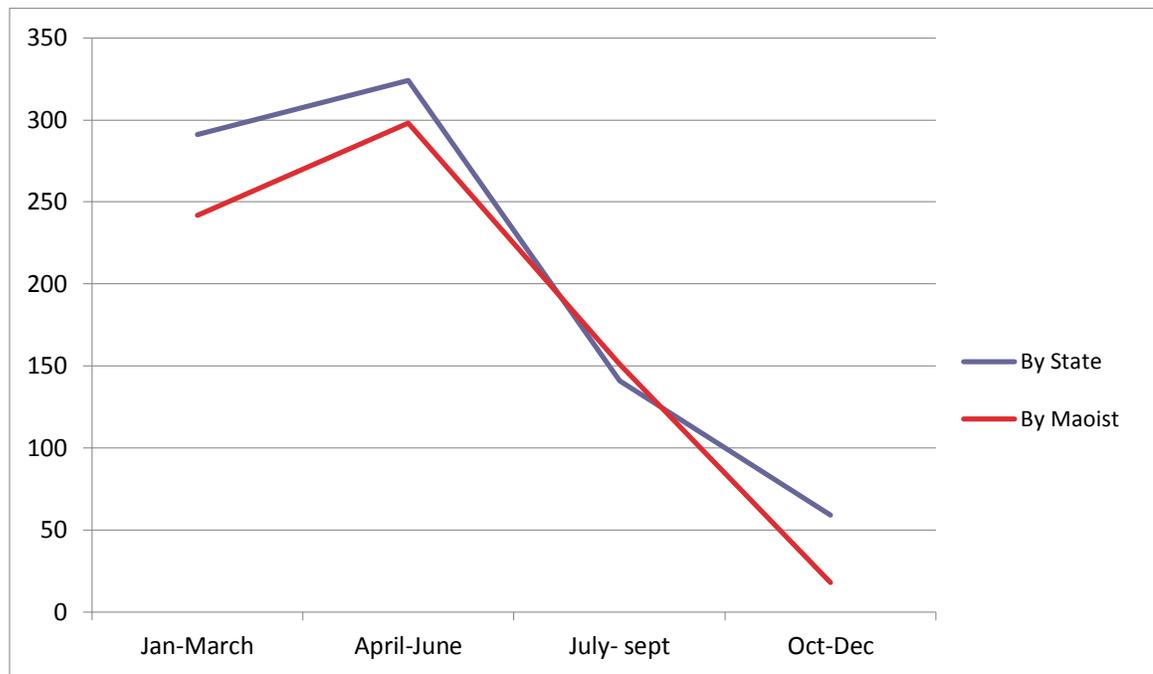
The time frame from July to December saw the most news on conflict resolution and long term peace. By July all the mainstream political party leaders, but not government ministers, were speaking more about effective peace talks. For instance, Kathmandu Post published news on possible mediators titled ‘Bista Rules Out UN, Indian Mediation’ (July 14), quoting Kirtinidhi Bista, a Vice- Chairman of the Council of Ministers, ruling out international mediation at present but accepting UN mediation in future if required. The same news had quotes from Maoist supreme leader Prachanda, and the Nepali Congress President Girija Prasad Koirala reiterating their party stance showing interest in international mediation. The Nepali Times published news like ‘Relief and Respite and Kailali,’ (October 21), describing the budding hope for peace in the conflict-hit district Kailai after the unilateral cease fire by the Maoists. The news describes a shocking multiparty meeting between Maoist local leaders and other parties, where the Maoist leader apologized for the killings, creating a more humane picture of the Maoists. Interestingly, around the same time, the pro-government Rising Nepal published difficult stories without calling the Maoists terrorists. Even Rising Nepal published some news on peace talks, albeit

emphasizing the government position, like: ‘Talks not likely until rebels lay down arms,’ (August 8), quoting minister Tanka Dhakal, which was the first story it published without calling Maoists terrorists. By October, news for extending the cease fire was on the rise and journalists wrote even about Peace Music Concerts that called for peace through songs of peace and national unity.

Journalists kept on following the conflict resolution approach trying to promote peace despite the crackdown. Publication of pro-escalation stories went down significantly after the Maoist cease fire and the subsequent drop in violence and killings. The ceasefire by the Maoists stopped their combat offensive, reducing the amount of clashes between the parties. Though the government did not declare a cease fire, the army was limited to the barracks or city street patrolling. Though some incidents were reported in the news, the ceasefire gave rise to high hopes for peace, which was disseminated through the media.

The role of the media is not only to inform the public on what is happening, but to help them understand why. Content analysis showed that the independent media in Nepal played an active and constructive role throughout the year, letting the public know what happened. By August the independent Media was helping the public understand the ‘Why’ aspect as well. As Howard has pointed out, a major role of media is educating and humanizing the parties, and the media in Nepal did both. On top of that, the newspapers published opinions and interviews from both factions. The people were informed by the media, but they too played an important role as their views were published. The media helped not only to bridge the conflicting parties, but to help them understand their own people better. Citizen rallies for peace were only able to force the conflicting parties to genuinely seek peace talks because the media reported them, which in turn helped other people rally to the cause.

Just as the media had a reciprocal impact on the parties to the conflict, another interesting reciprocal relationship was that the escalation news reporting followed a mirroring trend of people killed during the year. The time frame showing escalation and de-escalation follows almost perfectly the pattern of the chart showing the number of people killed in the conflict. The pattern is stunning because one almost overlaps the other.



Killings by State (815) and Maoist (709) in 2005 (INSEC Human Rights Year Book 2006)

Though we see the clear mirror image between the escalation news and number of people dead in 2005, the resolution news pattern does not compare as closely. The resolution news stands independently, signaling the ‘high road’ that Galtung emphasizes. It is likely that the media influenced the public and probably got influenced by the public peace initiatives and the parties. There are other factors in play like the role of the international community, civil society, and

citizens' demand for peace, as we discussed above. There is a relationship of influence, but the content analysis shows that media had a crucial role in the de-escalation of the conflict.

Content analysis of the three newspapers clearly shows that the independent media was seeking a long term solution to the conflict rather than the 'defeating the terrorists,' approach taken by the state run newspaper. The news published from the independent newspapers scored high on the criteria for peace journalism. They were especially good at avoiding the use of "good and evil" labels. They generally escaped the trap of demonizing one side and making victims of the other, and had a mostly non-partisan approach to the conflict.

One of the weaknesses of the independent newspapers, however, was to publish reactive news stories focusing on the pain and suffering of an individual, unintentionally blaming one side or the other. The intention, however, appears to have tried to show the negative effects of violence, using words like tragic and pathetic, although overall the story would be empathetic and considerate. Unfortunately, these stories could serve one or the other of the parties to justify their counter-violence. Another downside of most of the reporting was its limited number of sources: sometimes just one or even undisclosed. They typically quoted the army, claiming it as an official source, or depended on ordinary people for verifying incidents and the news overall.

Overall, the greatest shortcoming for news and opinions examined in the data set was framing. The framing of the news was poorly constructed, without thought given to the real causes of conflict. Most news stories took it for granted that everyone knew the reason behind the conflict. Importantly, however, news stories with longer length tended to focus on aspects of long-term resolution, trying to clarify the roots of conflict. News reports analyzing specific events had the

added strength of digging into the roots of the conflict, even emphasizing the social and economical aspects rather than just highlighting the ideological clash.

Content analysis also showed that framing was used in editorials and news stories to deconstruct enemy images while trying to convey the peaceful resolution of conflict. Headlines after the ceasefire were framed more for de-escalation. Editorial opinions generally had a trend of acknowledging the common threads between the conflicting parties. Some opinions were trying to portray both the parties as ‘brothers from the same mother’ in conflict, as the Nepali saying goes, implying positive images of ‘us’ as a whole. The use of language was balanced and neutral in stories of independent newspapers, which challenged the dehumanizing framing approach taken by the government-run Rising Nepal and its biased headlines and frequent use of the word ‘terrorists’ for Maoists.

Limitations of the Study:

There are several limitations to this study. It focuses on three newspapers to see patterns in the news published. Even though it minimizes the chances of selection bias by selecting the government run newspaper and the weeklies, which have an elite orientation, this is still a moderate amount of data. It certainly represents the trend, but a larger study including other newspapers, the televisions and the radios, would be helpful. The other drawback was on collection of the news itself. Two of the newspapers, the Nepali Times and the Kathmandu Post, had an archive and the news and other articles were directly accessed, but it is unknown if all the news articles were stored with the original length. The Rising Nepal had no archive of daily news and was collected by scanning all the news published in 2005 page by page.

Analysis:

Despite violence and impunity, if one analyzes the published news of 2005, the most unstable and uncertain time in the conflict, most journalists fulfilled their roles and kept on reporting for peace without losing their sense of responsibility. The journalists who were actively writing for peace and conflict resolution helped to form a national consensus regarding peace and security at a time when violence was the only understood word. Journalists were at first the only functioning communication channel between the Maoists and Democratic Party leaders by conveying both parties' interests, which significantly helped the parties turn to peace talks. Through the media, leaders on both the sides exchanged their opinions and formally or informally interacted with the initiators, building a channel for effective talks. As explained above, some journalists during previous rounds of talks had some relations with the Maoists. Even though the Maoists went underground again, they contacted these trusted journalists for news and information. After the coup, these journalists and human rights activists were used by both the political parties and the government as a channel to prepare for effective talks.

By the time the civil war ended, every citizen probably lost someone close, in the form of freedom fighters, security forces, or an ordinary man caught in a cross-fire. Journalists were the ones who became the voice of these voiceless people, which helped prepare the parties to see the importance of long term peace. This paved the way to the signing of the 12 point peace agreement between the democratic forces and the Maoists .

The impact of newspapers was not limited to the readership. More than 90% of the then functioning radio stations carried an early morning newspaper bulletin disseminating the main

news of the national newspapers to those remote places, indirectly adding the number of people influenced by the national newspapers. The special Report of the International Federation of Journalists on Nepal, 'Kings Coups and Censorship,' notes, "Radio has also made newspapers more accessible to Nepalese through 'what the papers say' segments" (IFJ Report 2005). The trend of inviting local journalists and other influential members of society to the studio or through the telephone to analyze the news published in national dailies helped generate clarity on the issues, even to the large illiterate population.

From this case study, we see that the inclination of news focusing on violence and on the resolution aspect of the conflict significantly improved with time. The two independent newspapers, as the data supports, are more objective in writing about conflict, while the Rising Nepal certainly needs to revise its angle on handling the conflict news as a whole. Galtung's categorization helps diagnose this and proposes a balanced approach on reporting violent conflict.

As explained by Pruitt and Kim, the escalation and de-escalation model was reflected in the context of Nepal's conflict. The newspapers' reporting pattern was directly replicating the violent deaths pattern between February and April 2005. After the conflict de-escalated, newspapers had less escalating news, as we see in the chart above. The Nepal army reacted with more violence when it felt the Maoists were taking over, and so did the Maoists, contending and defending each others' interests and/or positions, further escalating the conflict into a 'conflict spiral'. When both Maoists and the Army involved themselves in the circle of action and reaction, the newspapers reported more escalating news. But thereafter we see a strong de-escalating news pattern, following the trend of reporting more resolution news as reflected in the

chart. When the conflict escalated, the indicators of escalation were present in the news, but the indicators of resolution were sufficiently active to reframe the conflict to support peace talks.

Reframing is crucial to deconstruct an enemy image. As enemy images are viral on the news and editorials, intentionally or unintentionally, they can be replaced with friendly images through reframing. The enemy images of government and the Maoists were the result of the extreme polarization between the two and their supporters and even the public. The word terrorist had such a negative impact that the journalists from the two independent newspapers never used it, instead calling them 'Maoists', 'insurgents', and even 'rebels,' the way that peace journalism suggests. The newspapers also avoided the language pattern chosen by the rebels, and found a middle ground to report the news.

The process of changing the enemy image into a friendly image is not easy, but the independent newspapers' reluctance of using government and Maoist language balanced the news and was useful in humanizing both the armies' and rebels' perceptions of each other. Because of the decade long conflict, it took a long time for the newspapers to deconstruct the enemy images and raise the bar for both warring parties. The independent newspapers avoided disseminating group stereotypes, such that this balanced view helped deconstruct the images and the stereotypes dispersed by government and Maoists statements.

As discussed above, if framing can be used in constructing enemy images, it can also be used for deconstructing them as well. In the case of Nepal we saw that framing worked as a powerful tool as newspapers used it to further their concerns on peace, emphasizing common ground where both parties can stand together to build a peaceful Nepal.

The independent newspapers, through their reports and analysis, provided some reality to the issues behind the conflict, ultimately challenging the notion of “good and bad” to deconstruct enemy images. Newspapers used framing as a strategy for the cause of peace by bridging the conflicting parties, and ultimately helping them understand the conflict. Like Tankard emphasized, framing is like a magician’s swift hand, because it takes place without readers realizing that it occurs. The images of hatred and the terrorist tags, mostly disseminated by the escalation approach, were balanced by images of all parties being integral parts of society as a whole, laying emphasis on the conflict resolution approach.

The newspapers role in helping de-escalate the conflict through framing was particularly evident after the unilateral ceasefire by the Maoists. As Howard pointed out, as in the case of Nepal, the newspapers had a role in educating and humanizing both the parties and in helping to identify the underlying issues. Overall, journalism in Nepal during 2005 was more inclined towards reducing tensions between the conflicting parties through reframing the conflict, as prescribed by conflict resolution journalism.

Conclusion:

Content analysis reveals that the press in Nepal took the ‘high road’ in its coverage of conflict in 2005, based on Galtung’s categories of Peace and War journalism. The newspapers tried to form a consensus for peace. Though the government mouthpiece, the Rising Nepal, did not help the cause, we saw that the two independent newspapers were overall peace oriented. This was true throughout the April revolution that established the republic in Nepal, as well as despite the frequent arrests of journalists and infamous raids on FM radio stations. Even though the state of

emergency in February 2005 tried to limit the freedom of expression, the conflict de-escalation pattern that we see throughout the year was not much affected. As discussed above, international actors, political parties, and civil society exerted pressure on the King's government to lift the emergency within three months. In a year-long content analysis, the Rising Nepal had some strong signs of escalation in the months of February and March 2005 because of government propaganda, but the independent newspapers' de-escalation pattern was largely untouched, as it kept moving toward greater de-escalation. The threat was the same, if not higher, from the Maoists too, but the newspapers kept on scoring high on the de-escalation scale.

The Nepal Press Council (NPC), with the consent of the journalist umbrella organization Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), published a code of conduct in 2003 which, had it been better publicized, could have provided guideline principles for conflict resolution journalism for many, as it clearly emphasizes that the role of journalists is to enhance peace. Pages 17-23 clarify the duty of journalists and media houses, emphasizing that the job is to, "Enhance protection and promotion of democracy, justice, equality, humanitarianism, peace...." Further emphasizing the expectations from journalists, it clearly states "not to present any news, opinion, picture, opinion survey, sound or scene in such a manner as to encourage destructive activity, violence, terrorism and crime, or exaggerate such activity". Overall it promotes Article 16 of the 1990 Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal that guarantees the right to information, which states, "Every citizen shall have the right to demand and receive information on any matter of public importance."

To promote peace in a time of war is certainly challenging, but content analysis shows that conflict resolution journalism continued to rise even during a hostile setting. This is a strong sign that conflict resolution journalism can play a significant role and has a promising future in

helping to deescalate conflict. We cannot, however, say it was the only driving force that helped the de-escalation process leading to successful peace talks. Nonetheless, the continuous media efforts for peace must have helped people understand the roots of conflict better, and must have pressed the parties to seek peace talks. International pressure, civil society efforts, elite concern, people's participation in peace rallies are other factors that supported de-escalation, but all of these were constantly influenced by the media. The media also covered these other activities, which further emphasized the view that there was no other option than talks. This helped the independent media to 'provide reliable information with diverse views,' turning it into the instrument of conflict resolution Howard described.

Because the analysis concentrates on a short time period and takes into account only a few newspapers, these conclusions are not conclusive. But the strong data trend supporting the growing use of balanced, neutral, and solution-oriented journalism is a very hopeful sign. Slowly but effectively, the dream of reconciliation and peace became a reality.

More research is required on how media content can shape minds to change from violence to peace over the long term, and is strongly recommended for future inquiry.

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