

CONFLICT AND PEACE FORUMS

A practical checklist for the ethical reporting of conflicts in the
21st Century, produced by journalists, for journalists BY JAKE LYNCH

REPORTING THE world



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academic rigour and
journalistic experience...**

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REPORTING THE World



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Reporting the World is a service for journalists striving to uphold values of balance, fairness and responsibility in their coverage of international affairs. More than two hundred editors, writers, producers and reporters have joined interested professionals from other related fields, to discuss how news can best inform and orientate readers and audiences in today's increasingly interdependent world.

In a series of evening seminars at the Freedom Forum European Centre in London, participants have examined the reporting of conflicts involving Israel and the Palestinians ('Seminar One'); Macedonia ('Seminar Two'); Africa ('Seminar Three'), with particular reference to the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Iraq ('Seminar Four') and Indonesia ('Seminar Five').

Senior journalists, analysts and news decision-makers gathered at Taplow Court, Bucks, for a three-day Round Table, to formulate a broad-based agenda for reform in news, aimed at helping journalists to apply the best of traditional ethics and values to their work in a modern setting.

This document

This publication represents a distillation of the main themes in the discussions. Quotes from journalists are drawn from transcripts of proceedings at the seminars and Round Table. Full versions can be found on the website, along with perspectives from individual participants; the names of speakers; summaries of the issues raised; video clips from some of the seminars, an on-line discussion and links to related articles and sites.

Section One, International News after '9-11', is an introduction to the main concepts of Reporting the World, interpreted in and for the changed situation after the attack on America.

Section Two, The role and responsibilities of the journalist covering conflict, is based on discussions at the seminars and Round Table. It also gives a concise guide to the principles of Conflict Analysis, in a form useful for journalists.

Section Three, Practical and ethical implications of the checklist points, examines the four key questions - proposed here as a basis for the ethical reporting of conflicts - in the context of important stories on the international news agenda.

Section Four, Before and After, is a set of reports, prepared as for a London-based broadsheet newspaper on major developments in one or other of these stories. In each case the same episode is reported in two different ways, to show how applying the checklist points can affect the finished piece.

Section Five, Reporting the World and the reform agenda in news, links this exercise with a broad reform agenda, integrating journalistic ethics and the public interest. ■

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A FOUR-POINT ETHICAL CHECKLIST FOR INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Reporting the World has highlighted several important practical questions – questions about what to cover, and how to cover it, which recur in any discussion of the ethics of international news in general, and the reporting of conflicts in particular.



The purpose here is to propose a 'checklist' of points under four main headings, arising from the series of seminars and the Round Table and drawing on the insights of Conflict Analysis.

These are for journalists to consider whenever they commission, edit, produce or write a story about conflict, in order to help them think through and engage with the ethical implications of their work.

How is violence explained?

- How does the explanation arise from the way violence is reported?
- Is a report confined to a classic 'blow-by-blow' account of direct violence?
- Or does it also show the impact of structural and cultural violence on the lives of people involved?
- Does it illuminate the intelligible - if dysfunctional - processes which may be creating the conditions for violence?
- What are we led or left to infer about what should, or is likely to happen next?

What is the shape of the conflict?

- Is the conflict framed as a 'tug-of-war' – a zero-sum game of two parties contesting a single goal, so whatever one side wins, the other side loses?
- Or as a 'cat's-cradle' – a pattern of many interdependent parties, with needs and interests which may overlap, or provide scope for integrated solutions?

Is there any news of any efforts or ideas to resolve the conflict?

- Is there anything in the report about peace plans, alternative ideas or any image of a solution?
- Must these aspects of a story wait until leaders cut a 'deal'?
- Do reports of any deal help readers or audiences to assess whether it is likely to tackle the causes of violence?
- Do we see any news of anyone else, besides leaders and their officials, working to resolve or transform the conflict?

What is 'our' role in this story?

- Is the underlying or implicit message that 'these people will not be OK until our (benign) intervention, now in prospect'?
- Or does the report suggest that 'they would be OK, but for our record of (malign) intervention'?
- Is there anything in the reporting about interventions already underway, albeit perhaps undeclared?
- Is there any examination of the influence of previous or prospective interventions on people's behaviour?
- Does it equip us to assess whether more, or less intervention might represent a solution, or to discriminate between different kinds of intervention?

The checklist offers clear and specific criteria for assessing international news.

It is intended to fortify reporters, producers and editors alike in overcoming self-censorship and the constraints of consensus and inertia, in favour of thinking through

stories for themselves from a reliable set of 'first principles'.

It also addresses the need to promote journalists' own emotional self-knowledge and psychological well-being, especially when covering conflicts, if they are to continue to perform this service effectively (*see section 5.1 below*).

The checklist offers clear and specific criteria for assessing international news.

1. INTERNATIONAL NEWS AFTER '9/11'

This publication was just being finalised when international news was convulsed by shock waves from the attack on America on September 11, 2001.

Many of the main recurrent questions acquired a fresh and urgent relevancy in reporting the attack, its aftermath and the beginning of the 'war on terrorism'.

This huge story also provided an early test of the RtW Ethical checklist.

This section is a personal view, drawing on the concepts discussed in the Seminars and Round Table, considering:

- *The importance of news organisations committing to proper ethical reporting of significant global developments;*
- *The influence news may exert on those developments, how it works, and the responsibility this may bring to the journalist;*
- *The four checklist points, in turn, as applied to the story of '9/11' and subsequent developments.*

The case is made that these describe the real choices facing the journalist – choices that cannot be dispelled or obscured by the notion of 'objectivity' or claims that journalists 'just report the facts'.

The news is always already involved, it is argued, as a factor in calculations influencing the behaviour of parties to a conflict, whether its practitioners welcome it or not. The choices are about the ethics of that involvement.

It became an instant cliché in reporting the attack on America to declare that the world would never be the same again.

Perhaps some of this was wishful thinking. Many journalists committed to serious international news had come to feel under siege, their trade constantly having to be justified and defended against a rising tide of celebrity gossip, the 'animal du jour', news-lite and news-you-can-use.

It was, after all, no accident, but rather part of the sinister calculus behind the cataclysm, that it should strike at the heart of the world's media capital. The daily battle to define the news agenda is waged in towers just a couple of miles uptown from the stricken skyscrapers of Ground Zero.

Now, many who had urged the industry to carry on offering a strong international news service, to guide and orientate the public in an increasingly interdependent world, felt vindicated.

About a month on from 9/11, as the initial numbness began to recede, New Yorkers were treated to a robust debate about the role and responsibility of the media. *New York Magazine* looked at "some hard reasons why we missed the biggest global story of our time". Media writer Michael Wolff focussed on

Globalvision, squeezed in to a tiny Broadway office within touching distance of the Times Square behemoths - News Corp, CBS, Disney, General Electric and AOL Time Warner.

It turned out that this tiny production house, specialising in international human rights issues, does, despite appearances, belong

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in a city of superlatives: the same people brought you www.mediachannel.org - the world's most visited media analysis website, with a global reach. But Globalvision, with its serious-minded international agenda, had had to hold out against the zeitgeist. As Wolff commented, "you could hardly have designed, pre-September 11, a less promising media concept".

Now, it appeared that Globalvision's founders were right all along and "everyone else was wrong". Americans had spent the 90s being lulled by their increasingly parochial media into a false sense of security. Newsdesks casting around for reporters to dispatch to the frontline found many had "never travelled except on vacation"; among those sent to Islamabad was "NBC's diet-and-wellness reporter, Dr Bob Arnot".

At stake was the collective understanding of the context for 9/11. Without a solid and consistent foundation of international coverage in mainstream news, Wolff wrote, "This story had dropped into our laps, and almost nothing in it made any sense..."

"Our very notionlessness, our cultural remoteness, has become the story line", Wolff continued. "This shadow enemy. The impossibility of knowing where to attack, or of finding the money, or of identifying the perps. Knowing almost nothing, we've settled for identifying the villain as some pure spasm of all-powerful, far-reaching apocalyptic irrationality".

Why?

Journalists told us who, what, where, when and how, all at great length. What about why?

The writer, James W Carey, once complained that the question, 'why' is "the Dark Continent of American journalism". There was now a belated rush to illuminate this half-forgotten territory. *Newsweek's* front

cover, for the edition dated October 15, promised to answer the question, "why they hate us".

Inside, international editor Fareed Zakaria contributed a hefty piece examining "the roots of rage". This covered the chequered past of US intervention in the Middle East as well as the Arab world's home-grown political stagnation.

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Time magazine commissioned a 'Viewpoint' from Hazem Saghiyeh, lamenting "the bias shown by the US to Israel and America's cruel insistence on continued sanctions against Iraq.

"Plus, for historical reasons, Muslims and Arabs can always feel bitterness towards America" for installing and propping up the Shah in Iran, he wrote, and for leaving Afghanistan in such a mess after helping the Mujahideen win what turned out to be the decisive battle of the Cold War.

But Saghiyeh, a columnist for the London-based Arabic newspaper, *al-Hayat*, also blamed the failures of both political and religious reform movements within Islamic societies for perpetuating their impotence and subjugation.

Both were attempts to project a sophisticated, multi-faceted explanation for the attack of 9/11, challenging the "notionlessness" Wolff diagnosed and the explanation for violence as autistic – irrational and apocalyptic.

Time urged an understanding that Osama bin Laden, the chief suspect, had "a well-articulated plan of action" to expel the US from the Islamic world. Far from being "shadowy" – another cliché often attached to accounts of terrorists – he had set out this strategy many times. The problem had been that so few were prepared to listen, or to analyse the processes contributing to a context in which such a strategy might be assessed as feasible.

The backlash

Asking 'why' invited resistance and disapproval.

This tendency to self-examination did not sit well with everyone. As the two newsweeklies hit the streets, The New York Post, in its lead editorial on October 9, attacked them for indulging in "Dubiously Deep Thoughts".

The paper chided "talking heads" busy looking for "root causes... How they so miss the point. And at America's peril". The right response, the editorial continued, when someone asks "why bloody-handed killers like Osama bin Laden hate America, is: 'Who cares?'

"...There's no explanation needed – or possible – as to why 'holy warriors' are out to destroy Western civilization. Suffice to know that they are. And that they must be stopped.

"Rather than ask – corrosively – why they hate us, it might be better to think about how they came to believe they could get away with their acts of savagery. Part of that answer, at least, lies in the very self-doubt and hesitating nature of the West that is so exposed by searches for 'understanding'".

These exchanges will carry an insistent resonance for participants in Reporting the World. What is striking is the unifying theme – that there is a larger ethical dimension to the way a conflict is reported, some sense of responsibility for its possible influence over the course of events. What is contested is the nature of that influence and how it works.

Over at the UN, Media Peace Institute director, Keith Spicer contributed a critique of 'Americentricity' in the news industry ('Did shallow US media help bin Laden?'). "Relentless parochialism" and the "shrinking of deep coverage" had played a part in "intellectually

disarming America" and was "suicidal" for a superpower, he continued: "the political equivalent of a dazed and panic-prone elephant".

And Andrew Stephen, US correspondent of the New Statesman, connected the decline in serious international coverage served up to most Americans with a decline in America's institutional interest and competency in foreign – as opposed to military – affairs: "By giving foreign policy and foreign relations a lower and lower priority... the US is learning the price of its hubristic isolationism".

Pictures of crises afflicting distant countries were kept off prime-time news bulletins because advertisers didn't like them: "The result of this insularity is that foreign policy decisions are often made for reasons purely of domestic politics".

Over there & over here

Are British journalists, readers and audiences any better off?

Stephen was one of several commentators to emphasise the difference between mass media on either side of the Atlantic. Large numbers of Britons still get a far fuller picture of world affairs than many Americans. The avid UK consumption of national newspapers and thriving culture of public service broadcasting are two significant distinctions from the media environment criticised by Spicer as 'Americentric'.

But Reporting the World (RtW) discussions revealed an awareness among many British journalists that the difference may be more accurately characterised as one of degree than one of kind.

One senior editor, on the foreign pages of a London broadsheet newspaper renowned for its international coverage, recalled an occasion when a specially commissioned piece about the literacy

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crisis in sub-Saharan Africa found itself in competition for space with news of the Cruise-Kidman divorce case.

“You feel you’re going against the grain of the culture”, she complained, in advocating the kind of in-depth coverage that was her stock-in-trade - this despite the fact that such reporting regularly drew a full postbag as evidence of the appreciation by at least some readers for hers and similar efforts.

A similar quandary was evident in testimony to RtW gatherings by senior BBC executives. One, deputy director of news, Mark Damazer, defended the corporation’s continuing commitment to engage with the complexities of international conflicts – but cautioned that such efforts had to compete, within bulletins, with sports and domestic politics, and, between channels, with rival news offerings that had moved significantly ‘down-market’.

Another, world news editor Jonathan Baker, shared the results of focus group research showing that viewers who, when polled on their favoured categories of news, relegate ‘foreign’ stories to last place in a given list of preferences, then in practice invariably vote the overseas items the most memorable and striking, once they have actually sat down and watched them.

The purpose of Reporting the World

The job of unravelling these strands is central to the purpose of Reporting the World.

The abstract preferences of potential audiences, as detected by market research techniques, may not spring from the experience of watching news itself. Build a news agenda around them and you can

end up with diet-and-wellness reporters prevailing over serious international coverage; celebrity divorces knocking out the crucial development and security issues of the coming century. They represent too blunt an instrument, in other words, to pick up the second part of the BBC’s focus group findings or the depth of appreciation that prompts letters to an editor.

Getting specific

Moving beyond vague value judgements

This assessment of the debate over news content, post-9/11, has been liberally and deliberately sprinkled with the rather vague value-judgements characteristic of such discussions.

The prime purpose of RtW has been to help us to be much more specific. If ‘serious’ or ‘deep’ coverage, giving a ‘full picture’ and conveying ‘complexities’ has to be defended, it must be important to seek some sharper definitions; to be able to close our fist over precisely what there is to defend.

This process, and this report, together represent the fruits of efforts by a large group of conscientious professionals to arrive at practical definitions of the ethical questions involved in covering international news in a modern setting. ‘Ethical’ because they are based on an honest engagement with the influence news may exert on the course of events, and with the responsibility that may bring for the journalist. ‘Practical’ because they are derived from an important shared resource – journalists’ collective experience of covering recent major stories on the international news agenda.

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Media strategy

Parties to conflicts base their actions partly on calculations about how they will be reported.

The exchanges quoted here, over the responsibilities of the media, reached readers just as the US bombing of Afghanistan got underway; whereupon the focus abruptly shifted to a debate about whether this would likely prove an appropriate and effective response to the attack on America.

It is a condition of modernity that the authors of such a policy – as with any policy pursued by any government – base their actions partly on a media strategy. The appointment of a senior advertising executive, Charlotte Beers, as US Under-Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy, to coordinate contacts between government and media, testified to the importance of the message.

After the Kosovo crisis, then Downing Street Press Secretary Alastair Campbell gave a lecture in London to the Royal United Services Institute where he characterised the task of public diplomacy during wartime as a daily challenge to “hold the public’s interest on our terms... the only battle Nato might lose was the battle for hearts and minds”.

General Michael Short, the US Air Force commander in charge of daily deployments during Operation Allied Force, spoke afterwards about the frustrations of having to plan combat missions to match the Alliance media strategy – to supply spokesmen with convincing answers to give to reporters pressing for evidence that the bombing was having any appreciable effect on what Nato called “the fielded forces in Kosovo”.

(Tim Ripley, of *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, wrote in the NUJ magazine, *The Journalist*, in June 1999, about similar frustrations on the part of

British military planners in having their operational decisions suborned, as they saw it, to the imperatives of presentational stratagems).

“I don’t wish to be impertinent”, Short told reporter Allan Little, in a memorable interview for a BBC *Panorama* special, *Moral Combat*, “but I don’t think most of our civilian leadership really understands air power”. Experts would not consider bombing from 15,000 feet a suitable tactic, the General explained, for tackling ground forces holding territory.

Despite the best efforts of his aircrews, therefore, “the Serbs dictated the battle rhythm”, continuing to attack villages at will, and the Yugoslav Third Army eventually rolled out of the province with most of its ordnance conspicuously intact. It was political pressure that caused the bombing to be misdirected, in his view, at elusive tanks and troops far below.

Short was an advocate of concentrating, instead, on economic targets. Early in the campaign, briefing journalists from Aviano airbase in Italy, the General gave his prescription for victory explicitly in terms of bringing home to civilians the consequences of war: “I think, no more power to your refrigerator... the bridge where you stood with targets on your head, that needs to disappear at three in the morning”.

At one stage the tactics did switch in accordance with his advice. In late April, Pentagon sources were candid that bombing power stations was calculated to induce civilians to rise up against the regime of President Slobodan Milosevic. Spokesman Kenneth Bacon told reporters: “This is a different class of target... we think the Serbs should put pressure on their leadership to end this”.

But Nato media strategists began to connect reports of civilian hardships and casualties with what had by then set in as a gradual

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decline in public support – hovering just above fifty percent, as an average across the Alliance countries, by the time a UN Security Council resolution marked the end of bombing after 78 days. Campbell concluded that losing this battle for public opinion “would have meant Nato ending and losing the war”.

The destruction of Yugoslav infrastructure continued, albeit alongside the highly publicised targeting of ground forces. The former was intended to be effective; by the end many journalists - including many who supported the war and its aims - suspected that the latter was being carried out at least partly to create facts to be reported to the public in Nato member states, in order to supplement the unpalatable taste of the real bombing strategy.

Timothy Garton Ash, in an assessment for the *New York Review of Books* in September, 2000, identified “two parallel, but largely separate campaigns: the tactical one, aimed at preventing Serbian forces in Kosovo from doing further harm to the Albanians” - though this had proved impossible while restricting tactics to high-level bombardment - “and the strategic one, aimed at Serbia proper, which Nato won”.

Hostilities had ended when the attacks on power stations were stepped up, from the graphite bombs of April, aimed at disrupting supplies, to high explosives which actually demolished Belgrade’s electrical grid. “This damaged Milosevic’s command and control system and the morale of his population”, Garton Ash continued. “It also meant that patients on life-support systems and babies in hospital incubators had their power cut off”.

Yugoslavia’s foreign minister told Balkans specialist Tim Judah, for his instant account, *Kosovo – War and Revenge*, that it was this, rather

than any degradation of the armed forces themselves, that prompted his country to accede to the terms drawn up by Nato and Russia.

The Feedback Loop

Journalists’ responses influence the future behaviour of parties to conflict.

There is no lament here for a golden age of straightforwardness. To observe that policies come with a built-in media strategy need not be pejorative. But it does present an ethical dilemma. The traditional definition of a journalist’s job is “I just report the facts”. Today, experience at the ‘newsface’ suggests that many actors in news stories – not just government spin-doctors or military alliances – adapt their behaviour in order to provide facts for journalists to report. A calculation, about the way it will be reported, may affect not just the presentation of a policy but the *policy itself* – the root of Short’s complaint that operational decisions were being second-guessed.

The only possible basis for such a calculation is experience of previous reporting – as participants, readers, listeners or viewers. Every time a reporter reports the facts, it adds another layer to the collective understanding of how reporters are likely to report similar facts in future. That understanding in turn feeds in to the actions of parties to a conflict, concerned to hold the public’s interest on their own terms and prepared to calibrate their policies in order to do so.

RtW participants discussed this phenomenon as the Feedback Loop – a way of modelling the cumulative influence of news on the course of events.

There is no real way of separating out media strategy, and

Every time a reporter reports the facts, it adds another layer to the collective understanding of how reporters are likely to report similar facts in future.

measuring the extent of its influence as a factor affecting the behaviour of parties to a conflict at any given time, any more than you can retrieve a single colour from a tin of mixed paints. It does mean that each individual journalist carries, at any moment, an unknowable share of the responsibility for what happens next.

Objectivity

Can journalists take responsibility for the consequences of their journalism?

Reporting the World participants discussed the Feedback Loop in light of the journalistic concept of objectivity. Paul Taylor, then Diplomatic Editor of Reuters News, said: “Objectivity is not a state, is it, it’s a goal, a process, a daily dialectic - and we’re constantly debating it, as we should be, all of us”.

The political and media commentator Michael Kinsley contributed a column to the *Washington Post*, in November, 2001, in which he noted wryly that conservative press critics in the United States, who usually berate journalists for bias, were now upbraiding them for their objectivity.

He defined the ‘big O’ as “an effort to report the facts without developing – or at least revealing – an opinion about them”. Critics on the Right wanted reporters to be ‘patriotic’ instead of ‘neutral’ – “they jump on any suggestion that a journalistic outlet or individual journalist might be reluctant to express or act on an opinion. The opinion is that bin Laden is evil and that at least the broad outlines of the US

campaign against him are wise beyond dispute”.

The problem, Kinsley continued, was that conservative critics clung to “simple-minded notions about objectivity and bias”. Instead, he urged a more sophisticated understanding that “the difference between fact and opinion is not a bright line: it is a spectrum”.

The Feedback Loop suggests that there is no effective choice, for journalists, between involvement in a story and “just reporting the facts”. News as a process is always already involved in the facts it reports, whether or not practitioners seek or welcome it.

The effective choices are about which facts to include in reports of conflict, and how to put them into context. Perhaps the central issue, in considering the ethics of international news, is whether journalists can build into the processes of commissioning, newsgathering, reporting, editing and production, some responsibility for the influence their choices exert on subsequent developments.

This question immediately begs another – what can we ascertain in advance, or reliably predict, about the nature of that influence? It follows that, in covering conflicts, journalists seeking to apply ethical values to their work could benefit from studying the dynamics of conflict itself.

The ethical checklist proposed here arose out of discussions informed by insights from Conflict Analysis, an academic discipline and body of fieldwork methods developed over the past fifty years, considered as a way of pursuing this crucial question. ■

... each individual journalist carries, at any moment, an unknowable share of the responsibility for what happens next.

Reporting the World checklist points after '9/11'

Explaining violence

How does the explanation arise from the way violence is reported?

The feedback loop sharpens the ethical implications of one of the RtW checklist points in particular – the explanation for violence and how it arises out of the choices journalists make in framing a story about conflict.

If, as is often the case, a policy is being put forward as a solution, then calculations about its likely reception in news reports will be conditioned by the diagnosis, in those same reports, of the nature of the problem. A “pure spasm of apocalyptic irrationality” is one way to diagnose the attack of 9/11; but not the only way.

One alternative, underlying the treatment offered by *Time* magazine, among others, was to see the attack as part of “a well-articulated plan of action”, a coherent strategy to expel the US from the Islamic world.

It invites consideration of the political conditions in that world and how the suicide hijackings, including the response the perpetrators sought to induce, were intended to influence those conditions. If the state of public opinion in Arab countries is reported as part of the problem, then it enters the Feedback Loop as an incentive to take this into account, in presenting but also in setting and implementing any policy put forward as a solution.

Afghan politics also entered the frame, especially as the United Front/Northern Alliance swept the Taliban from the board. At the time of writing it was not clear how political arrangements would turn out, but the downside risk was a revival of the anarchic warlordism that prevailed before the Taliban.

A surface narrative

Does abbreviated coverage of conflicts encourage a superficial response by policy-makers?

The shrinking of deep coverage, lamented by Keith Spicer, intensifies the focus on surface events at the expense of underlying processes.

A fascinating example occurred earlier in 2001. The destruction by the Taliban of antiquities including the Bamiyan statues - huge Buddhist images carved into a cliff-face, nearly two thousand years old - provided spectacular pictures and received widespread coverage, prompting an offer by New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art to save them at its own expense.

At the same time a catastrophic famine was exerting its grip, with refugee camps, run by international aid agencies based across town from the ‘Met’, so poorly funded and ill-equipped that a group of 150 displaced Afghans had frozen to death under canvas - but readers and audiences would have had to be attentive indeed to have picked up any mention of this tragedy.

Which was the more important story? Which more indicative of the dangers posed to the world by having a country – Afghanistan – reduced to its condition of 2001? It did not, after all, require a fanatical theocracy to take charge for bin Laden to gain a foothold – he arrived as the United Front/Northern Alliance government was dissolving in internecine fighting over Kabul, before the Taliban seized power.

Insecurity over basic needs, having enough to eat or shelter to keep warm, or being safe in one's own home, drives poor people all over the world into the arms of ‘strongmen’ or ‘warlords’, especially if state authorities are so weak as to be unable or unwilling to control private armies. In the case of bin Laden, of course, the Taliban went so far as to make an ally of him in the struggle to cling to power.

These are the important factors in Conflict Analysis. Diagnose these

... it enters the Feedback Loop as an incentive to take this into account, in presenting but also in setting and implementing any policy put forward as a solution.

underlying *development* issues as part of the problem and they enter the Feedback Loop as a factor in calculating the likely reception for any proposed response. To concentrate, instead, on surface events is to incentivise intervening parties to devise remedies for the symptoms, not the cause.

This is one way of considering the issues at stake in a concept well known to journalists – the importance of context. There is, in other words, a specific ethical dimension to ‘Americentricity’ or ‘parochialism’ in media, insofar as they cut down the space or airtime available for reporting conflicts with sufficient context to illuminate underlying processes.

Shape of the conflict

What was the wider political background to ‘9/11’?

Bin Laden, in his own pronouncements, was quick to exploit obvious grievances over the treatment meted out to Iraqis and Palestinians in what many Arabs now resent as a US-sponsored order in the Middle East. Peter Beaumont, writing in the *Observer*, picked up a survey of students at Bir Zeit University suggesting that as many as 26 percent thought the suicide hijackings consistent with the principles of Islam.

Journalists committed to the region had long foreseen trouble arising out of these unresolved conflicts. Roger Hardy, Middle East analyst for BBC World Service, told RTW Seminar Four, on coverage of the conflict with Iraq:

“Ten or eleven years ago the US was riding high in the Middle East. It didn’t mean that the people in the Middle East loved the US but they were in awe; they were afraid of the US and they believed, with some justice, that pax Americana had arrived, that it wasn’t just Iraq, that it would move on to a peace process and a general US hegemony. This

was not a foolish assumption at that time.

“Compare that to the situation today - where is the pax Americana? The US is still the big superpower but there is no pax Americana and the two big failures are – one - the Intifada and - two - Iraqi sanctions”.

Conflict arena vs conflict formation

Can a conflict be understood by concentrating on ‘foreground’?

One major insight of Conflict Analysis is a typology of violence – direct violence being one manifestation, structural and cultural violence the others.

It is key to understanding a second principle, the distinction between *conflict arena* and *conflict formation*. On September 11, downtown Manhattan was a conflict arena – where direct violence was occurring. Then, from October 7, the conflict arena switched to Afghanistan. But it would be an error, according to Conflict Analysis, to restrict the search for causes, or exits from a conflict, to the arena itself.

In this sense, the plight of Iraqis and Palestinians amounts to a major source of structural and cultural violence, violence for which many across the Islamic world and beyond, rightly or wrongly, blame the Americans. This analysis identifies the broader conflict formation – not a justification for bin Laden as a self-appointed instrument of Muslim grievances, but indispensable to understanding the context in which a “strategy to expel the US from the Islamic world” came to seem feasible.

When British Prime Minister Tony Blair held a joint news conference with President George W Bush at the White House in early November, 2001, some observers believed they detected an incipient divergence of emphasis between the two men, over the balance between conflict

... it would be an error, according to Conflict Analysis, to restrict the search for causes, or exits from a conflict, to the arena itself.

arena and conflict formation, in their own analysis.

According to Blair, any lasting solution to the problems underlying the September 11 attack would require the Arab-Israeli conflict to be resolved. He had already used his leader's speech to the Labour Party conference to commend the struggle against al-Qaida as an opportunity to inject fresh impetus into efforts to tackle injustices the world over.

Bush replied that the 'War on Terrorism' would be won "with or without" progress between Israel and the Palestinians; or, by implication, towards the rest of Blair's ambitious agenda for global development.

For journalists reporting conflicts, these choices go together. If an act of violence is interpreted as a "pure spasm of apocalyptic irrationality" there is no need to look any further for the cause than a single mad or bad perpetrator. It makes no sense to report from anywhere besides the immediate conflict arena.

If, on the other hand, it is understood as part of a coherent strategy, any full account of the problem must include tracing connections with issues of structural and cultural violence across a broader conflict formation.

This is how news helps to shape the public's interest in a conflict. And, since the diagnosis of a problem conditions calculations about the likely reception for policies advanced as a solution, these choices for the journalist enter a Feedback Loop to exert a cumulative influence over the course of events.

Peace actions

'Peace' must include removing structural violence at the grassroots

Implicit in the treatments offered by *Time*, *Newsweek* and others was a preparedness to think seriously – and expend serious column inches

doing so – about issues in the broader conflict formation as they bear upon the lived experience of those entrapped within them. Such were the 'dubiously deep thoughts' that earned them a scolding from the *New York Post*.

This debate carried echoes of what was widely identified as a twin-track approach within the Administration itself. On this analysis, Secretary of State Colin Powell was seen as addressing the media constituency represented by the two newsweeklies.

In a policy speech in late November, 2001, interpreted as signalling US re-engagement with the Middle East peace process, he declared:

"The occupation of the West Bank and Gaza has been the defining reality of Palestinian lives there for over three decades. The overwhelming majority of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza have grown up with checkpoints, raids and indignities. Too often, they have seen their schools shuttered and their parents humiliated".

This was not, Powell added, an excuse for "self-defeating violence and terror". But the suggestion remained that peace, to be peace, must include removing the structural violence governing everyday life in the occupied territories.

Beyond Realism

No need to wait for leaders to talk peace to include it in reports of conflict.

This understanding of the conflict affects judgements about what is worth reporting. The indignities affecting ordinary Palestinians living under occupation are newsworthy, because they represent an important contributory factor in the cycle of violence.

If an act of violence is interpreted as a "pure spasm of apocalyptic irrationality" there is no need to look any further for the cause than a single mad or bad perpetrator.

Most news reporting still reproduces, unexamined, the realist view of international relations. News is about change – we pick up today's paper to find out what's changed since yesterday. Realism is the belief that change is only brought about by states, governments and (other) armed men. Mao's dictum that "power comes from the barrel of a gun" is the essence of realism.

News presented in context helps us to sift the significant change from the rest. If the context for reporting the Arab-Israeli conflict includes the insights of General Powell, it equips us with criteria for assessing significance besides those of realism.

In practical terms, it means the many grassroots initiatives to challenge the political legitimacy of the occupation or to alleviate the effects of structural violence are worth reporting. There is no need to wait for states, governments or gunmen to take the initiative before including the discourse of peace in news reports of the conflict.

Perhaps the most significant recent change in the Arab-Israeli conflict, before the al-Aqsa intifada, was Israel's withdrawal, in the Summer of 2000, from its occupation of southern Lebanon. One way of explaining this development is as the result of military resistance by Hezbollah guerrillas. But this would be to miss the crucial complimentary role of grassroots peace actors such as the Four Mothers, who lost sons in the Israeli Defence Force and campaigned to challenge the political legitimacy of that occupation, eventually convincing many Israelis that the price the policy was exacting, in terms of lives lost on either side, was too high.

There is no need to wait for states, governments or gunmen to take the initiative before including the discourse of peace in news reports of the conflict.

'Gaffes'

Reporting sensitive issues raised by politicians as 'gaffes' reduces important arguments to slogans.

The period immediately after September 11 saw two important instances of statements reported as diplomatic 'gaffes'. Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi suggested that Islamic societies tended to be undemocratic and illiberal because they, unlike their Western counterparts, had not enjoyed the benefits of a Christian religious heritage.

And British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw contributed an article to an Iranian newspaper in which he suggested that anger across the Middle East over the plight of 'Palestine' had helped create the conditions for the attack.

The next stop on Straw's itinerary was Israel, where Prime Minister Ariel Sharon promptly cancelled a scheduled meeting, only reinstated after a call from Downing Street. Most reports concentrated on whether Tony Blair had apologised – yes, said the Israelis; not quite according to Number Ten – without really analysing whether he had anything to apologise for.

Likewise with Berlusconi – readers and audiences were kept up-to-the-minute with repudiations of his remarks by world leaders, but remained unenlightened as to why, if he was wrong, political arrangements in Arab countries seem to run the gamut from A (Authoritarian) to D (Despotic).

It is crucial for journalists to explore these questions if readers and audiences are to be helped in forming a proper understanding of the issues at stake in intervention. An analytical piece on either episode would have been, technically at least, a relatively straightforward assignment.

Instead, reporting them as 'gaffes' has the effect of reducing

important arguments to an exchange of slogans. Berlusconi's comments are collapsed into a benign view of intervention as something always 'in prospect' and necessary to save other people – Arabs, in this case – from themselves.

Remarks such as Straw's are swept up into a view of intervention as a record of meddling, without which Arab nations would be able to run their own affairs perfectly well.

Intervention

How can the reporting of conflicts help us to form a balanced view of the merits of intervention?

The treatment of intervention as a question in international news interlocks with other checklist points – such as the explanation for violence – and the Feedback Loop. The diagnosis of a problem affects calculations about the likely reception for any proposed remedy.

Do fundamentalist religious practices, illiberal societies and, indeed, terrorism, represent an *expression* of something endemic in Islam? Or are they *constructed* by identifiable processes, at an historically specific point in the development of some Islamic societies?

To omit the context offered by writers such as Saghiyeh is also an act of commission. It reiterates, by default, underlying and long-established essentialist explanations for the behaviour and character of, in this case, Arab countries. These are not, or were not initially, the work of journalists. The vulgar Western understanding of Muslims, as motivated by fanaticism to various odd forms of political, social and religious behaviour, arose from centuries of conflict including several interventions – an historic cultural construction known, on the most established thesis, as 'Orientalism'.

To include such contextual material enables a critical focus on the

Balance may require more than 'telling it how it is', with a quote from either side. It may mean equipping us to see how each side's story came to be.

impact of past interventions in constructing the political realities of today. On Saghiyeh's view, home-grown problems had exacerbated those presented by outsiders: "We in the Muslim world... could not open up to the tools that modernity suggested, for the simple reason that they were introduced by way of colonialism". Arabs found the nation-state, democracy, the rule of law and the principle of rights inherently suspect because tainted by Western conquest.

Beaumont reported that bin Laden had succeeded in opening "deep and dangerous fault lines throughout the societies of the Middle East" with the message that conflict between Muslims and Christians was inevitable, mirroring the 'clash of civilisations' prophesied by Samuel Huntington on the American Right. He quoted two Muslim intellectuals, one who blamed the US for "perverting the attempts to democratise the Arab world"; the other, urging Arabs to grow out of their conspiracy theories and stop blaming the West for their troubles.

These, and many of the more thoughtful responses to '9/11' offer a highly sophisticated version of one of journalists' traditional values – the notion of balance – for reporting conflicts in the modern world. Balance may require more than 'telling it how it is', with a quote from either side. It may mean equipping us to see how each side's story came to be – part of a strategy to make the conflict transparent, to understand and uncover it by exploring complexity, rather than perpetuating the distortions inherent in seeking simplicity.

Upholding this sense of balance is crucial in preserving a space in which it is possible, for example, to apply critical scrutiny to American foreign policy, without being reduced to the slogan that America brought the suicide hijackings 'on itself'. ■

2. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE JOURNALIST IN CONFLICT

2.1. Influences on the journalist – a three-way balance

The everyday working life of the journalist can be seen as being governed by a set of opportunities, disciplines and constraints, which in turn depend on the balance of three factors – the state, capital and civic society.

The avalanche of pent-up material about Lord Archer, previously suppressed by fear of libel actions but set loose upon his conviction for perjury in the Summer of 2001, testifies to the influence of the state and its laws on the content of news – what can be said, and when.

As for capital, not all news is produced for profit, but any journalist works with the assumption that his or her journalism must make the reader want to buy the newspaper or magazine, the listener or viewer switch on and pay attention, or the on-line consumer click the mouse.

News is that-which-can-be-delivered, via newsprint, the airwaves, a digital signal and/or a satellite footprint; or, perhaps, that-which-will-be-clicked on the internet.

To whom it can be delivered, in what numbers, how, when and where all depend, to a large extent, on conditions in the market - or, more accurately, in individual media market sectors.

Civic society is a setting for the exchange of ideas about values and the development of ethics - the bit of news belonging both to everybody and to nobody. RtW brings journalists together in an 'ecumenical' space, cutting across the boundaries of different media and different news organisations, in free discussion of ethics and values.

As such, it represents a contribution to the civic-society influence over the content of news – a strengthening of the journalist's hand in

applying ethical standards to his or her own work as a conscientious professional, independently of who is paying, and for what.

Traditional values in a modern setting

There is a creative tension between these three factors – state, capital and civic society - which is constantly adjusting, but which many RtW participants complained was becoming seriously out of balance.

During and since the 1990s, market conditions in one media sector after another have been transformed by sharply intensified competitive pressures. This process has, in many ways, proved a radical creative force. But contributions to Conflict and Peace Forums discussions over the last few years have revealed a widespread unease that something important is being eroded.

Then *Observer* editor Will Hutton, speaking at the Taplow Court journalism conference, News for a New Century, in 1999, described the consequences for international news of conditions in the highly competitive London newspaper market:

"Firstly, there is now a multiplicity of outlets. Two - they want to be heard so they shout to be heard, which coarsens what can be said... and so, when you place a phone call to the commissioning editor, often they are just ignorant, actually, of some of the points you're making. And they haven't got the time to do anything else, either accept the official line, or crudely challenge it head to head... Coming at it from the flank, [trying] to redefine the terms of debate or to declare independence from the herd's agenda, is just not on, in this context".

The sector most obviously experiencing a tightening of market

Firstly, there is now a multiplicity of outlets. Two - they want to be heard so they shout to be heard, which coarsens what can be said...

conditions at the time of writing is television news and current affairs, with a hugely expanded digital spectrum in millions of homes; closer competition than ever for the ITV news contract and a smaller budget for the winner; rival network offerings at ten o'clock and a Communications Bill eagerly awaited in the boardrooms of television companies, which have spent the last decade devouring each other and now appear hungry for more.

The well-known research finding, which documents the effect of these market pressures on representations of the world to television viewers, comes from the International Broadcasting Trust in its publication, *Losing Perspective*:

“This report has analysed all non-news/current affairs factual programming where a significant proportion of the programme time was devoted to footage filmed overseas. The methodology is very inclusive and recognises programmes about subjects such as wildlife, travel, and cookery, as well as the more serious themes of politics, human rights and the environment.

“The main findings of the research are:

There is substantially less non-news/current affairs factual programming output filmed outside the British Isles than at the beginning of the decade. In 1989-90 there were 1037 hours, in 1998-99 there were only 728.6 hours”.

It is difficult to establish, however, that viewers – or indeed readers or listeners – have access to less factual material about international affairs than before, especially as so many more channels are now available in so many homes, together with the vast potential of the internet. The influence may be felt in subtler ways, which are harder to measure.

One Round Table participant, the award-winning independent

journalist and film-maker, Damien Lewis, bemoaned the decline of international affairs on television “in terms of real coverage that is meaningful and that works” – a process affecting news and current affairs as well as general programming.

At Seminar One, former BBC Middle East correspondent Tim Llewellyn called this decline a process of ‘dumbing down’:

“The broad context in TV now is that there is very little of the old style back-up documentary or serious current affairs programming, which tends to support and widen complex issues and which I always thought was vital, providing a context for the obviously more cursory news reports...”

“I think that foreign current affairs coverage on TV is, where it exists at all, confined to personality reporting. The kind of programme where a bright young thing says to a commissioning editor, ‘I know, why don’t we send Julian Clary or Edwina Currie to Afghanistan in a hot air balloon!’”.

And Mark Huband, former *Guardian* and *Observer* Africa correspondent, now editor of the *Financial Times*’ World Economy pages, spoke at Seminar Three about the influence of television coverage, in a multi-channel environment, on the commissioning process in newspapers:

“Above all newspaper desks is a TV set: it’s hardly surprising that reporters who are witnessing stories are constantly bombarded by demands that they follow up what news editors are seeing in front of them in London and elsewhere.

“This is probably the most damaging process of all, as it deters journalists from seeking out fresh aspects for themselves, turns the process of newsgathering into a competition and creates the danger that the whole story may never be told because all the media are

... the decline of international affairs on television “in terms of real coverage that is meaningful and that works”.

following the same angles of a story”.

Danny Schechter, executive editor of www.mediachannel.org, told the RtW Round Table that the main function of a checklist for ethical reporting should be to help journalists resist the recession of serious international news which had disfigured US media in its presentation of world affairs:

“I think you have to look at the way in which there were decisions made in some media organisations to stop covering the world except that part of the world that the US was engaged in. It appears that the merger of newsbiz and showbiz cut back dramatically the capacity of a lot of newsgathering operations... we have look at how the structures of corporate pressures reshape the nature of journalism and foreign coverage.

“I found it very difficult, on a news magazine in the 80s, to get more coverage of Africa and get anybody interested. The reason my boss wasn't interested was because his boss wasn't interested and I think we have to look at the political economy of the news world and the relationship with the political world.

...There's a chain of events but there's also an institutional framework here that's also very important”.

Codes of Practice

The anthropologist, Mark Pedelty, author of an ethnographic study of war reporters in the field, attended the RtW Round Table. He described his method in researching a PhD thesis, in El Salvador, which was later published as *War Stories – the culture of foreign correspondents*:

“I did initial interviews with all the reporters at which they were able to perform for me their ‘perfect selves’, and I believed them too. ‘I am

autonomous, my editor never ideologically edits me’; they told me about all the things they do, where they go in the field. And then I spent time observing them, at their offices, hanging out with them at parties, going into the field with them. However I quickly discovered that what I saw was very different, there was a big disjuncture between what they were telling me at the initial interviews and what I observed.

“And that was the crux of my method, to sit down with them again and get to know them better, saying ‘come on, you say this in the report but what do you really think’ and that's when they really started telling me things”.

Many news organisations perform their ‘perfect selves’ in the form of written guidelines and codes of practice, some of which do go some way to specifying what might be meant by real coverage that is meaningful and that works, supplementing and challenging the competitive pressures generated by market conditions.

One of the most comprehensive codes is the BBC's Producer Guidelines. At RtW Seminar Three, Mark Damazer, the corporation's Deputy Director of News, set out the ‘perfect self’ of the BBC journalist covering developments in the conflict centred on Iraq:

“Multiple perspectives; much more historical context... a wide angle of vision; greater use of voices other than UK voices to tell the story. Clearly one of the limitations for a domestic audience is that they have been underexposed to the French, Russian and Chinese diplomatic and political calculations”.

Colleagues on the World Service, particularly the Arabic service, had provided “consistency and depth” in covering the story, he added – and were able to “tick most of the boxes”. But editors of domestic TV

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“Multiple perspectives; much more historical context... a wide angle of vision; greater use of voices other than UK voices to tell the story.

bulletins were constrained by the available programme time, and, even in the context of a public broadcaster, the competitive pressures of the market for television news, which inhibited the ‘perfect self’:

“I think we have to own up to the fact that the BBC is already pitched, in its domestic bulletins, significantly upmarket from other domestic broadcasters and it has to compete with the election and sports news. I would say to the industry as a whole that we under-reward the sophisticated political reporting that we do and the industry still has a tendency to over-emphasise the ‘bullets’ part of the story”.

2.2. A media-savvy world

Along with increasingly intrusive market conditions, the journalist’s efforts to apply balance, fairness and responsibility in reporting have been further complicated by life in a media-savvy world.

There is a kind of ‘double-think’ at work here. As Mark Pedelty said at the Round Table, news has a habit of “naturalising narratives” and leading us to mistake culture for nature. The Independent Television Commission once sent out researchers to conduct face-to-face interviews with members of the public about what they, the viewers, thought television news teams should cover.

Maggie Brown, in a *Media Guardian* diary piece in July 2000, used it as the basis for an entertaining bit of tail-tweaking:

“Television journalists: know your place. The overwhelming view of the public is that the job doesn’t involve creative decisions, because ‘news is news’, according to ITC audience research. ‘What do you mean, what should they cover?’ a young woman from London asked a researcher. ‘They have to cover the news. What has happened, what is going on, there is not a lot of deciding to do about it’”.

But this notion of news as something natural, a means of retrieving events

exactly as they happened - like looking through a window on the world - co-exists, among many of the reading, listening and viewing public, with a more sophisticated understanding of news as cultural; something *made*.

Round-the-clock television and radio news has been with us all for the best part of two decades; newspaper pagination seems to have grown exponentially, and internet search engines bring a world of material to our fingertips. We are well into a post-modern age of information glut, where an ever-expanding range of experiences seem to be ‘always already’ mediated before they reach us.

This awareness may not, in these terms, form the basis of conversation around many dinner tables. But it is not confined to spin-doctors or the realm of professional PR. Many members of the public, suddenly finding themselves at the centre of ‘human interest’ stories, turn out to be media-savvy. They prove well aware of the stories news wants to hear, the dominant narratives, the choices, the process of setting the frame around the window.

2.3. Covering violence Violent demonstrations

As media and protestors have shadowed each other on the economic summitry trail of the last few years, a recurrent pattern of coverage has developed; one that both embodies and extends the media-savvy world we share. Darius Bazargan, a BBC News producer and camera operator who specialises in ‘front-line’ newsgathering at demonstrations, told the RtW Round Table:

“Often when we get coverage of these big anti-capitalist demonstrations, you have a ‘script’, and almost every story says, a violent minority distracted attention from the vast majority of people demonstrating. You’re sort of admitting culpability of being suckered into

this, and yet not showing coverage of the vast majority of people, the demonstrators that you claim the minority is pulling attention away from”.

After the G7/G8 meeting in Genoa, Peter Preston, writing in the *Guardian* on July 23, 2001, called for “some media introspection”.

“ We [journalists] didn’t just happen to be there when the mayhem started”, he declared. “We were always part of the equation, an umbilical part of the script. It is time to be clear-eyed over that. The anarchists (whoever they are, however many of them there were storming the barricades) wanted the oxygen of publicity; so, more peacefully, did the tens of thousands of protesters who travelled in to make an often bewildering variety of separate points. So, enfolded in pomp, did the G8’s loftiest panjandrums”.

Tony Benn had likened the demonstrators to the Tolpuddle Martyrs, but Preston detected an important difference:

“Those martyrs had no 24-hour news channels to fill. This is something different, street theatre for media consumption. We have to report it; but as we do so, we have also to remember the one fact of contextualisation that should make any editor feel deeply uneasy. That we, in the reporting, are not innocent bystanders, but carriers of oxygen. We are, essentially, the story itself”.

Violence in Yugoslavia

The break-up of Yugoslavia is the story which has brought many journalists face to face with this unwelcome sense of entanglement, the impossibility of knowing that what you are observing, filming or being told would be happening at all – or at least in the same way –

We have to report it; but as we do so, we have also to remember the one fact of contextualisation that should make any editor feel deeply uneasy. That we, in the reporting, are not innocent bystanders, but carriers of oxygen. We are, essentially, the story itself.

were it not for some calculation by those taking part about the likelihood and effect of its being reported.

Jim Maceda, veteran reporter with NBC News, spoke at Seminar Two about some of the practical difficulties this poses:

“Media-savvy is exactly what all of the sides in all of the conflicts that I’ve covered since Vukovar in ‘91 have become. I do not remember personally having to question, like I question today, the agenda of the people I am speaking to. I don’t know if it’s because of the ‘CNN effect’, that we are covering conflicts that really are in real-time, but I truly do feel that what’s getting in the way of my reporting now is my own personal cynicism about what I’m being told, as much as anything else”.

When violence flared up in Macedonia for a second time in 2001, some reports suggested that the Albanian NLA guerrillas were motivated by the need to attract international attention through the media, and that this might go at least some way towards explaining the sequence of events. One typical account, in the *Telegraph*, quoted a western military expert in Skopje who suggested: “They want an over-reaction - they want a Racak”.

The group’s leader, Ali Ahmeti, appeared to confirm, in an interview with Mark Urban on the BBC’s *Newsnight* programme on July 4th, that the armed campaign by his men had indeed been, at least in part, a publicity exercise. Asked what they had gained by taking up the gun, he replied, “all the people of Europe now know about our situation”.

Violence in the Middle East

This dilemma is present also in covering the Israel/Palestine conflict.

Ha'aretz Palestinian affairs correspondent Amira Hass filed for the paper from Gaza City on 11 October, 2000 about the media strategy of the Israeli Defence Force:

“For the past ten days, the Israeli public has been preoccupied with its feelings that it is being attacked, besieged, victimized and humiliated”. These feelings had been inflamed, she reported, by the official version of various violent incidents which would arrive at the newsdesk before journalists had a chance to compare it with intelligence gathered from on the ground – Hass’s own stock-in-trade.

Reports from the army and police were “always given considerable prominence and always promote the victim mentality”, and were, to a varying extent in individual cases, facts created – and efficiently circulated – in order to be reported.

A prime example was the claim which continued to crop up as an analytical factor in stories about the conflict, that the Palestinian Authority had released “dozens of Hamas detainees”.

This, Hass wrote, “has no basis in fact. A total of 17 detainees have been released. They had been held in custody without trial for prolonged periods. The Palestinian High Court of Justice had already ordered the release of some of them, after the Palestinian security services were unable to supply evidence that they posed any danger to anyone.

“This false, inaccurate report was compiled to reinforce the image of the Israelis as humiliated victims - an image that dissipates the terrifying significance of 85 persons killed by IDF gunfire and another 3,000 wounded, many of whom suffered head and chest injuries”.

On the other hand, Steven Rosenberg, editor of the *Jewish Advocate*, complained that reported incidents of stone-throwing by

Palestinians might also be facts created in order to be reported, on the basis that IDF reprisals would also be included, supporting a ‘David and Goliath’ formulation of the conflict.

Reporters assigned to Jerusalem were too ready to fall under the sway of Palestinian ‘fixers’, he complained, who had an agenda of their own:

“They arrive in Jerusalem, get their press card at the Israel Government Press Office, and are waved away by the Israelis. Minutes later, they invariably meet a representative of the Jerusalem Media Communications Centre. Run by former PLO diplomat Ghassan Khatib, the JMCC is employed by 99 percent of the foreign journalists in Israel.

“Called ‘fixers’, they provide background material, briefings, translators, drivers, interviews and will arrange virtually anything for a reporter. Need a photo taken, or a violent scene? They’ll bring a reporter into the heart of the violence, and almost on cue, the rioting will begin”.

Violence in Indonesia

Further afield, the GAM, the armed rebels fighting for independence in the Indonesian province of Aceh, have been accused of keeping thousands of villagers

in refugee camps, calculating that news and humanitarian reports will blame their plight on Jakarta and thereby add to the pressure for intervention.

New Internationalist’s Anouk Ride concluded, from a trip to Aceh: “the refugees are being controlled, even created, and their image manipulated into a humanitarian plea for independence”. In 1999, during the bombing of Kosovo, the tarmac at Banda Aceh airport was bedecked with huge slogans calling for Nato to send its planes to the

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Violence in Africa

BBC World presenter Nik Gowing, in an important critique of reporting in the Great Lakes crisis of 1996-7, writes that journalists must never again underestimate the sophistication of parties to a conflict operating under what he calls ‘the tyranny of real-time news’. His warning:

“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”.

Beyond cynicism

Journalists seeking to produce fair, balanced reports, which inform and orientate the reader or audience in this media-savvy world, clearly need an antidote to cynicism, which, as Jim Maceda complained, has now become a significant impediment to ethical reporting.

This may require a new paradigm for conceiving of the journalistic process itself. The traditional view – ‘we just report the facts’ – is a counterpart of what the ITC interviewer was told, about TV news programmes simply reporting ‘what’s happened’.

This traditional view has held particular resonance for journalists covering violence, articulated Seminar One by Bob Jobbins, outgoing Head of News at the BBC World Service:

“While it’s easy to sit in a room and deplore the focus of the media on violence, the core and the essence of what’s happening at the moment is really about violence. And if we don’t report that, then we

are failing in our duties as journalists, and while it is deplorable that it may become over-mechanistic, journalists take extraordinary risks to try to cover what is happening on the ground.

“The essence, to me, of the story is what is happening to individual people in the Middle East. Many other dimensions get reported in other parts of the media - maybe not as often as people would like - but I do think there’s a danger of seeing a coincidence of interest between people engaged in conflict resolution, and the media.

“Conflict resolution is something on which I report, not something in which I engage. A side-effect of my reporting may be that it makes conflict resolution harder or easier, but that’s a judgement that is made after our reporting”.

This is to model the news as a linear sequence of cause and effect – events occur; journalists report them; readers read, audiences watch and listen. Anything that happens afterwards, including any response to the reporting, is incidental to the process itself.

Journalists seeking to produce fair, balanced reports, which inform and orientate the reader or audience in this media-savvy world, clearly need an antidote to cynicism

2.4. The Feedback Loop

The new news paradigm, emerging from the consideration of examples as diverse as Macedonia, Aceh, Israel and the Palestinians, demonstrations at summits and indeed human interest stories, is more accurately pictured as a Feedback Loop.

Added to the psychological need we all have, for someone to listen and pay heed to our fears and grievances, has been the shared awareness, in a media-savvy world, of how news coverage can amplify the effect by bringing them to wider attention.

The only way for anyone to acquire this awareness is from their

experience as readers, listeners or viewers. Every time journalists report something, it augments this experience, thereby adding another layer to the understanding of what is likely to be reported in future.

That understanding then becomes the basis for calculations governing or influencing people's behaviour – the facts that journalists 'just report'. The facts that crop up tomorrow may therefore bear a slight residue or imprint of the reporting they do today.

This is the 'Feedback Loop' as a model for the influence of news coverage in a sequence of cause and effect. If, in the context of reporting conflicts, most or all of journalists' attention is claimed by acts of violence, then the cumulative effect may be to send out the message that demonstrators at economic summits, or movements for national liberation, need to engage in violence.

If the same groups forswear violence, they risk their cause or struggle being overlooked amid the growing clamour for attention from what Will Hutton called a "multiplicity of outlets", shouting to be heard - especially if, as Mark Huband complained, newsgathering is becoming a cut-throat competition to follow up the same angles as everyone else. The effect is intensified, in other words, by the increasing influence of market conditions on journalists' work.

Debate

Seminar Two, on Macedonia and titled, 'Reporting the facts – or inflaming conflict?', took these issues head-on. Among the material considered was a special edition of *Panorama* on BBC-2, from March, 2000, called *Moral Combat*.

Reporter Allan Little explored the origins of what later became a

widespread observation, in a Macedonian context, about guerrilla groups seeking to provoke reprisals - likely to be reported as 'atrocities' - in order to draw international intervention to their side.

The facts that crop up tomorrow may therefore bear a slight residue or imprint of the reporting they do today.

The film contained an interview with KLA leader Hacim Thaci, in which he admitted he and his colleagues had been well aware that their strikes on Serb police patrols were likely to lead to villages being bombarded. And Dugi Gorani, another Kosovo Albanian member of the Rambouillet negotiating team, recalled being told by one western diplomat that outside military involvement would not come until the 'body-count' among his co-nationals surpassed five thousand.

Anthony Loyd of the *Times* raised an important debate:

"I find all the talk, and the stuff we've seen on the screen, quite offensive - very media-centric, very selfish, this notion that we're creating facts instead of reporting them. Even people like Allan Little, who's a very good friend and colleague, with Hacim Thaci - Hacim now admits that he knew the Serbs would undertake an over-response against civilians...

"Well surprise, surprise - we all know that, not necessarily that Hacim Thaci knew that, but that the Serbs were prepared to over-respond against civilians. Taking on Nik Gowing's thing that factions in gumboots know how to misinform and obstruct: listen, if you get into a war, you want to win it - and if winning it takes lying then that's what people do.

"That's what people have done for centuries in the Balkans, because every under-equipped, undernourished army that's ever fought a war against a superior force in the Balkans has always

guaranteed or understood that if it is to win it has to attract an outside force, whether they are Austrians, Germans, Turks, Bulgarians, whoever. That's the name of the game in the Balkans, you get in, if you're the smaller army, an outside power".

Response

Reporting the World takes, as its point of departure, the experience of journalists engaged in the basic processes of commissioning, newsgathering, reporting, editing and production. 'A media-savvy world' and the 'Feedback Loop' are conceptual tools with which to analyse the conditions they face in carrying out those tasks in a modern setting.

One response to this modern setting is to become cynical - routinely mistrusting everything people say or do, or seeing 'manipulation' in all and any dealings with them. Jim Maceda's response to Anthony Loyd's remarks, quoted above, is an acknowledgement that such cynicism may become a significant impediment to doing a proper job.

Remember, though, the desire for attention is a normal human response. At the same time, the widespread awareness of how news works, contained in the phrase, 'a media-savvy world', is a fact of life, seeping into all of our behaviour.

There is, in these important respects, nothing *pejorative* in interpreting what people say or do as containing an implicit media strategy. It does not automatically become inauthentic, unrepresentative or less worth reporting, as a result.

No-one would claim that the existence of the NLA in Macedonia can be wholly understood in terms of a media strategy – as Anthony Loyd pointed out, such groups have arisen in the past with the aim of provoking a bigger

partner to come to their aid, some of them long before the post-modern condition described in the phrase, 'a media-savvy world'. But this condition may amplify and hasten the effect sought by such groups, thereby steepening the gradient of incentive for their actions.

Trying to separate out the role of news in relations of cause and effect can be like trying to un-blend a tin of mixed paint. If members of a group like the NLA have expectations about the likely response of journalists to their actions, they can only have arisen from the experience of news gone by. If those expectations form even a part of their calculations, in planning and carrying out their actions, it means every journalist shares an unknowable proportion of the responsibility for what happens next.

The Macedonia seminar took place in what, it later became clear, was an interlude between two phases of violence. The first, in March 2001, saw saturation media coverage. When the guns fell silent the reporting dwindled sharply or, in many cases, ceased altogether. The 'two versions' given in Section Four of this document are reports from different perspectives of the incident which re-started the violence and, with it, the coverage.

If anyone from the NLA ever did calculate that international attention might help their cause, and that violence was the way to get it, then the news industry as a whole certainly did little to disabuse them of that belief. The Ali Ahmeti interview on *Newsnight*, mentioned above, suggests a certain satisfaction that the hypothesis proved correct.

This way of analysing modern conditions at the newsface is not, then, in Anthony Loyd's words, a "notion that we're creating facts instead of reporting them". It is a suggestion that news is one among many influences on the process by which facts arise, and that journalists concerned to take an ethical approach might find it useful

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to consider, from various perspectives, whether some sense of responsibility for their part in a process of cause and effect can be more fully integrated into their work.

Insights from other fields

Reporting the World was conceived primarily as a conversation among journalists, but no single body of knowledge can provide the means to evaluate itself. Conflict analysts, economists, scientists, social scientists and psychologists have joined in, to provide insights from other fields of endeavour which have enabled participants to inspect from the outside the assumptions and orthodoxies of their own work.

In any effort to think through the ethical implications of the journalist's role as observer and interpreter of events, there are suggestive parallels to be drawn with a number of other disciplines. Perhaps most obviously, Einstein's theory of relativity revolutionised physics by proposing that reality depends on where you stand.

Social scientists are familiar with the concept of 'inter-subjectivity' – the truth about what is observed depends, to some extent, on the observer. Anthropologists acknowledge themselves to be 'participant-observers' – as soon as they begin observing something, it changes.

The Feedback Loop is one way this may work in journalism – a model which fits many of the experiences of reporters at the 'newsface', in the conflicts examined during the series.

2.5. Objectivity

Just as television viewers often turn out, when they themselves become part of the news, to hold a sophisticated awareness of the way

the process works, so many journalists see that there is a lot more to covering complex international stories than 'just reporting the facts'.

Paul Taylor, then Diplomatic Editor of Reuters News, gave a particularly supple and sophisticated definition, at Seminar Two, of the journalist's concept of objectivity:

"Objectivity is not a state, is it, it's a goal, a process, a daily dialectic – and we're constantly debating it, as we should be, all of us. Are we using the right terminology? And the question, about what we call the different ethnic groups in Macedonia, is only one of many issues. We had a debate at Reuters about what we called the guerrillas – were they separatists, were they nationalists? And so on.

"We debate this through and we go round the issues, it's a constant process, not a fixed state. We tried to approach it in a number of ways, which I think you'd expect of a major international news agency. We tried to get a balanced team. We made sure that we had people that spoke both languages. We had a Macedonian, we had an Albanian, we had a "Balkans expert", somebody who'd covered all of the wars for the last decade and one Russian based in Bulgaria and speaks Bulgarian and who has been going in and out of Skopje for a few years".

In the same seminar, Mark Brayne, Europe Regional Editor of the BBC World Service, remarked:

"I have an increasing awareness of how the perception of the individual journalist, of what he or she is experiencing, colours inevitably the way that individual will report. That's one aspect of it, the interplay between the individual and the story...

"To say that we just report objective facts, in a balanced way, is sweet fantasy because we are under huge pressure from people like

To say that we just report objective facts, in a balanced way,
is sweet fantasy because we are under huge pressure.

Eran Fraenkel [director of Search for Common Ground in Skopje, a participant in the seminar and assiduous lobbyist of news organisations for what he sees as responsible coverage of the conflict], from people like the Macedonian government; from people in the Kosovo conflict; from people like the KLA, from NATO in Brussels.

“We duck and weave, and we respond to these challenges, and I know that Eran Fraenkel’s emails have had a huge impact, as did the fact that our Macedonian broadcasts were taken off-air in Macedonia. These things do have an impact on how careful we have to be about a story”.

Whether Paul Taylor’s ‘constant dialectic’, by which Reuters’ journalists satisfied themselves they were conveying a proper understanding of Macedonia with a range of voices, really is ‘objectivity’, or whether it amounts to an acknowledgement of ‘inter-subjectivity’ may be a semantic point. But it contains an awareness that journalists cannot occupy a position of Olympian detachment from the situation on which they report.

The parable of the plastic bottle

So some journalists, in some circumstances, are ready to accept their own version of relativity – the facts depend on where you stand. At the same time, Mark Brayne, a highly experienced correspondent and editor who is also a trained psychotherapist, brought to RtW a keen awareness that ‘the observed’ is not a fixed category but the result of a process in which the observer is also a participant.

How could journalists follow anthropologists and psychotherapists, in assessing the ethics of their intervention as participant-observers in the stories they cover?

The Feedback Loop, one way of modelling such an intervention, carries particularly serious implications when covering conflicts. To say, *pace* Bob Jobbins, that the consequences of reporting violence may be considered only after the reporting process is complete, suggests a parallel from yet another field - classical economics, with its notion of ‘externalities’ in measuring the value of economic acts and processes.

Once, in industrial economics, the environmental impacts of manufacturing could be set apart as ‘externalities’. A maker had only to ensure that, say, a plastic bottle would perform satisfactorily the job for which it was designed. What happened to it after it left the factory gate, or after the contents were consumed, was none of his responsibility.

If the bottle had to be disposed of by incineration, with the emission of noxious gases, or by burial, with the contamination of land, that was an ‘externality’ – there was no need to include the environmental costs of such processes, or the monetary costs of (perhaps long-delayed) cleaning-up operations, in the economics of production.

Today, regimes of regulation or self-regulation, reinforced by educated consumer preference, have led manufacturers to build the potential for recycling into the manufacturing process itself. A linear way of thinking about that process is now replaced by the curved arrows of the symbol for recyclable plastic, signifying a circular model reminiscent of the Feedback Loop.

So - can journalists, too, build into the processes of commissioning, newsgathering, reporting, editing and production, some responsibility for the potential consequences of their journalism?

can journalists, too, build into the processes of commissioning, newsgathering, reporting, editing and production, some responsibility for the potential consequences of their journalism?

2.6. Conflict Analysis

This question immediately begs another – what can we ascertain in advance, or reliably predict, about the potential consequences? It follows that, in covering conflicts, journalists seeking to apply ethical values to their work could benefit from studying the dynamics of conflict itself.

Indeed, 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.

The following concise guide is drawn largely from the TRANSCEND manual, *Conflict Transformation by Peaceful Means*, prepared by Professor Johan Galtung for the Crisis Environments Training Initiative and the Disaster Management Training Programme of the United Nations (and available in several versions at www.transcend.org).

What is conflict?

Conflict, as understood in an analytical sense, 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'. (For mundane and understandable reasons – if a newspaper reporter refers to 'fighting' in paragraph

one of a piece, conventions aimed at making copy readable and stimulating suggest that a different word is substituted in, say, paragraph four.)

Nonetheless, understanding the difference between conflict and violence is crucial to Conflict Analysis.

Conflict is a fact of life, or, in Galtung's words, "a ubiquitous phenomenon in human and social reality, a major *force motrice*". We all *inhabit* conflicts, large and small, but by no means all of them involve violence. 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:

We all *inhabit* conflicts, large and small, but by no means all of them involve violence. Conflicts can be positive and constructive, by opening avenues of change, if managed effectively

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)

Withdrawal

- Walk away from the situation
- Destroy or give away the orange
- Just watch the orange
- Put it in the freezer

Compromise

- Cut the orange
- Squeeze the orange
- Peel the orange and divide the slices
- Any other division

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, perhaps through a process of intensification, 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 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 certain 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 and 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
- ‘Orientalism’
- Civilisational arrogance

(Civilisational arrogance may present ‘civilisation’ as a process of ascent along a scale of improvement towards societies of the kind ‘we’ inhabit today, representing ‘ourselves’ as the product of progress, dismissing other peoples and societies as ‘primitive’ or ‘barbarous’.)

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”).
- 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 (Romeo and Juliet).

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 object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary. The evil it does is permanent".

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
- Psychological trauma eg depression, suicide, PTSD

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.

Debate

If knowing about conflict analysis can help journalists to think through the potential consequences of newsgathering and reporting decisions they make, in terms of influencing the course of events, is that the same as calling for journalists to become conflict-resolvers?

Understandably, this question arose many times during discussions in the RtW series. As Bob Jobbins said: "conflict resolution is something on which I report, not something in which I engage".

Melissa Baumann, president of the Media Peace Centre in Cape Town, South Africa, spoke at the Round Table about the worldwide movement now exploring conflict resolution roles for journalists, and their compatibility with existing responsibilities. What such efforts had in common, she declared, was:

"A commitment to rethinking our roles as journalists in favour of being more pro-active and less reactive and more facilitative to peace building. A commitment to realising the harm you can do as a

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

The point is to expand the space to consider creative solutions to the structural and cultural violence, the underlying causes

journalist by being aware of the impact. A commitment to help tell more of the untold stories, to challenge prevailing narratives as we've been talking about - for instance, challenging Africa's relentless portrayal as the world's basket case.

"A commitment to empower more local people, the people involved in a conflict for instance, to tell their own stories and to speak for themselves. A commitment or a sense of accountability to the people that we report on".

Responses

The parable of the medical correspondent

Does taking on such commitments, or building the insights of Conflict Analysis into the production process of news, necessarily amount to a shift of category, from reporting on conflict resolution to engaging in it?

Conflict is a fertile source of metaphors for sport and court reporting, and of course for the medical correspondent. The fight against a bug, the battle to eliminate cancer and the war on AIDS are just a few obvious examples.

There is a way of reporting on disease which dwells on the visible effects – the 'direct violence' exchanged between a particular affliction and the application of intrusive drugs to eliminate it – at the expense of background understanding. The grim relish with which some journalists brought the world news of necrotising fasciitis, the 'flesh-eating bug', a few years ago perhaps comes into this category.

Then there is a way of reporting which explores the underlying causes of illness, including a well-developed discourse of public

health. The high incidence of heart disease in Scotland, for instance, might be linked with poor diet, which might in turn be connected with poor health education, itself a consequence, in part, of poor housing and economic deprivation, factors militating against success at school.

A competent medical correspondent may illuminate such factors, as well as initiatives to alleviate them – may even see such a task as a 'higher purpose' to the work - without passing himself or herself off as a doctor. The point is to expand the space to consider creative solutions to the structural and cultural violence, the underlying causes.

A burden?

Times Special Correspondent Janine di Giovanni, listening to Melissa Baumann at the Round Table, protested:

"I can see how it is our responsibility to report atrocities or genocide but I'm not sure it's my role to get the Macedonians or the Albanians sitting at a round table, I just think that really violates our role as reporters. It's enough trying to be objective and reporting fairly without having that extra burden, it just seems to be totally unrealistic".

There are two questions here. Applying the checklist points and the insights of conflict analysis need not, as the parable of the medical correspondent suggests, amount to getting parties to sit round a table. (Baumann was observing that this is what journalists occasionally do, as with the famous instance during the Apartheid period when Ted Koppel, on ABC's *Nightline*, interviewed Desmond Tutu and foreign minister Pik Botha in a 'one-plus-two' live discussion.

At that point, no dialogue was taking place between the Pretoria

regime and its black opponents. The guests were in separate studios, so the 'table' was metaphorical, but they did engage directly with each other for the first time, as a result of the programme's intervention.)

The other point is about the 'burden'. The findings of Reporting the World are presented here as a checklist to help journalists, not as an extra set of demands.

Reporting objectively, in the sense of getting the facts, can indeed be a difficult business while covering conflicts today, as Janine di Giovanni averred. The media-savvy world has sharpened the sense, among parties to conflict, of what may be at stake in the way events are presented to readers and audiences of international media. It has made many of them more likely to confront news organisations about the detail of their reporting.

Guardian Middle East Editor Brian Whitaker attended RtW Seminar One and shortly afterwards contributed a piece to the paper's website on the contested terminology of the conflict, in particular the way Israeli violence was so often presented as a 'response' to something done by the other side.

Whitaker called on journalists to "at least hint at a broader picture and acknowledge that the Palestinians might have some genuine grievances.

"To do this is neither difficult nor unduly word-consuming. Some news agency reports, for instance, routinely work into their stories a five-word reference to the 'Palestinian struggle against Israeli occupation'.

"The Israeli occupation lies at the root of the conflict - and yet, more often than not, journalists fail to remind their readers of it. The *Guardian's* electronic newspaper archive contains all the British national dailies, plus the London *Evening Standard*. A search of this reveals 1,669 stories published during the last 12 months that

mentioned the West Bank.

"Of these, 49 contained the phrase 'occupied West Bank'. A further 513 included the word 'occupied' or 'occupation' elsewhere in the text. That leaves 1,107 stories - 66% of the total - which managed to talk about the West Bank without mentioning one of the key facts".

The piece explained how international opinion, and international law, regards both the occupation and the settlements in occupied territories as illegal. But he reckoned without the watching media monitors at the Israeli embassy in London, who rang the *Guardian* to complain.

Whitaker emailed RtW to give the upshot of the ensuing exchange:

"You may be interested to know the reaction to my article from the Israeli embassy here in London. Their basic argument is that it is factually incorrect to state that the occupation is at the root of the

conflict. This, they say, is because the Palestinians rejected Israel's offer to withdraw from almost all the territory. The Palestinians' goal is the destruction of Israel. I'm summarising what was actually a very long conversation but (I hope) accurately.

"This raises an important question about what journalists should or should not regard as a 'fact'. If Israeli occupation is central to the conflict (as is generally recognised - Resolution 242, etc) and one party denies it, are we then obliged to treat it merely as an allegation, claim, etc"?

This is where Conflict Analysis can be an extra support rather than a burden. To characterise Israel's position at the Camp David talks of July 2000 as 'an offer to withdraw from almost all the territory' warrants close scrutiny (see Section 3.3.2. below). What material would be relevant to include in reports of proposals presented as being 'on the

The media-savvy world has sharpened the sense, among parties to conflict, of what may be at stake in the way events are presented to readers and audiences of international media.

table' in such a setting? How would it help readers and audiences to assess for themselves the realistic chance of ending the violence?

An understanding of Conflict Analysis leads us to focus on the texture of the conflict, the effects wrought on the everyday life of people inhabiting the conflict, which may drive some of them to resort to violence. The Palestinian experience under occupation is forever contingent on institutionalised inequalities, affecting aspects of everyday life from water supply, to freedom of movement, to whether people can live in their own home and grow their own food.

As long as these aspects of structural violence remain, Conflict Analysis suggests that they will continue to reproduce the conditions in which direct violence is likely to occur. We are, therefore, on firmer ground in insisting that the occupation is at the centre of the conflict – not by siding with one party against another, but according to an understanding derived from a well-developed body of theory and knowledge which belongs to neither party.

Cultural violence

On the other hand, the intifada saw increasingly bellicose rhetoric by rejectionist Palestinian groups, from which the official leadership would sometimes distance itself somewhat equivocally, if at all. A demonstration on December 29, 2000, heard an address by telephone from Hezbollah leader, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, urging the Palestinians to continue their uprising until Israel was destroyed outright – a statement which of cultural violence against Israel, driving her to greater extremism.

Many Israelis, including many who have campaigned for peace –

writers Amos Oz and David Grossman have been among the most prominent - see the right of return for Palestinians exiled in 1948 as threatening Israel's very existence in any recognisable form, since the refugees now number more than four million. Discussing the right of return, as though this is a feasible option except on a limited and perhaps symbolic basis, may therefore amount to cultural violence, persuading Israelis that the Palestinians' goal is indeed their destruction.

These observations were made at RtW Seminar One by Colin Schindler from the School of Oriental and African Studies. In the long term, alleviating the fears aroused by the events and unresolved grievances of 1948 would require greater openness about what really happened. Secrecy may be another form of cultural violence:

“Another point that I would make is that Israel has opened its archives, and academics have been allowed access to archive material to find out what did happen in 1948 - that the Israelis did indeed expel many people but many Palestinians left for other reasons - that it wasn't a clear cut situation that the Israelis expelled every Palestinian.

“This has been repeated time and time again in the liberal left-wing press by people who normally have a better sense of accuracy. Unfortunately no Arab archives have been opened to what happened in 1948, no academic can gain access to what happened in 1948 in any Arab country, especially the Palestinian archive. So what I'm saying is that, although the Israelis are coming to terms with the black spots in their history, the Palestinians have not. No archives are open. Palestinian history is at the disposal of the politicians and the propagandists and I think that trickles through to the press as well”. ■

An understanding of Conflict Analysis leads us to focus on the texture of the conflict, the effects wrought on the everyday life of people inhabiting the conflict, which may drive some of them to resort to violence

2.7. New balance

This understanding suggests a new way of interpreting one of the journalist's most cherished prerogatives – balance. BBC World presenter and former Middle East correspondent, Lyse Doucet, called on participants at RtW Seminar One to look harder for balance, in covering the conflict, than the traditional exchange of views expressed by leaders on 'both sides':

“At the BBC perhaps we do make a parody of ourselves, but we do try and have balance. And even though there's no doubt in my mind that the Palestinians are suffering far more in this present conflict, every day they're suffering - they can't get from A to B, their children can't get to schools, their impoverishment takes place on a daily basis - Israelis in Tel Aviv are not suffering this, Israelis in other parts of Israel are not, but that doesn't matter. The *perception* of Israelis is that they're suffering - that they've been betrayed and that is something that I think we have to reflect. We have to try and see in the minds of two people because it is the perceptions, as well as historical rights and wrongs, that are fuelling this conflict”.

Again, these issues have also been addressed by journalists and analysts in South Africa. Lesley Fordred, a colleague of Melissa Baumann and an anthropologist from the University of Cape Town who has accompanied and observed reporters working in the field, has drawn up a table summarising the opportunities for journalists and news organisations, attentive to the insights and methods of Conflict Analysis, in approaching key concepts such as balance:

Israelis in Tel Aviv are not suffering this, Israelis in other parts of Israel are not, but that doesn't matter. The *perception* of Israelis is that they're suffering

FROM OLD	TO NEW
Role Watchdog Commentator Independent of issues covered Spectator/observer	Enabler Communicator Independent yet interdependent “in the boat”
Style/Stories Debate Difference Polemic	Dialogue Common ground and difference Discussion
Approach to Journalism Seeks simplicity Reactive to violent events Event-based reporting “I am objective” Balance = cover both sides equally (quantity)	Explores complexity Strategy to understand/uncover the conflict Process-based reporting “I am fair” Balance = represent both sides' stories and perceptions (quality)
Approach to audiences Bodily damage/gore increases circulation Newsroom sets agenda Leaders/experts know best Right to know “This is the way journalism is done”	Public participation in problem-solving builds audiences/readership Public has role in setting agenda Ordinary people need to be consulted Right to participate in democratic processes Exploratory and flexible; rooted in values

by Lesley Fordred, University of Cape Town

The sense of balance which can emerge by applying the checklist points proposed here is very much as Lyse Doucet called for and as Fordred suggests: “representing both [or indeed all] sides’ stories and perceptions”.

This does not mean equivocating over the occupation of the West Bank or its illegality. It does mean enquiring into how the conditions imposed by occupation are perpetuating the conflict and fuelling

violence; balanced with the emotional impact in Israel of rejectionist rhetoric and slogans like ‘the right of return’, a factor impossible fully to understand without taking into account the existential fear transmitted from the Holocaust.

This is part of a strategy to make the conflict transparent, to understand and uncover it by exploring complexity, rather than perpetuating the distortions inherent in seeking simplicity. ■

It does mean enquiring into how the conditions imposed by occupation are perpetuating the conflict and fuelling violence

3. PRACTICAL AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF CHECKLIST POINTS

3.1.1. Explanations for violence

If, in two-thirds of newspaper pieces on the Palestinian intifada in which the phrase, 'West Bank' occurs, the Israeli occupation is not mentioned, what is put forward instead as an explanation for the violence? Of the 'five 'w's and h' of the journalist's traditional remit, what is the 'why'?

Why do Palestinians throw stones at Israeli soldiers even when they know they will fire back at them with live bullets, or strap explosives to their bodies and blow themselves up in public places?

To leave out any mention of structural violence is to *frame* the conflict as consisting entirely of exchanges of direct violence - not simply an act of omission, but also an act of commission. At least it allows other explanations to prevail by default. One is the 'ancient hatreds' theory common to reporting from the Balkans to Indonesia.

A piece in the *Sunday Express* of October 15, 2000 recounted an outbreak of violence 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:

"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".

To use the word, 'conflict' to denote violence is to limit the understanding of the conflict to the events of last two weeks – framing out the 33 years of occupation and its daily grind. 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".

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 *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".

In Glasgow, the *Herald* believed that a hastily convened "Arab summit offers little hope of overcoming ancient hatreds... bargaining is a way of life for all factions in the area, but... 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".

What is at stake in such explanations? Palestinian legislator Hanan Ashrawi gave an interview to *Channel Four News* on August 9th, 2001, the day after a suicide bomber attacked a Jerusalem pizza restaurant. "These people are not born that way, they are being made that way", she asserted.

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She was challenged as to why Yasser Arafat had not ordered Palestinian security forces to arrest members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, blamed by Israel for organising the suicide bombing campaign (another incarnation of the story critiqued by Amira Hass in *Ha'aretz*). The notion, that violence represents 'ancient hatreds' brimming over, often overlaps with the explanation that strings are being pulled, the tap being turned on, by ill-intentioned leaders.

So Dominique Moisi, in the piece quoted above, continues: "historic narratives call for historic actors, and the Middle East lacks the equivalent of South Africa's FW de Klerk and Nelson Mandela. Yitzhak Rabin was Israel's de Klerk and his assassination may prove to have been a turning point. Yasser Arafat, leader of the Palestinian Authority, is no Mandela... doubts about Mr Arafat's sincerity are growing in western diplomatic circles".

As already suggested, it would be naïve to see every episode of Palestinian violence as a spontaneous outpouring of anger. There are, clearly, leaders at different levels planting the seed of particular actions, from stone-throwings to suicide bombings, and it is right to challenge them on their role and responsibilities. But it is, in this case, the experience of an occupied people which prepares the soil.

3.1.2. Explaining violence in Africa

Framing out structural violence, as a factor helping to account for incidents of direct violence, allows 'stock' or background explanations to prevail by default. These did not originate in news reporting. The notion that Arabs are people given to fanaticism and actuated by

'ancient hatreds' or 'ethnic fatalism' is part of 'Orientalism', the cultural construction of a long history of conflict.

With violence in Africa the 'stock' explanation is slightly different. At the RtW seminar on Africa, Mark Huband, editor of the *Financial Times* World Economy pages, recalled how "the need to understand whether the world could have intervened in Rwanda was subsumed by the wish

to show the visual horror and to explain it away with reference to an apparently age-old Hutu/Tutsi conflict.

"To attempt to explain that the genocide was essentially the result of a grotesque abuse of political power by a group within the Rwandan ruling elite, and not an age-old tribal conflict, would have clashed with the visual image and was rarely attempted at all by TV and thus the world left Rwanda to its fate and the media played a very major role in convincing the US and others that they could do nothing to stop the horror".

At the RtW Round Table, Linda Melvern, author of *Rwanda – A People Betrayed*, described how the impression of the conflict generated by news reports, with violence explained as the result of 'tribal anarchy', influenced deliberations in closed sessions of the UN Security Council about the prospects for intervention. These discussions then led to the decision, on April 21 1994, to withdraw the bulk of UN peacekeeping troops from the country.

Melvorn pieced together the story on the basis of interviews with the Czech ambassador after she was given a 155-page secret document detailing the proceedings:

"On April 14th, it was the British representative who first suggested that the bulk of the peacekeepers be withdrawn - this was in a secret and informal meeting. He put forward options and one of the options was to reinforce, but this was discounted immediately. The press at

Framing out structural violence, as a factor helping to account for incidents of direct violence, allows 'stock' or background explanations to prevail by default.

the time was reporting that what was happening in Rwanda was tribal anarchy and chaos, therefore nothing could be done.

“His next option was that the bulk be withdrawn and then he said to the other ambassadors, ‘but don’t forget the negative impact that this will have on public opinion’, and so the decision was made to withdraw the bulk but that some 270 peacekeepers would stay behind to try to negotiate a ceasefire in a civil war.

“Later on that month, on April 29th, as the evidence was beginning to leak out in the form of bodies in the river, the president of the council at the time, the New Zealand ambassador, sitting in a non-permanent seat, suggested a statement be issued from the council declaring that genocide was happening.

“It was the British and US representatives who argued strongly against the use of the word, ‘genocide’. The debate in secret and informal session on the use of the word went on for eight hours. By now Oxfam had used the word, ‘genocide’ in a press release - however in secret and informal session both the British and US argued that the word genocide not be used, and the council was deadlocked. And it was only when the New Zealand ambassador threatened to take the debate into public session, thereby exposing the position of each country, that a compromise was reached and the compromise was that the words from the 1948 convention on the prevention and punishment of genocide be used but not the word itself”.

It is worth quoting at length because of what it suggests about the calculations at work about the likely response of journalists, with decisions calibrated, to an extent at least, according to the expectations about the way they would be reported. Part of the

Feedback Loop which is seldom illuminated as it is here.

3.2.1. The shape of the conflict

Most reporting of and from Iraq, in UK and US media, presents the conflict as being between two parties – on the one hand Iraq, personified in the ‘demonised’ figure of Saddam Hussein; on the other, official London and Washington.

This leaves out most of the rest of the world, an observation as true now as it was at the time of the Gulf War ten years ago. As Professor Johan Galtung, director of the TRANSCEND international peace and development network, has observed:

“Many people, perhaps most people in the world, belonged to a third camp – against both the war that started 2 August 1990 and the war that started 17 January 1991” – but this view was greatly under-represented in media coverage.

So there is an issue of accuracy at stake, but also one of framing. This can be conceived as a question of geometry. Two points can only be connected by one shape - a straight line. So any movement - any change - must take place along this one axis.

A conflict modelled in this way resembles nothing so much as a tug-of-war. Any fresh development immediately begs to be assessed for how it moves the parties along this one axis. Visualise the pennant in the centre of the rope used in tug-of-war. If it is not moving ‘our’ way, it must be moving ‘their’ way. It is a classic ‘zero-sum game’.

Presenting it as a tug-of-war distorts one of the central questions in the conflict – whether sanctions, including bombing missions to enforce the no-fly zones, are an appropriate or effective way of safeguarding

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regional security. It means that those countries with most at risk from any recrudescing Iraqi threat – Iran and Saudi Arabia, for instance – are seldom, if ever quoted on the wisdom of the US/UK policy.

This was true when American and British bombers carried out airstrikes on Baghdad in February 2001. Using an archive news service search engine, with the terms, 'Iraq + bomb + Baghdad' gave 139 hits for UK publications in that month.

Add 'Iran' to the search terms and the number of hits comes down to 14, of which only one, by Shyam Bhatia in *Sunday Business*, mentioned Iran's own assessment of the likely effectiveness of the US/UK policy. Tehran Radio came out with an official statement condemning the bombing as "adding to the violence in the Middle East".

The bombing took place on a Friday night – finally, on the following Thursday, the *Guardian* ran a piece based on Saudi misgivings that the policy was proving counter-productive. But that, again, was the only one.

Sanctions

The framing excludes any initiative to enhance security if it does not also demonstrably contribute further to the defeat of Saddam – failure to do so can only be interpreted as contributing to 'his' victory over 'us', giving him 'the upper hand'.

The space it leaves creates for the consideration of sanctions means that either they must all be wrong, and must always have been wrong, in principle – or that they are all right and must remain in place, perhaps indefinitely. The story has become, in a word used by some

participants in RtW Seminar Four, 'sloganised'.

As author and Birkbeck visiting fellow Faleh Abdul Jabbar complained:

"Since the Gulf War there has been an oversimplified conception of the whole conflict, goodies on this side, baddies on that side. The media coverage was caged into this oversimplified framework. The war ended - the cage did not.

"To cite one example of how we conceive of sanctions, sanctions for example are either rejected out of hand or accepted in full. Not a single attempt has been made to see that it consists of sub-systems. There is an economic embargo, on imports and exports, that was later changed through the food-for-oil programme.

"Secondly there is the surveillance or destruction of weapons of mass destruction. Thirdly the embargo on civilian flights and transportation, Iraqis cannot travel. Fourthly the system of surveillance of the high seas of the Gulf and fifthly the no-fly zones.

"Some of these points are destructive, others are not - and I'm speaking as an Iraqi. I'll give you one example. The whole package of sanctions strengthened Saddam politically and gave him a very powerful political weapon to lay all the difficulties at the threshold of the west.

"Secondly it increased the dependence of the Iraqi people on the state. Iraq is a command economy, we don't have any separation of the economy from politics - that's why the people are dependent on the state for their livelihood. Now they are dependent on the state for their daily provisions, just imagine 60 million Britons having to go to ten Downing St to beg for their food because the state is in charge of

Since the Gulf War there has been an oversimplified conception of the whole conflict, goodies on this side, baddies on that side. The media coverage was caged into this oversimplified framework. The war ended - the cage did not.

distribution of provisions.

“On the other hand the no-fly zone is protecting three million Kurds and this is a reality no matter what the incentives or hidden agendas are behind these no-fly zones - otherwise they would have been in the mountains exposed to the elements again”.

Dis-aggregation

Framing in the perspectives of other parties is one way of breaching the zero-sum formulation of such a story – especially in the case of Iraq, as those parties most directly affected are almost always framed out. The two accounts of the Baghdad bombing, given in Section Four of this report, represent an experiment in doing just that. Another way is to dis-aggregate the parties concerned.

It serves an obvious interest for the conflict in Macedonia, to take another example, to be portrayed as an atavistic struggle between Albanians and ‘Slavs’. The NLA, like the KLA before them, behaved as though every Albanian should support them – with villagers often given little effective choice in the matter.

On the other hand, there may always have been many members of each community who see interests in common, like the creation of a shared civic society based on equal rights, as more important than taking sides against each other.

The two versions of Macedonia, also in Section Four, give some idea of the different results which can be obtained by framing out and, on the other hand, framing in this possibility. The term, ‘Slav’, to describe the Macedonian majority nation within the state of Macedonia, has been rejected by some as ascribing to them an ethnic identity - welling up, as

it were, from within - rather than a civic identity constituted by their rights and responsibilities as citizens of a nation-state. (One upshot of discussions at the seminar was for the BBC World Service to adopt a policy of avoiding the term, ‘Slav’ where possible.)

Reporting the World Pt 1, the concept document for this project, contains a full discussion of the aggregation ‘The Serbs’ and its consequences. The treatment of Serb civilians as ‘unworthy victims’, from the Krajina to Kosovo, went with their presentation as part of an aggregate including the Yugoslav National Army, Interior Ministry Police and paramilitaries, the results of whose rampages against the civilians of other nations were well-documented.

This process of aggregation contributes to a reduction in the number of parties in a conflict to two – a condition of framing it as a tug-of-war. Both can be understood as part of a larger discourse - DMA syndrome, standing for Dualism, Manicheism and Armageddon. One party is assigned the role of baddies, a label which becomes more extreme over time until they appear to be the incarnation of evil. This in turn makes a ‘fight to the finish’ appear inevitable.

Professor Galtung, in a paper contributed to RtW (full text available at www.reportingtheworld.org), characterises it thus:

“Conflict is seen as dual, between two parties, like God and Satan, one good, one evil, fighting over one issue. It can only end one way, in a massive, violent encounter, possibly with Evil triumphing over Good on Earth but Good continuing in Heaven.

“We refer to it as the DMA-syndrome for Dualism-Manicheism-Armageddon. If a conflict is constructed as a contradiction between two parties, one worthy of survival and the other not, predestined to

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meet in a major battle, then this natural law of violence, its DMA inevitability, becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, like in Marxism; embedded in the deep culture”.

There have been many attempts to disentangle the process by which this arose as a framework for understanding events in the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Jenny Ranson, a participant at the RtW Round Table, now director of communications at the Cabinet Office, is one who has observed it from several perspectives.

A journalist by training and experience at senior levels, she worked in the Foreign Office during the 1990s and then spent three years running the Open Broadcast Network in Sarajevo. The idea that “the story is too complex for anybody outside the actual theatre to understand” was to be regretted, she said, especially when it led journalists to appoint parties as ‘good guys’ and ‘bad guys’:

“I think this happened certainly in the Yugoslav conflict - the media said very early on that the Croats wore the white hats and the Serbs wore the black hats.

“I’m not saying the Serbs were good or bad, but anybody that was there knows that there were atrocities and equal amounts of nationalism on both sides. Yet the government found it very difficult, once the media had got this simplification angle, to say too much that was bad of either the Croats or Muslims, and the Muslims were seen throughout as victims, and many of them were.

“Most of the refugees were Muslims, but that’s because the area that was being fought over was a Muslim area. There was very little fighting in the Serb area, Serbs who lived in Croatia had a bad time

and many of the Croats who lived in Bosnia had a bad time.

“Most of the victims were Muslims but that doesn’t mean that there weren’t some terrible atrocities committed by the Muslims and just as much nationalism and hatred as everybody else. What I’m saying is that there are no blacks and whites, only infinite shades of grey, and one has to be very careful of that. The media want to be able to say this is bad, this is good and we’re on the side of the good, that’s a great danger and that can happen in any number of conflicts”.

By 2001 many journalists were aware of this danger. According to Chris Stephen, covering the Macedonia conflict for the *Scotsman* (in a personal communication with RtW):

“If the reader is left confused, so be it – better to be confused about a war that is, after all, deeply confusing, than be fed an opinion”.

3.2.2. From tug-of-war to cat’s-cradle

Dis-aggregating the parties to a conflict can help to unravel the hardened position of each party, to consider their interests and needs as the touchstone of any progress towards resolving the conflict. A position is a set of goals expressed as demands, part of a process of polarisation and formulated so as to exclude the goals of the other party. Interests and needs can overlap, or prove interdependent – demands and positions, by definition, cannot.

Before about the mid 1980s, the British government and Northern Ireland Unionism could be – and usually were - represented as belonging to one aggregate of view. Britain’s position was broadly the same as the

Unionist demand, that the British state, along with British troops, remain in Northern Ireland. The problem was the IRA and its bombs and bullets: the solution, more effective security arrangements to 'crack down' on them and maintain what Reginald Maudling, Home Secretary in the Heath government, infamously called "an acceptable level of violence". This approach became known, in nationalist and republican circles, as the 'securocratic mentality'.

This mentality arose from and contributed to a process of polarisation, which affected many aspects of the conflict as experienced in everyday life. For example, one of the Army's roles initially was to draw up security ratings on 'terrorist suspects' and keep an eye on them, monitoring their movements, searching them and their vehicles as they passed through checkpoints and so on.

Then, in the mid-1970s, the arrangements changed. The Army continued to *implement* the policy on terrorist suspects, but the assessments themselves were, from that point, drawn up by the Royal Ulster Constabulary, historically resented by Catholics and drawn overwhelmingly from the Protestant community.

From a Catholic perspective, this 'proved' that British and Northern Ireland Protestant interests were the same. The security assessment process carried little cross-community confidence and the soldiers' role in implementing it was seen, by some in Catholic communities, as 'harassment'. The situation was further polarised through a series of killings in which security force collusion or complaisance was suspected – solicitors Pat Finucane and Rosemary Nelson, and the Portadown Catholic, Robert Hamill, being perhaps the best-known examples.

On the other side, Northern Ireland republicans and nationalists were routinely swept up into an aggregate of view with the Irish state,

its written constitution laying an historic claim to the six counties.

Change in the political discourse on the Britain/Ireland conflict has been a long and winding road, with many important signposts – the Anglo-Irish agreement of 1985, which enshrined cross-border cooperation between the two states, and Britain's renunciation of any 'selfish strategic interest' in the province, were two.

The parties are now *dis-aggregated* – it is commonplace to refer to 'pro' and 'anti-Agreement Unionists' or 'dissident republicans'. The British and Irish governments sometimes occupy common ground; sometimes, on particular questions, not.

The essence of the Good Friday Agreement was for the old question dividing the parties – the British presence in Northern Ireland – to be unravelled and split into constituent parts. Britain remains, in the sense that it is the Union Flag, not the tricolour, which flies on official occasions. But the nature and identity of the British state in the province is to change.

Reforms to policing, along with a scaling-down of the Army presence and a review of the criminal justice system, are supposed to address interests and needs, tackling specific practical objections to the British presence, rather than the simple demand for it to be withdrawn.

The Irish constitutional claim was repealed by referendum and the security threat was to be removed by a paramilitary ceasefire and decommissioning of weapons.

The vast majority of people on the island always tried to carry on as normal and prosperous a life as possible, despite the troubles – an acknowledgement of which was enshrined in arrangements for cross-border cooperation to foster economic growth and investment.

The tug-of-war as a model for the conflict has been, effectively,

tackling specific
practical objections
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withdrawn

replaced by a cat's cradle of many parties, pursuing many goals. The structure depends on tensions pulling different strands in many different directions at once. At the time of writing, none of the four strands mentioned here had been fully teased out – we were awaiting the troop reduction plan, the implementation of police reform and review of the courts from the British government and, of course, the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons.

How have journalists engaged with this, in the framing decisions they make? Of these interwoven aspects, there is still a relative over-reporting of 'IRA weapons' as the outstanding problem – and a relative under-reporting of the other issues, the structural violence, without which the problem cannot be properly understood. The critical mass of coverage still frames the conflict largely as tug-of-war. Any IRA weapon 'gained' by one side must also be 'lost' by the other – back to a zero-sum game.

What about 'why'?

This is where understanding Conflict Analysis can help carry out one of the journalist's prime functions – to tell us the 'who, what, where, when, why and how' of the story. Why did men from Catholic communities in Northern Ireland take up arms? The explanation within the 'securocratic mentality' was a familiar one from other conflicts affected by DMA syndrome – they were mad or bad, 'evil' or 'psychopathic'.

Was this a sufficient explanation? Assigned to the province by Sky News in 1998, I met Eilish McCabe, in the border village of Aughnacloy, in County Tyrone. Her brother, Aidan McAnespie, had been killed by a British soldier's bullet from the checkpoint which

straddles the main road out of the village into the Irish republic. The Army said it was an accident, which took place while the soldier was cleaning his gun.

But Ms McCabe had long since passed the point, she said, of seeking justice. At a belated inquest, the only witness, another British soldier, had gone AWOL and so could not give evidence. She wanted "the truth", so the family could move on from his death.

While in Aughnacloy, I also spoke to Michael Muldoon, a local Catholic, who told me he'd endured twenty years of "harassment" by soldiers from the checkpoint, dating from the time he'd got his driving licence and started to pass through it on the way to work - the same treatment as that endured by Aidan McAnespie before his death. Mr Muldoon had gone to court to try to get a legal definition of a 'body search', to which, he said, the troops had subjected him on occasions too numerous to mention, the latest just

weeks before our interview.

The court case had brought him no closer to a legal definition of his rights or, therefore, of any statutory restraints on what he said was sometimes extremely rough treatment, but it had yielded one nugget of information along the way. Some time in his youth, he'd been handed a 'P1' security assessment as a terrorist suspect in secret records compiled and maintained by the RUC.

There was no way of hearing any of the allegations against him, which had led to this assessment, or of having them tested in any tribunal providing for his accusers to be cross-examined, or the evidence challenged, by his representatives.

According to Eilish McCabe, Mr Muldoon's frustration was part of a pattern in which normal routes of redress for citizens with a grievance

The tug-of-war as a model for the conflict has been, effectively, replaced by a cat's cradle of many parties, pursuing many goals

were denied to Catholics. A senior local clergyman, a Monsignor, had taken up as many as fifteen hundred cases over fifteen years with army commanders, initiated by people who believed themselves to have been mistreated. “He’s never even got a response” in the overwhelming majority of them, she said. “That’s very, very, very frustrating for some young people”. Mr Muldoon went further - the checkpoint was “a recruiting sergeant for the IRA”.

Ms McCabe and Mr Muldoon had been interviewed many times by journalists before and were well aware of how their stories fitted in with a media strategy to present the conflict from a particular perspective – but they did not become inauthentic or less worth reporting as a result, just requiring to be handled as carefully as anyone else’s account of their part in a conflict.

The point is that by illuminating the structural violence, a news report frames the conflict as a cat’s cradle. It expands the space to see how the British state would need to change, if its continued presence in Northern Ireland were to win greater acceptance among Catholics as part of an overall settlement. To frame out these perspectives is to collapse the alternatives back into the tug-of-war format – all or nothing, in or out. These are the effective choices for the journalist.

What is a peace initiative and when and how should it be reported? The word ‘peace’ as part of a news report often begs more questions than it answers

3.3.1. Peace initiatives and ‘solutions’

What is a peace initiative and when and how should it be reported? The word ‘peace’ as part of a news report often begs more questions than it answers. Round Table participant Anne Penketh, international news editor of the *Independent*, complained that journalists generally were too ready to define as ‘peace’ a kind of identikit UN-brokered ‘solution’ which had been applied from Angola to Cambodia and had a habit of rapidly going wrong. A ceasefire, followed by the formation of a unity government, were two of the key elements.

For a plan to hold the prospect of making peace depends on whether, and to what extent, it addresses the problem. The value of a particular remedy depends on the diagnosis. A symptom of reporting which diagnoses violence as mad or bad, springing from dark places in the soul or orchestrated by ill-intentioned leaders, is the uncritical use of the word ‘tough’. A night of rioting in Bradford, in Summer 2001, offered a classic of the genre from the *Mirror*. A Home Office source obligingly told the paper that David Blunkett, the newly appointed Secretary of State, had “vowed to get tough” and was considering equipping the police with water cannon.

Two explanations were put forward for the disturbances – Mr Blunkett was quoted, describing it as “sheer mindless violence” and the reporter attributed it to “around a thousand hate-filled youths”. Who they hated, and why, were questions left unaddressed. The Home Secretary was “under pressure”, the paper said, to adopt “tougher measures”.

Shortly after the election of Ariel Sharon as Israeli Prime Minister, Suzanne Goldenberg, the *Guardian’s* award-winning Jerusalem correspondent, filed a piece about the intensified ‘closure’ he ordered

as one his first acts on taking office.

“The trenches and earth barriers that went up around Bir Zeit at the weekend marked the first tangible display of how Ariel Sharon intends to end a Palestinian uprising, and restore a sense of security to his own people”, she reported.

But she pointed out that the economic impact of the closures, on both Palestinian and Israeli society, was likely to prove counter-productive to the longer-term prospects of enhancing security for Israelis:

“Mr Sharon knows that it is not physically possible to separate Israel from the Palestinians, and that the economy of the Jewish state does not function without cheap Palestinian labour. But such restrictions are a signal to an anxious domestic audience that the old warrior remains as tough as ever”.

A suggestion that the policy had been formulated partly, perhaps primarily, to create an impression – a fact provided in order to be reported, part of a media strategy. In the feedback loop, the strategy is based on calculations about how particular facts will be reported – calculations based, in turn, on an understanding derived from experience of previous reporting.

If that reporting concentrates mostly on the direct violence, and carries or implies an explanation that those committing it are mad or bad, then it makes a ‘tough’ response seem to make sense as the next logical step. If, on the other hand, issues of structural violence are included in the frame as an alternative - or perhaps supplementary - explanation, then ‘tough’ responses appear to make less sense. Again, these are the effective choices for the journalist.

Reconciliation

Sky News, in February 2001, was one news organisation to focus on the closures as an aspect of structural violence, likely to sow the seeds of further direct violence. By this stage the number of Palestinians allowed into Israel to go to work had been cut to a quarter of the previous level. It had contributed to the loss of 180,000 jobs in the Gaza Strip in just four months.

Reporter Andrew Wilson had interviewed a visiting UN envoy, Terje Roes-Larsen, who explained that these were conditions in which the message of rejectionist groups was likely to be more readily received:

“Misery produces anger and hatred, and produces sympathies for violent and extremist organisations”.

The focus on structural violence, and its role in jeopardising Israel’s perennial stated aim of security, did not require a long piece –

Wilson’s package ran at a whisker under a minute and a half. It explained the conditions for violence as being produced by intelligible, if dysfunctional processes.

For reports to frame in aspects of structural violence can expand the space for understanding problems as shared – with the kind of response generally described as ‘tough’, now appearing inadequate or beside the point. Instead, it makes sense to envisage a solution based on reconciliation and to focus on actors within the conflict seeking to promote it. Professor Galtung calls this the “exculpatory nature-structure-culture approach”:

“A structure-oriented perspective converts the relationship from inter-personal, or inter-state/nation 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”.

Such a perspective was brought to RtW Seminar One by Yitzhak Frankenthal, a founder of the Bereaved Families’ Forum (BFF), whose own son was shot dead while serving with the Israeli Defence Force.

The BFF is a joint Israeli and Palestinian group which, in Mr Frankenthal’s words, ‘markets peace’ and works to mediate with the families of those killed in the conflict, attempting to halt the cycle of martyrdom, embitterment and revenge. He explained:

“We are a group of 100 families who lost their kids because of terror and in the army and we are working together with Palestinian bereaved families. We all believe that we lost our kids because there is no peace between us and the Palestinians.

“Our feeling is that it’s not a question of revenge or hatred, it’s a question of what we can do to stop this bloodshed and hatred. Therefore what we tried to do was to make reconciliation between both sets of people and we believe that if people like us, who lost their kids, can make reconciliation between us, then everybody can do it and that is what we try to market to both communities. What we want is to open a new page and continue their lives and our lives”.

The story of Mr Frankenthal and the BFF has appeared in several international publications including the *Christian Science Monitor*, which ran it in January 2000, complete with quotes from Leah Rabin,

widow of the murdered Prime Minister. It might be a useful element for what has become a bread-and-butter assignment for a Jerusalem bureau - discussing how one incident of violence is likely to lead to more, on the basis of revenge. It would also have the effect of dis-aggregating the parties to the conflict.

Intensification

Conflicts where power is distributed very unevenly between parties contain an apparent paradox. From *Working with Conflict – skills and strategies for action*, by the Birmingham-based group, Responding to Conflict:

“Sometimes it is necessary to intensify conflict. For example, when people are doing well and have enough power and resources to meet their needs, they do not notice, or refuse to acknowledge, that others are disadvantaged or marginalized. In this case, conflict needs to be introduced or brought into the open so that the necessary changes can be brought about”.

The changes may be “necessary” as an alternative to a ‘pressure-cooker’ building up, where resentments eventually boil over into violence.

It’s a persuasive model for understanding the position of Albanians in Macedonia - and especially Kosovo under Milosevic – as well as the al-Aqsa intifada. The *Guardian’s* Martin Woollacott, reviewing *States of Denial* (a book by the sociologist, Stanley Cohen) suggested that the Oslo process “seems in retrospect a case in which deception and self-deception paved the way for failure.

“Many Israelis believed they were acting generously, when in fact

Sometimes it is necessary to intensify conflict. For example, when people are doing well and have enough power and resources to meet their needs, they do not notice, or refuse to acknowledge, that others are disadvantaged or marginalized.

the course they were following was bound to end in an explosion". This, according to Cohen, was an example of the centrality of denial to many conflicts. Some groups active in and around the intifada have set out to intensify the conflict, not by taking up stones or guns, but instead by gearing their actions to tackling this state of denial, bringing the conflict further into the open.

Gila Svirsky, of the Coalition of Women for a Just Peace, was another contributor, by telephone, to RtW Seminar One. The group has carried out a series of eye-catching direct actions, among them a large demonstration in Jerusalem, with participants from either side of the green line, on New Year's Eve, 2000, in which four banners were unfurled from the wall of the Old City bearing peace slogans in several languages.

More interesting, perhaps, was the sit-down in the road outside the Defence Ministry building in Tel Aviv, aimed at bringing home to Israelis the realities of life under conditions of closure. From the group's press release: "A solid bloc of 'closure' signs" confronted traffic as "a small representation of what the Palestinians experience every day – being blocked entry and exit from their towns and villages".

Shortly after the seminar, the group went to re-open a blocked road outside the West Bank village of Rantis:

"It turned out that 200 pairs of hands could shift quite a lot of earth in a few hours. The mounds were levelled down, and the trenches filled with stones and earth. There seemed no way for the police and army to stop this, short of arresting everybody. They just hung around, some of them – especially the conscript soldiers with their blue berets – not unfriendly.

"The Rantis villagers told of the desperate conditions in the village since it had come under siege. The bread-winners, 90% of whom used

to work in Israel, are all unemployed; the olive groves, which provide the other economic mainstay, untended and unharvested since the army denies access to them; the village clinic closed, since the doctor cannot arrive; with most teachers unable to arrive, either, the local school is open only a few days per week, and not for all classes even then".

You will search in vain for any mention of any of these activities in the countless hours of airtime and acres of newsprint devoted to reports of the al-Aqsa intifada and its attendant crises. Why? Members of this group are not representative of Israeli opinion as a whole, but then neither are the extremists whose demonstrations tend to attract widespread coverage.

The efficient circulation of press releases and the nature of the campaign suggest that these are facts created in order to be reported, as much as they are aimed at levelling mounds of earth and bringing relief to villages. But there is nothing pejorative in this

observation, which, in any case, applies to stone-throwing and 'tough' responses as well. It does not automatically become inauthentic, unrepresentative or less worth reporting, as a result.

Examined as part of Conflict Analysis, they appear as more newsworthy than they have been given credit for. The intensification they are carrying out, albeit non-violently, is aimed at cutting through the denial, deception and self-deception which is central to the conflict and, according to Martin Woollacott, prevented the Oslo process from delivering peace.

Moreover, the Coalition of Women for a Just Peace has its own image of a future peace plan, addressing the structural and cultural violence of the conflict:

The intensification they are carrying out, albeit non-violently, is aimed at cutting through the denial, deception and self-deception which is central to the conflict

- 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

Another clue - 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 – in the Summer of 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 for several years.

Grassroots peace actions and initiatives can come in many forms. *War Prevention Works*, by Dylan Matthews, a publication by The Oxford Research Group (ORG) details fifty different stories of people

resolving conflict. ORG director Scilla Elworthy told the RtW Round Table about the selection criteria used to winnow down from an initial list of about two hundred.

Such stories may be worth more attention from journalists than they receive, not from a dewy-eyed sentimentality towards ‘plucky little peacemakers’, but from a steely-eyed determination to focus on change agents.

To make it into the book, any story must lend itself to being simply told; it must involve the heroism of ordinary people in acts of courage or imagination and it must have had a significant impact on the course of the particular conflict. Such stories may be worth more attention from journalists than they receive, not from a dewy-eyed sentimentality towards ‘plucky little peacemakers’, but from a steely-eyed determination to focus on change agents, unburdened by the assumption that change can only be brought about by states, politicians with their ‘tough’ policies, or men with guns.

Some of the point of doing so would be lost, however, if *only* grassroots initiatives were considered. The value may be as a tactic of comparison to help in assessing the prospects for ‘official’ negotiations actually bringing about peace. Scilla Elworthy explained:

“We’ve attempted to combine, in the writing-up of these stories, some insight into the motives and the passions of those involved, and set that against the background, the context of why the conflict erupted in the first place. We’ve looked at what the emotions were that drove people, women in North-Eastern Kenya who got fed up with the men of their tribes killing each other - after they’d killed 15,000, they thought, ‘this is enough’.

“But one of the things they discovered was the commitment they had to exact from the peace-building process. So they said to the women of the other tribe, will you join in this, and the condition is, ‘if

people from my family kill people from your tribe, will you still work with me for peace? If you can't say yes, don't join the group now'.

"It's not an academic book, it's really a story book. It's very simply told, but we teased out a few interesting by-products. One of them is that the interventionists described how extraordinarily cost-effective it was. The maximum cost for any of them is \$4 million for a series of meetings bringing together thousands of senior figures from France and Germany after World War II, laying foundations for the unification of Europe. The minimum is \$2,700 for community level conflict resolution, bringing about peace in an area of Sierra Leone.

"When we compare this to the cost of military intervention, the result is stark. Obviously, we're all aware of the difference in the budget of the OSCE, being a thousand times less than the core budget of Nato. We as British taxpayers are still paying an amount for the containment of Saddam Hussein, which is 20 times our contribution to the OSCE, let alone to non-governmental peace and conflict prevention organisations in Europe. We began to examine what would happen if those figures were reversed.

"The second point is pretty obvious, and it does underline the slow, steady progress of incredibly unglamorous peace-building activities that is necessary before any kind of official negotiations even start, if they are to be sustained. The third point is that women frequently offer the ingredients essential to the establishment of peace, particularly in addressing the feelings involved".

3.3.2. Camp David

The awkward conversation between *Guardian* Middle East editor and the Israeli embassy press office, reported to RiTW in correspondence reproduced above, in section 1.6.) testifies to the importance of how the Camp David talks involving President Clinton, Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat were reported. In August 2001, the *New York Review of Books* ran an analysis by an American writer, former Clinton adviser Robert Malley, and Hussein Agha from St Antony's College, Oxford.

They dispute the notion that Israel 'offered to withdraw from nearly all the occupied territory', as the embassy press office claimed – indeed, they dispute whether the Israeli position amounted to an offer at all. "Determined to preserve Israel's position in the event of failure, the Israelis always stopped one, if not several steps short of a proposal".

Meanwhile Yasser Arafat, they say, was persuaded that the Israelis were setting a trap, withdrawing from specific, intermediate steps as prescribed under the Oslo process in favour of relatively vague promises about a final settlement. "His primary objective thus became to cut his losses rather than to maximise his gains". The upshot, when the talks ended in failure, was presented to Israelis as proving that there was no possible negotiated end to the conflict, and that Arafat could not be a credible peace partner.

Some commentators did note at the time that, as Barak departed for Camp David, his cabinet was approving a tranche of \$293m spending on expanding the settlements on occupied land.

As long ago as last October, Uri Avnery of Gush Shalom, the Israeli peace bloc, described Barak's Camp David position as "far from the

Some commentators did note at the time that, as Barak departed for Camp David, his cabinet was approving a tranche of \$293m spending on expanding the settlements on occupied land.

minimum necessary to make peace with the Palestinian people and the whole Arab world: Palestinian sovereignty over East Jerusalem, and especially the compound of the holy mosques (Haram al-Sharif).

“Barak indicated at Camp David that he might ‘consider’ some cosmetic changes (and thereby he indeed broke some of the Israeli taboos concerning Jerusalem) but as a matter of fact he denied the Palestinians, the Arabs and the Muslims sovereignty over the compound of the holy mosques and the major Arab neighbourhoods in the city. That’s why the summit failed and the escalation started, leading up to the ‘al-Aqsa intifada’”.

It had nevertheless become accepted among Israeli public opinion that ‘Arafat blew up the Camp David summit’, Avnery wrote, but Barak had set out with five ‘red lines’ which he would not cross under any circumstances:

“Among them: Israeli sovereignty over the entire city of Jerusalem, No return to the 1967 border, Keeping 80% of the settlers were they are, no return of a single refugee to Israel!!! Afterwards he softened some of these stands, but not enough to come anywhere near an agreement”.

Of course the interpretation of such a summit is always keenly contested. But applying the checklist points, drawing on the insights of Conflict Analysis, would lead us to assess its credentials against the processes understood as generating and reproducing the violence. At one point it was reported that Barak was proposing to cut the number of settlements remaining in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to around 70.

Each would need to have its own road in and out, its own utility supplies including the scarce and vital resource of water, all guarded

by Israeli troops. Would that end the institutionalised inequalities of the occupation? Were the parties ready for the negotiating table, after what Malley and Agha describe as the ‘six years of broken promises’ which was the Palestinians’ view of the Oslo process?

3.4.1. Intervention or complicity?

Writing in the *Independent* in June 2001, Balkans specialist Tim Judah offered an assessment of the prospects for the conflict in Macedonia, ten years since the first shots rang out across the Slovenian border in what became the Yugoslavian wars of succession.

A “whole cottage industry” of journalists, academics, analysts and activists had prospered, he wrote, by “decrying Western inability to get involved in these Balkan conflicts – until it is too late”.

But can conflicts be properly understood if a prospective intervention is always presented as a possible response to developments on the ground? Judah himself, in a separate piece for the paper some days later, sounded a warning about repeating the mantra of Lord Owen, that a grand re-drawing of borders is necessary in order to settle separatist conflicts once and for all:

“Even airing such ideas is spurring on the extremists in Macedonia today, who believe that because he is a lord, David Owen is only saying what Mr Blair, President Chirac and President Bush have already been secretly plotting but can’t afford to admit publicly”.

The behaviour of parties to conflicts may be partly explained by their anticipation of an intervention, or their efforts to bring one about. Inevitably, their assessment of the likelihood of such a development influences their tactics, and such assessments arise from, or are conditioned by, their

...can conflicts be properly understood if a prospective intervention is always presented as a possible response to developments on the ground.

observations of what has gone before. The Birkbeck historian, Professor Mark Mazower, contributed a piece to the *Financial Times* in March 2001, interpreting the first major outbreak of violence in Macedonia as having been inspired by the West's previous intervention in Kosovo.

This had set a dangerous precedent. Nato had "taken sides", Mazower wrote, and allowed international borders to be changed by force, since no serious prognosis envisaged Kosovo being ruled again from Belgrade – "autonomy and eventual independence for the province seem far more likely". This had breathed new life into an old form of struggle – for a separatist group to present itself as an oppressed victim in order to draw in outside military help.

"Some KLA activists argue, if Kosovo, why not Macedonia, too, where large numbers of Albanians live as well? And so the West is forced to confront these unpredictable consequences of its Kosovo campaign".

UN Security Council Resolution 1244, which brought Nato's Kosovo bombing campaign to an end, called on the alliance to demilitarise the KLA. This was awkward, especially since, as was being widely reported by this stage, western agencies had trained the KLA and overseen its emergence in the first place.

Some intervening entities have interpreted the 'demilitarisation' of such a group as getting them to hand in or otherwise 'decommission' their weapons. The UN Transitional Administration in Eastern Slavonia had successfully trodden this route some years earlier.

Nato, on this occasion, opted instead to 'regularise the irregulars', getting them to form the Kosovo Protection Corps instead. Two years later, in August 2001, spokesmen for the Macedonian government, reeling from NLA attacks on their soldiers, were blaming KPC men for carrying

them out, flitting across the border from Nato-controlled territory.

The war, which saw Macedonia absorb hundreds of thousands of refugees, deepened divisions between the local Albanian population and the Macedonians themselves, many of whom tended to sympathise with the Kosovo Serbs. Dr Biljana Vankovska, Associate Professor at the University of Skopje, contributed a paper in 1999 to the Transnational Futures Foundation, arguing that:

"Albanians in Macedonia were highly sensitive to every development in the neighbouring autonomous province of Kosovo, while Macedonians were obedient to the federal politics and sympathetic to the Serbian leadership.

"Inter-ethnic tensions [in Macedonia] occurred several times and coincided with the similar incidents in Kosovo – in the 1960s and 1970s. According to Albanian scholars of the developments in Macedonia (eg the riots in the town of Tetovo) from 1968, many of the principal actors were actually Kosovars, who had fled Pristina three weeks earlier".

Sanctions against Belgrade during the 1990s, when Macedonia was trying to rebuild an economy which had stagnated under state control, cost billions of dollars' worth of trade - one reason why Macedonia was still beset by unemployment figures of 35%, and the average wage was just \$200 a month, by the time the NLA emerged. The scarcer the resources, the sharper the conflict. In all these ways, prior and existing interventions by the West exerted a profound influence over events in Macedonia in the first half of 2001.

At the time of writing, the next instalment of this ongoing intervention was expected to begin, with Nato troops about to be deployed on Operation Essential Harvest, against the backdrop of a

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ceasefire and draft political settlement brokered by Nato and EU diplomats and signed by the main local political parties. Once fully deployed, the 3,500-strong detachment was due to spend just 30 days in the country, collecting weapons handed over by the NLA. If the ceasefire broke down, it was to be promptly pulled back out.

Jonathan Steele in the *Guardian* warned: "Each side may be tempted to provoke the other into armed clashes, hoping the foreigners will help it... the real danger lies in the capital, Skopje, where around 200,000 Albanians live. What happens if Macedonian hardliners, determined to complete their country's partition, try to drive this huge minority out?"

"Shops have already been attacked and pogroms on a larger scale, fuelled by rumour and tit-for-tat actions, cannot be ruled out. Could foreign troops turn a blind eye if civilians are killed in great numbers?"

Like sanctions against Iraq, 'intervention' by outside powers in the Balkans is a term which may have to more closely examined and, perhaps, broken into constituent parts, if it is to be properly understood.

The principles of Conflict Analysis suggest that any proposed intervention be measured against its possible ramifications, not only within, but also outside the immediate conflict arena. What did Nato's bombing campaign mean for the future, not just of Kosovo, but for Macedonia and indeed the entire region - not just this year and next, but for the next decade, the next generation or the next century?

Another important question might be to ask how far the proposed intervention is aimed at punishing one party for its part in the conflict, in a tug-of-war formation based on DMA syndrome; and how far it holds the potential to address the needs and interests of all the parties, in a cat's-cradle formation. What might be the consequences of 'taking sides' as Mark Mazower put it?

'A potential time-bomb'

A similar critique of western interventions in the decline and fall of Yugoslavia was delivered as long ago as 1991, in the period leading up to the granting of diplomatic recognition to Croatia and Slovenia by the European Community. UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar, in correspondence with then German foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, warned the Community against a hasty recognition of claims to independent statehood, "being a potential time-bomb" as the letter put it.

In the event the warning was disregarded and the recognitions went ahead, with immediate effects on the ground chronicled by Michael Ignatieff, in *The Warrior's Honor*. The politicians responsible for steering Croatia out of the Yugoslav Federation drew up a constitution specifying that it was to be a country of and for Croats, not citizens of any nation who lived in Croatia.

In the village Ignatieff visited, this led to all non-Croat police officers being promptly sacked: a classic polarising situation, leading people to fear that 'only my own kind will protect me', as he puts it. The fears were exacerbated by extremists who spread dire warnings about the Yugoslav Army sending in tanks and urged people to arm themselves. Those extremists found their mirror image on the other side, of course, and both Serb and Croat paramilitary groups were quick to emerge.

With strings being pulled from Zagreb and Belgrade, prophecies of violence became self-fulfilling, and Ignatieff found himself spending a night in a bunker with a group of Croats, aiming rifles at Serbs who had previously been their friends and neighbours but who now occupied another bunker a few hundred metres away.

Crucially, he concludes, it was not that Croat nationalism had come welling up spontaneously from within, with the international

What happens if
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community then intervening to allow this feeling to be freely expressed. Intervention and, before that, the prospect of intervention, was part of a process in which the feeling of nationalism was *constructed* from raw materials of fear and suspicion and, in Ignatieff's words, 'the Narcissism of minor difference' between Serbs and Croats.

Later, according to some reports, the interwoven strands of intervention, violence and political nationalism took a more sinister twist than any to be found in the corridors of high diplomacy. At the time of writing, the eminent Balkans reporter, Roy Gutman was revisiting longstanding allegations that the US had clandestinely entered the war on Croatia's side, providing surveillance reports on concentrations of Yugoslav National Army troops in 1995.

This, he wrote in a special report for *Newsweek*, was part of Operation Storm, which saw the Krajina region cleared of its Serb inhabitants to be part of the new independent Croatia. Two hundred thousand fled as refugees, 150 were killed and thousands of houses were put to the torch. An unnamed former Administration official told the magazine that the White House had "the usual scatter of information about individual incidents" but no evidence that "Croats were going out of their way to terrorize the Serb population".

Gutman's story began with a drone reconnaissance aircraft taking off from a secret military base on the Adriatic coast, but went on to quote two named Croatian intelligence sources to the effect that this was part of an ongoing clandestine intervention, to gather and provide militarily sensitive information to Zagreb.

- How far did the availability of such information affect the

calculations, by the Croats, as to the feasibility of a manoeuvre like Operation Storm in the first place?

- Would it have gone ahead, were it not for the existing intervention and the prospect of more?
- And what part did the clearance of the Krajina play in adding to Serb grievances – grievances ripe for exploitation by unscrupulous nationalist politicians?

Independence for Croatia and Slovenia gave rise to 'me-tooism', with the referendum on independence for Bosnia leading to the split of that republic along ethnic lines and the bloodiest episode on European soil for fifty years – the 'time bomb' that Genscher was warned about.

Perez de Cuellar had 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, an intervention based on these principles might expand the space for *transcendence* – a creative

outcome, 'going beyond', delivering something more than, or different from, the opening demands of any one party.

Scope for transcendence depends on the number of creative combinations possible within the conflict model. Plans based on transcendence do not depend on one side emerging as the winner. They make no sense as news developments, therefore, in the context of reporting which models the conflict as a zero-sum game of two

Intervention and, before that, the prospect of intervention, was part of a process in which the feeling of nationalism was constructed from raw materials of fear and suspicion

parties contesting a single goal.

The cat's-cradle model, including many parties with possibly interdependent needs and interests, may be more helpful for readers and audiences to assess properly the likely consequences of any particular intervention. That requires the effects of prior or existing interventions to be taken into account, not ignored as though the slate is clean and, because violence is taking place on the other side of a border, for instance, it can be assessed in isolation. To do so, in Conflict Analysis terms, is to mistake conflict arena for conflict formation.

3.4.2. Non-military interventions

Readers and audiences of western news services have followed events in the Indonesian province of Kalimantan, on the island of Borneo, with a certain horrified fascination. A piece in the *Economist* in April 2001 started in typically blood-curdling fashion:

“In Kuala Kapuas, the latest battlefield in the long war between indigenous Dayaks and Madurese migrants, the warriors with their traditional mandau swords swap tales of eating human liver. The heads, livers and hearts of their victims have magical properties, they say. Beheading is their traditional way of killing their enemies, state-of-the-art magic their secret weapon”.

This piece, unlike some others, did go on to explain the violence as being constructed by intelligible, if dysfunctional processes – rather than leaving us to conclude that it wells up naturally from within the savage breast. The trans-migration policy pursued, first by the Dutch colonial powers, then by the authorities of independent Indonesia, amounted to a

form of structural violence. Madurese incomers tended to dominate local commerce, and the economic meltdown of 1997-8 had seen living standards plummet and resentments sharpen.

“Dayak powers are winning the day”, it continued, “among the charred tree-trunks of old forest fires”. Fast-forward two months, to a major investigation in the *Guardian* about the paper industry and its impact on Indonesia's rainforests. Correspondent John Aglionby had visited a paper mill, in this case on the neighbouring island of Sumatra, where government regulations on the use of non-renewable timber were being persistently flouted.

The piece was pegged to the release of a report by Friends of the Earth, *Paper Tiger, Hidden Dragons*. It traced the involvement of UK banks in financing the production of wood pulp and paper, which, the report said, threatened to destroy all Indonesia's rainforest trees by 2020 if the present rate was maintained.

There are threads here to be pulled together. Kalimantan is one area of Indonesia where a traditional way of life is followed by many and remembered by many more – not just for its colourful beliefs about the magical properties imparted by consuming human body parts. Environmental despoliation of the kind exposed by the *Guardian* is a threat to this way of life, based, as it is, on the forest.

Why is Asian Pulp and Paper (APP), the firm at the centre of the investigation, now producing wood pulp at an ever-faster rate? One reason is that given by Friends of the Earth. In its rush to increase production, it has flooded the world market with cheap paper, driving down prices, and requiring, in turn, still greater volume to generate the same profit.

the warriors with their traditional mandau swords swap tales of eating human liver. The heads, livers and hearts of their victims have magical properties, they say

The other reason is that APP, like many big industrial concerns in Indonesia, is part of a conglomerate, which borrowed money on international markets to finance its expansion under President Suharto. In March of 2001 the company froze repayment of principal and interest on debts worth 12.2 billion dollars. The monetary crisis, or *krismon*, which triggered the economic collapse, saw the local currency, the Rupiah (in which earnings are paid), fall sharply against the dollar (in which the borrowing was denominated).

Hence the servicing of debts to international lending institutions suddenly required Indonesian firms to run faster to stand still. During the *krismon* came an intervention by the International Monetary Fund, including an instruction, on November 1, 1997, to close 16 banks. This caused a run on Indonesia's banks, which had to be rescued with \$60 billion of loans. This, in turn, plunged the government into domestic debt and imposed deep cuts in public spending. Anne Pettifor, co-ordinator of Jubilee Plus at the New Economics Foundation, takes up the story:

"Before 1997, Indonesia had no significant domestic debts. Today, domestic and external debt-service expenditures make up 41% of expenditures and 61% of tax revenues.

"To pay the domestic debt bill, the IMF is recommending a 'quick fix': the mobilisation of revenues through the removal of subsidies on kerosene and other fuels – the poor financing the cost of the IMF blunder. The fuel price increases led to rioting in Jakarta", destabilising still further the central authority.

"The injustice of Indonesia's predicament is this: those co-responsible

for the creation of her unpayable debts – G7 creditors, the IMF and the World Bank – do not bear the financial risks associated with the loans they made to Suharto. Instead the risk is transferred almost entirely on to the poor. Not only are they de-linked from their financial responsibilities, perversely, they gain from major policy errors and go on to compound them".

A multi-dimensional crisis

This account illuminates Indonesia's 'multi-dimensional crisis', present in all the vertical and horizontal conflicts besetting the world's fourth most populous country. In the violence in Kalimantan, central authority commands scant, if any legitimacy, for many reasons – one being that it cannot afford to field a credible police force or to enforce regulations on commercial activities like the paper industry.

As in Croatia, people therefore form groups for their own protection and to advance their own interests, which intensifies the conflict – a syndrome described in another Indonesian word, *pangkelompokan*. The IMF remedy for the lack of central government funds would risk widespread unrest, further undermining the authorities. As violence and disorder increase, the confidence of international investors is harder to recapture, ensuring that the Rupiah carries on bumping along at the bottom of the international currency league – though this predicament, at least, did ease with the accession of President Megawati and her initial, apparently conciliatory approach to conflicts.

At the time of writing an IMF delegation was visiting Jakarta to assess the wisdom of granting what is generally reported as 'further

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assistance'. Some raised the prospect of ultimate military intervention. BBC Special Correspondent Fergal Keane, writing in the *Independent*, advised the incoming President George W Bush to brush up on the country as a possible successor, with some obvious parallels, to Yugoslavia on the US foreign policy agenda.

Given the record, is it correct to present intervention, whether economic or military, as 'further assistance'? Or would this presentation of events, by actual and potential intervening parties, have to be supplemented with an examination of the impact of previous or existing interventions? Anne Pettifor suggested that a more worthwhile intervention might be to write off some of the debts:

"The precedent for such an initiative can be found in Indonesia in 1970 when western creditors, after a process of mediation led by the independent central banker, Herman Josef Abs, gave a fillip to Suharto's regime by recommending the write-off of 50% of Indonesia's debt; and reduced her debt payments to just 6% of export earnings. Today, Wahid's government spends 50% of her export earnings repaying debts incurred under Suharto's regime".

Speaking at RtW Seminar Five, she urged journalists to include material about the record of intervention as essential context in reporting the country's affairs:

"I speak as someone who started campaigning on debt in 1996, when everyone, all the NGOs laughed at what we were trying to do and said there is just no way that the British people are going to show any interest whatsoever in Third World debt and international finance, and if you think that you can talk about this to millions of people, and reduce it soundbites, "Drop the Debt" or whatever, you must be crazy.

"We did that and in the end it was a big global story, and I think what was behind what we were trying to do was the refusal to patronise the British people. We refused to accept that the British people would not be interested in the complexities of international finance, and we set out to talk to them about it in ways that they would understand. ...

"I think the reason why these stories don't get in is that there is a culture in journalism which is that dumb people don't really want to understand these issues, it's not really going to turn them on. My experience of ordinary people is that they can grasp complex issues, they can understand international finance they can talk about in supermarket queues and get excited and then do something about it".

Indonesia struggles with a difficult legacy. The genocide of 1965-6, which may have claimed as many as a million lives and accompanied the rise of Suharto, is only now beginning to be addressed and processed. The New Order suppressed conflicts under a mantra of unity-in-diversity, and authoritarian rule was brought to an end amid violence and chaos. A larger narrative is the trauma of the Javanese, switching from colonisers to colonised, as the Portuguese and the Dutch snatched their empire from them.

So it would be unbalanced and misleading to suggest that Indonesia would be doing just fine but for the blundering IMF intervention of 1997; but equally unbalanced and misleading to frame it out of reports of conflict, like the one involving the Dayaks and Madurese, lest 'stock' explanations prevail by default, giving rise to an uncritical assumption that these incorrigible conflicting parties require 'us' to ride to the rescue.

Reporters in Bosnia juggled with a conundrum about intervention – 'something must be done' versus 'nothing can be done'. It is important

I think the reason why these stories don't get in is that there is a culture in journalism which is that dumb people don't really want to understand these issues, it's not really going to turn them on

to equip readers and audiences to be more sophisticated, to discriminate between various forms of intervention. For this, reports need to explain the continuing influence of previous and ongoing interventions, and examine their ramifications across the conflict formation, not just in the conflict arena.

3.4.3. An interdependent world

If, to be relevant in reports of conflict, interventions need not be military, neither need they be carried out by states, governments or even supra-national institutions like the IMF.

Viewers of *CBS Evening News*, watching in June 2001, saw presenter Dan Rather introduce an item about the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with the sobering thought that as many as two and half million people may have died in three years of violence.

Reporter Mark Phillips had travelled to the east of the country, an area controlled by insurgent forces of the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD), to see an open-cast col-tan mine being worked. Col-tan, he explained, was a mineral essential for the manufacture of electronic equipment like computer games consoles. The explosion of demand had driven up its value to \$200 a pound, creating a deeply divisive conflict issue as rival factions struggled for control of supplies. A point Phillips adroitly made by intercutting images of futuristic war, generated by a Sony Playstation, with shots of central Africa's rolling hill country and the miners at work with picks and shovels.

The RCD leader, Adolphe Onasumba, explained on camera that the col-tan business was paying the bills for him and his men, to the tune of a million dollars a month. His patrons, the Rwandan government, were receiving a much larger share – three times their annual military

budget, according to the voice-over. Col-tan had “taken a small, nasty war in the centre of Africa and turned it into a big business, affecting a high-tech world”, Phillips said – “as long as there's a market, the trade, and the war it's paying for, will be difficult to stop”.

Some of the miners said they had no idea what the mineral they were extracting was used for – they were saving for their education, in a country where many public services have broken down after years of violent conflict.

The economic inequalities, made visual in the contrast between the games console and the hand-tools wielded by the men, were part of a *structure*.

Conflict as a development issue

The piece was impressive in projecting a picture of conflict as a development issue – a starting point for analysis at the opposite pole from DMA syndrome. It also effectively connected ‘us’ – viewers in the West – with the problems perpetuating the conflict. The economic inequalities, made visual in the contrast between the games console and the hand-tools wielded by the men, were part of a *structure* – not the ‘fault’ of an individual or group, but a system of relations, which makes wars likely to break out and

“difficult to stop”.

Some RTW participants saw, in this way of tracing the threads which link readers and audiences with protagonists in overseas stories, a promising way of selling them to newsdesks and commissioning editors unconvinced about what “real coverage that is meaningful and that works” might entail.

Ron McCullagh, director of Insight News Television and a veteran of successfully placing ambitious treatments of stories from Africa on mainstream outlets, attended RTW Seminar Three:

“We sell our material to broadcasters all over the world so we don't

see this as a uniquely British problem. So I would say that we would have to accept defeat in attempting traditional analysis of Africa. I would suggest that we have to find new ways of bringing our audiences into the stories, getting them interested.

“I have a suggestion: a word I heard for the first time a few days ago it’s ‘consumanism’, an amalgam of consumerism and humanitarianism and the remarkable thought that most individuals’ power is in what they buy rather than what they vote for. It’s the idea of, say, diamonds from Sierra Leone, where did your diamonds come from and let’s work back from there. So I’m suggesting that we try a new tack here and this is one suggestion”.

Jonathan Baker, newly-appointed World News editor at the BBC and until then editor of the *Ten O’clock News*, spoke at the RtW Round Table about focus group research the corporation had commissioned and about what were, for those present, some pleasingly counter-intuitive findings about international news.

Ask a group of viewers to select from a set of categories what they would like to see on their news programmes and international stories come low down the list. But if the same viewers are then invited to watch a compilation of broadcast material, and to name afterwards the items they particularly liked, they will often pick the packages from overseas.

Baker suggested that there may be several reasons for this: such pieces often tended to be more pictorial than those contributed by reporters on ‘home’ beats, the best camera crews were deployed on them and so on.

In another experiment, a focus group had been asked to respond to a brace of films for the *Ten O’clock News*, commissioned by Baker

himself, on the war in Angola. Why were hostilities flaring up again, resulting in landmines now being relaid. This, in the very tracts of bush graced by the late Princess of Wales in helmet and flak-jacket, when she lent her support to the international campaign to ban the weapons?

One piece had contained a throwaway line, Baker explained, that Britain bought more oil from Angola than from Kuwait, with the revenues helping to perpetuate the conflict. This marginal aspect of the film was picked up straight away by members of the focus group to whom it was shown:

“There was a strong response to that... [they asked] what are you saying to us here? Are you saying that we should be boycotting this in some way, are you saying that we shouldn’t be buying our petrol from them?”

“It does open up all sorts of interesting arguments about whether we have a role in making these kinds of connections, when the world is so much smaller, and shrinking all the time.

“Whether we should actually be laying things out for people and saying, this is the way it is, we give you the information, you draw your own conclusions – or whether we should try and push them in various directions to do things”.

Where does intervention begin? As journalists, there is no real operative choice of whether to ‘get involved’ or ‘just report the facts’. Facts are *always already* conditioned by the prospect of our reporting them, even before they happen. And the course of a conflict in Indonesia or Angola might be affected by decisions we take, or suffer to be taken on our behalf, well before it occurs to any of us that ‘something must be done’.

In short, we now inhabit an interdependent world – an insight not

‘consumanism’, an amalgam of consumerism and humanitarianism and the remarkable thought that most individuals’ power is in what they buy rather than what they vote for

lost on the members of BBC focus groups who were hungry for information about the ways in which they themselves were connected with world events.

Beyond realism

BBC News producer Darius Bazargan, a participant in the RtW Round Table, contrasted the discourse of international news with that of business news:

“With business stories, people that read them are somehow empowered by them - you can buy shares or sell them on the basis of what you read, and companies can grow wealthy or powerful - or not, depending on what the people in the market decide to do. Yet I can be very interested in foreign news and yet I can't change foreign policy and politicians' foreign policy values are never listed when they go for election”.

Most international reporting still inhabits a realist orthodoxy, in which “politicians' foreign policy values” are the key to understanding world affairs – states, governments and (other) men with guns are the only change agents. But the system of relations between people in different parts of an interdependent world permeates our daily lives – whenever we buy anything in the supermarket, make pension contributions, use the internet or put petrol in a car, the decision we make resonates in faraway places.

To frame out the market for Col-tan from reports of the DRC crisis – or, for an alternative, the similar story which could be told about the cobalt concessions controlled by the Zimbabwean military - is not simply an act of omission but also an act of *commission*, obscuring this system of relations, which constitutes our relative positions in an

interdependent world. To map the possibilities for change arising out of our daily lives is to expose this system and to make conflicts more transparent.

This need not entail journalists, in Jonathan Baker's word, ‘pushing’ readers and audiences to respond in particular ways. But the analysis presented here is not marginal. The American Social Investment Forum estimates that as much as two trillion dollars is now invested according to socially responsible criteria in the US alone. Both the Dow Jones and the FT-SE now have ethical stock listings.

Members of the ethical investment community, campaigners for better information on product labelling, NGOs now increasingly linking, say environmental damage with the activities of British business, as Friends of the Earth did in Indonesia, could all be more prominent sources in international news than they are presently.

Illuminating the pathways readers, listeners and viewers could tread for themselves, in the sense of opting to do something as well as opting to stop doing something, could likewise be a more prominent analytical factor in reports of conflict, without going so far as to push them into doing so. It would, after all, demand to be treated as openly and impartially as any other form of intervention.

‘Liddism’ and the new security paradigm

American policy towards the twin bogeymen, Iran and Iraq, is known as ‘dual containment’. Containing the threat from ‘rogue states’ has become steadily more prominent in the security rhetoric emanating from official Washington and is, of course, central to the logic of National Missile Defence.

...whenever we buy anything in the supermarket, make pension contributions, use the internet or put petrol in a car, the decision we make resonates in faraway places.

The system is supposed to defend against direct violence by mad or bad leaders who see the acquisition of ballistic missile capability as a way of standing up to the US - actuated, according to the same rhetoric, by envy or resentment of Americans' freedom or way of life.

(This became an important analytical factor in the explanation given to Americans for the attack of September 11. Karen Hughes, President Bush's special counsellor and senior press officer during his election campaign, said on a television discussion programme in November 2001, "they hate us because we elect our leaders".)

There are other explanations, of course. In an interdependent world, that way of life is, to some extent, a counterpart of the way of life of people in poorer countries, which may be – or may become – 'rogue states'. The system of relations linking the opportunities and prosperity available to people in, say, Kansas and Kinshasa may also contain elements of structural and cultural violence.

The workings of the col-tan industry could be seen as a form of economic exploitation, existing in conditions of excessive material inequality, so much so that the miners had no access to education unless they saved enough out of their wages to pay for it. The UN proceedings on the Rwandan genocide suggest that relations within the international community are inflected by an enduring civilisational arrogance, a colonial relic leading conflicts in Africa to be dismissed as 'tribal anarchy' – which, in turn, influences perceptions about the range of feasible interventions.

The understanding of conflict arising from discussions within Reporting the World suggests the need for an alternative security

paradigm to the 'containment of rogue states', as a basis for reporting and interpreting international affairs. Professor Paul Rogers, of Bradford University Peace Studies Department, proposes one such paradigm in a working paper titled *Politics in the next 50 years: the changing nature of international conflict*. Its importance lies in mapping global systems as a context within which, Rogers argues, any conflict in the coming half-century must be seen if it is to be properly understood:

"The factors most likely to influence the development of conflict in the coming decades are the socio-economic divide, environmental constraints and the spread of military technologies, not least weapons of mass destruction.

"Secondly, this is likely to lead to conflicts involving anti-elite action from within the marginalized majority, rapidly increasing migratory pressures and conflict over environmental factors, especially strategic resources, all within the context of middle-ranking states unwilling to accept a western hegemony.

"Finally, the western perception that the status quo can be maintained, if needs be by military means, is not sustainable, given the vulnerabilities of advanced wealthy states to paramilitary action and asymmetric warfare".

So Rogers does not dismiss the dangers of proliferating weapons systems or irresponsible political and military leaders. Instead he urges greater attention to the underlying factors behind the emergence of such threats, particularly the system of relations at work in apportioning shares of strategic resources, and human effects on environmental constraints in the form of, say, climate change or land degradation.

The understanding of conflict arising from discussions within Reporting the World suggests the need for an alternative security paradigm to the 'containment of rogue states', as a basis for reporting and interpreting international affairs.

Bogus asylum seekers'

It is the “rapidly increasing migratory pressures” Rogers refers to which have brought perhaps the most tangible evidence into the lives of people in wealthy countries that the status quo is not sustainable.

Efforts to construct ever-higher walls to keep out the “marginalized majority” are an example of what he calls ‘liddism’ – the notion that a lid can be kept indefinitely on a cauldron of resentments from the socio-economic divide, brought to the boil by increasingly prevalent media images of a more privileged way of life which point up the extent of that divide.

This conflict has, of course, provided many a front page or top story in UK-based media over the last eighteen months or so, with a strong element of DMA syndrome. The dualism, leading to Manicheism, which designates ‘rogue states’, has been discernible in microcosm in some reporting of ‘bogus asylum seekers’.

Each contains a suggestion of ‘self’ and ‘other’ – ‘they’ are precisely what ‘we’ are not – fine in their ‘proper place’ but a threat to us if they transgress the boundary by coming here instead. In the image which first captured the picture desk’s eye on the London *Evening Standard*, they present a perverted, alien notion of family by thrusting their suspiciously docile babies under the noses of passing commuters, begging for cash.

‘They’ are scroungers and layabouts: Romanian gipsies have “a code which values begging more highly than labour”; if they work at all, it is for “cash in hand”, cheating the taxpayer. ‘We’ are in danger of being “swamped” by a “rising tide” of would-be immigrants,

envious of our way of life.

All this largesse threatens to rob us of the fruits of our prosperity. Who are ‘we’ anyhow? A study of the *Daily Mail*, sister of the *Standard* and another paper closely associated with the campaign against ‘bogus asylum seekers’, throws up some interesting results, particularly on the odd, revealing occasions when for some reason people change categories, from ‘other’ to ‘self’.

The Concorde crash in Paris posed a particular problem. A story of obvious global importance, worthy of a front-page lead, but for one highly inconvenient detail - all the victims were Germans. So, instead, they were presented as “hard-working family members”, who’d saved up for the holiday of a lifetime, when disaster struck.

What really caught the papers’ imagination in the Paddington train crash was that people in the foremost carriage suffered the worst impact. “They were among the best of us”, the *Mail* commented in its front-page lead: “hard-working family contributors”, conscientiously trying to reach the office on time, moving to the front of the train to disembark as it came to rest.

It’s a formula which crops up in the unlikeliest of circumstances. A special report on Zimbabwe’s land conflict featured one white farming family, the wife and mother a former model, whose plight “hard-working families everywhere” would recognise.

Each contains a suggestion of ‘self’ and ‘other’ – ‘they’ are precisely what ‘we’ are not – fine in their ‘proper place’ but a threat to us if they transgress the boundary by coming here instead.

Tracing the Links

As before, the DMA syndrome in this treatment of the asylum story conceals a system of relations in an interdependent world. To expose

it is to make the conflict transparent. What would this entail? As with Paul Rogers' paper, it is important to trace the links between conditions in the countries where migratory pressures are being generated, and various forms of intervention by 'advanced wealthy countries'.

One major source of migrants in Britain is Afghanistan, from where a group of airline passengers hijacked a plane at London Stansted Airport, in February 2000. These people were demonised to an extent that callers rang a phone-in programme on Sky News to advocate, in apparent seriousness, a range of measures up to and including hauling them out on to the tarmac to be shot.

Such an extreme view called for some context. For a reporter on the spot, contributing to the programme from the roof of a satellite truck overlooking the tarmac apron, there was therefore an opportunity to remind viewers that Afghanistan has been beset by decades of violent conflict.

These were the people who successfully threw off the Soviet yoke, a struggle which led indirectly to the fall of the Iron Curtain. When Red Army tanks rolled out of Kabul in 1989, the lesson was not lost

These were the people who successfully threw off the Soviet yoke, a struggle which led indirectly to the fall of the Iron Curtain.

on peoples across Eastern Europe. The Afghans having, in a sense, won the Cold War for us, they were then more or less abandoned to their fate, I suggested. There was no Marshall Aid for a devastated country, just the weapons the West had poured into it to assist the Mujahideen in taking on the might of Moscow – not the root cause of the conflict between rival groups, but one of many factors increasing the level of violence.

The other interesting element of the construction of 'self' and 'other' is that many would-be immigrants to Britain come from societies which place, if anything, a greater premium on hard work and family values than most British people tend to do.

Showing, for example, Turkish Kurds, settled in north London, studying in English language classes they have organised, or running family catering businesses set up through courses offered at their own community centre, is a useful corrective to what has become a particularly clichéd form of dualism. And it requires no more words to point out that, under British law, asylum seekers are not allowed to do paid work even if they wanted to, than it does to remind people about the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. ■

4. BEFORE AND AFTER

the Checklist Points as a ‘makeover for International news stories

These pieces were written as experiments in applying the checklist points to particular stories. Each is a set of two contrasting treatments of a particular development in a major international news story.

Each piece is compiled as for an imaginary London broadsheet newspaper, and assumes that 800-1,000 words are available for a hefty news feature.

The material is drawn partly from contemporary reports and partly from other sources. One significant exception is the story, in this first set on Israel and the Palestinians, of the late Ibrahim Issan, founder of the Hope Flowers school in Bethlehem, which dates from a previous closure in the occupied territories, in 1999.

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.

4.1. Two versions of Israel and the Palestinians, October 2000

4.1.1.

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.

Mob

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

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.

Chaos

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.

Concessions

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.

Some analysts believe Mr Arafat needed a fight with Israel to shore up his wavering authority among his own people.

4.1.2.

‘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 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.

Shots

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 Avnery, 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.

Riots

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 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.

Grassroots

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.

Grievances

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 guerrilla 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.

Nervous

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.

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

4.1.3. Commentary

To 'frame out' structural factors, like the institutionalised inequalities in water supply, is to fall back on the thesis that violence can be wholly understood as the expression of 'ancient hatreds', welling up from within.

To frame them in, when reporting episodes of direct violence is to allow for a greater range of possibilities for change. The intifada was triggered by Ariel Sharon's visit to Jerusalem and the exchanges of violence which followed it, but it came at the end of a long hot summer and three years of drought.

This allows us to see how 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.

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 Messrs Issan, Avnery and Galtung, not out of a dewy-eyed preference for 'little people making peace' but a steely-eyed determination to focus on change agents, unburdened by the preconception that change is the sole prerogative of states, governments or men with guns.

This allows us to see how the violence is being constructed by intelligible, if dysfunctional processes – opening the prospect that negotiated adjustments in those processes may change the conflict.

4.2. Two versions of Macedonia, April 2001

4.2.1.

Massacre ruins hopes for peace in Macedonia

Peace talks aimed at ending the conflict in Macedonia lay in ruins last night after the massacre of eight soldiers and policemen by Albanian rebels who then mutilated their bodies.

The atrocity took place in an ambush just outside the mountain village of Vejce, near the border with Kosovo, when a joint army and police patrol was attacked with machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades, a Macedonian government spokesman said. Six men were wounded, and three vehicles destroyed.

The bodies appeared to have been cut with knives after they died, he added. One man's skull had been smashed in, probably with the butt of a rifle.

The attack was believed to be the work of guerrilla fighters from the National Liberation Army, which occupied hills overlooking Macedonia's second city of Tetovo, until it was forced out last month. Ali Ahmeti, a political leader of the NLA, denied that his men had attacked the patrol, saying they may have fired in "self-defence".

The incident came as a senior minister in the Albanian government raised the spectre of a greater Albania, including Kosovo and the western section of Macedonia, where ethnic Albanians form a majority.

Emergency

Justice Minister Arben Imami said the desire for unification was in line with global trends: "There are no two Vietnams, no two Germanys and soon there will be no two Koreas", he declared.

In Skopje, where Macedonian authorities have accused the Tirana government of supporting Albanian extremists, the National Defence Council was in emergency session last night to consider urgent military action in response to the incident.

The midnight bulletin of the Albanian-language news was taken off the air. Agence France Presse reported that the Macedonian television service had accused the programme's producers of working against the interests of the state and stirring up extremism.

The Tetovo area, which was back under curfew last night, has been swept by rumours in recent days that a major Spring offensive is imminent. The NLA has set up a war chest modelled on the system used to bankroll the KLA's arms build-up in Kosovo.

Fazli Veliu, president of the overseas branch of the National

...the Macedonian television service had accused the programme's producers of working against the interests of the state and stirring up extremism.

Movement of Kosovo, said a National Liberation Fund had been established to channel international donations to the Macedonian rebels.

Western leaders fear the outbreak of a fourth Balkan war. Lord Robertson of Port Ellen, the NATO Secretary General, said: "I condemn the cowardly acts of the extremists and my message is simple: the violence must end and their tactics must not be successful".

Foreign Secretary Robin Cook repeated his declaration that the NLA were "terrorists" and reaffirmed British support for the government in its "proportionate response to provocation".

Militant

But many ethnic Albanians appear ready to throw in their lot with the guerrillas. One young activist from Tetovo, who has escorted journalists to rebel strongholds, said last night: "Nobody cares for our rights, and those who are most militant have decided the gun is the only way for their voices to be heard".

After fierce fighting in March and April, the European Union began applying pressure to the Skopje government to accede to Albanian demands for official recognition of their language and status within the country. The Albanians in Macedonia Crisis Centre, a US-based group of emigres, has been circulating findings from the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, which has criticised the existing citizenship law as discriminating

against minorities.

Since the NLA was driven out of the hills, the police, 93 percent of whom are Macedonian Slavs, have been making arbitrary arrests of men in and around Tetovo on charges of aiding and supporting terrorism.

Coalition

The fighting has hardened opinions on both sides. Editor-in-chief Branko Geroski complained in a recent edition of Dnevnik, a Skopje newspaper, "Macedonians have always believed that politicians in power are giving far too many rights to Albanians. People feel let down. They realise that all the concessions failed to bury the Albanians' dream of creating their own state in western Macedonia".

The government has concentrated on encouraging the two main Albanian parties to bury their differences and join together as partners in the ruling coalition, to minimise the scope for political mischief-making - a process analysts expected to become more difficult after the weekend's renewed conflict.

On the streets of the capital, a new, polarised reality is taking shape. Before the NLA crossed the border in their first offensive, the Ak Saraj tea house in the old Albanian market quarter of Skopje echoed to the tones of several languages, including the Slavic tongue of the Macedonians and the occasional strain of Turkish. Now, only Albanian is spoken there.

Macedonian parties condemn violence after gunmen kill eight police and soldiers

There was condemnation across the political spectrum in Macedonia last night after a joint police and army patrol was ambushed near the Kosovo border, with the loss of eight men and six others wounded.

Both the main parties representing the country's minority Albanians distanced themselves from the killings, almost certainly the work of guerrillas from the self-styled National Liberation Army. Ali Ahmeti, a political leader of the NLA, denied that his men had attacked the patrol, saying they may have fired in "self-defence".

But the Macedonian government said the soldiers and policemen had done nothing to provoke the volley of machine gun fire and rocket-propelled grenades which also destroyed three vehicles. A spokesman

added that the bodies had been cut with knives and one man's skull caved in, apparently with a rifle butt, before they could be recovered.

Stevo Pendarovski, from the Interior Ministry, said: "We are very concerned that this is the start of new violence. We didn't expect this atrocity, which is unparalleled in our history. Maybe some people are not happy because the political dialogue is going well".

The NLA seized territory earlier this year around Macedonia's second city of Tetovo, in the west of the country where most people are of Albanian descent.

They retreated last month after the Macedonian army deployed artillery and helicopters to bombard their mountain positions, but not before putting forward a list of demands for improved civil and political rights.

The single incident at the weekend claimed more lives than were lost in several

weeks of the stand-off in March and April, with one western military expert in Skopje suggesting the motive was to re-focus international attention. "They want an over-reaction: they want a Racak", he said - a reference to the discovery of several dozen

bodies in a Kosovo village which was seen in Nato capitals as a massacre and triggered the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999.

The suggestion that the NLA harbour the same eventual goal as the KLA, a de facto redrawing of boundaries to create an Albanian state, was put to Brigadier Hamish Rollo, head of British troops serving with the Nato-led KFOR force in Kosovo.

"The reality on the ground was that the connection did not amount to much earlier, but now that has changed. The NLA has momentum. These links (with Kosovo Albanian fighters) will be reflected by real support, by real people and by real guns", he told Reuters in telephone

Both the main parties representing the country's minority Albanians distanced themselves from the killings, almost certainly the work of guerrillas from the self-styled National Liberation Army

interview from Pristina.

Macedonians have been nervously eyeing events in Kosovo as well as the political disposition of Albania itself, for any sign of aspirations to unite all the Albanian-speaking peoples in a unified territory. But the Tirana government united to slap down one minister who broke a taboo by calling for a Greater Albania.

Support

Justice Minister Arben Imami said he was sure the idea would win international diplomatic support - a notion which proved mistaken. The US ambassador rebuked him personally and foreign minister Paskal Milo said, "such statements damage the Albanian cause".

If territorial ambitions remain a minority pursuit, there is evidence of genuine causes for Albanian grievances to match the Macedonians' fears. The policemen who died were among the 93 percent of the force drawn from the two-thirds majority Macedonian population. Albanian families in the Tetovo area have complained that their menfolk are now subject to arbitrary arrest, detention and beatings.

Difficulties

Some have been charged with serious terrorist offences, despite the government's repeated assertion that the NLA are a bunch of interlopers from Kosovo, not a home-grown paramilitary grouping.

Meanwhile their children even face difficulties in finding nursery education, according to Shpresa Sinani, president of the Tetovo Albanian Women's League. She said the city has five Macedonian kindergartens, but only one for Albanians, who comprise more than three-quarters of the 80,000 population.

Macedonia is one of Europe's poorest countries, with official unemployment at 35 percent and the average wage some \$200 a month. The political reforms under discussion in Skopje include plans to empower local authorities to raise and spend their own money. Ms Sinani called for some to be allocated to provide more Albanian nursery schools. Practical help with such basic needs is available, in the meantime, from aid agencies.

Some years ago, Search for Common Ground in Skopje established its Mozaik programme, providing interethnic kindergartens for four-to-six-year-olds. Executive director Eran Fraenkel paid tribute to parents still prepared to send their

children to a cross-community group: "In Macedonia, most people from different ethnic groups live in parallel worlds", he said, "that very rarely intersect. The neighbourhoods are segregated. The media [are] in different languages. The kids go to different schools. These kindergartens are a way of breaking that cycle".

Reform

International diplomats have welcomed signs of negotiated political reform. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, a Brussels-based human rights quango, recently commended government plans to overhaul Macedonia's citizenship laws, which it had previously criticised as discriminating against minorities.

There are Macedonians, at least in the capital, Skopje, who believe that a slide into further violence is far from inevitable. The outbreak of fighting earlier this year led to panic buying. A few days after the beginning of the crisis, sales doubled, the owner of the Kam supermarket chain recalled. One shopper laid in 100 tins of sardines but then, some days later, brought them back. "The lady was asking to return the cans because she realised there wouldn't be a war".

There is evidence of genuine causes for Albanian grievances to match the Macedonians' fears

There are Macedonians, at least in the capital, Skopje, who believe that a slide into further violence is far from inevitable.

4.2.3. Commentary

There are several points of Conflict Analysis here.

Explanation for violence

Do we see how violence is being constructed, how the conditions for violence are being perpetuated by structural factors, inequalities and barriers to freedom and opportunity?

Or are other explanations left to prevail by default, including, the expression of atavistic ‘hatreds’?

In either of these two narratives, what is the logical next step? If the violence is seen as being constructed by intelligible, if dysfunctional processes, then some form of negotiated intervention in those processes may remove it.

If it is the clash of ethnic identities, then the logical next step may be more violence – deciding who ‘started it’, then coercing or punishing that party.

(Dis)aggregation

Is the conflict being presented as the clash of two homogenous aggregates of identity, interest and perspective? A zero-sum game of two parties, with any gain for one requiring an exactly proportionate loss for the other?

Or are there divisions among both Macedonians and Albanians, and other parties whose involvement is crucial to understanding the dynamic at work here?

Again, this may affect what seems to make sense as a logical response. The bipolar model can make the parties feel they are faced with only two alternatives – victory or defeat.

Peace initiatives

‘Conflict’ is not a synonym for ‘violence’. People can inhabit a conflict which is not violent – it depends on the society’s resources for managing the conflict non-violently.

News is about change – we pick up today’s paper to find out what’s changed since yesterday.

It follows from these two propositions that anyone working to replenish a society’s resources, for handling conflict non-violently, is newsworthy – hence the importance of focussing on peace initiatives of the kind Search for Common Ground offer with their Mozaik programme.

Words

Words to think carefully about. ‘Massacre’ was used to describe the deaths of the eight police and soldiers, in at least two newspapers.

This is – rightly – an emotive and powerful word. Doesn’t it have to mean the killing of people who were unarmed, and who their attackers *knew* were unarmed? This was an ambush and a very violent incident, but was it a massacre?

‘Atrocity’ likewise. OK to attribute it, but is it OK to use it in the journalist’s own words?

‘Fierce’ fighting – a cliché, isn’t fighting always fierce? What does it

...anyone working to replenish a society’s resources, for handling conflict non-violently, is newsworthy.

contribute to the perceptions of all parties about the conflict?

'Slavs' – a discussion ensued at the seminar about the use of the word, 'Slavs' to denote the Macedonian majority population, after which the BBC World Service stopped using it.

Intervention

Is this a story of well-intentioned Western mediators, trying to broker a peace deal, or do the present events in Macedonia have to be seen in the context of international interventions in former Yugoslavia in general, and Kosovo in particular?

Posted on our website (Seminar Two news section) is an early critique, from Jan Oberg of the Transnational Futures Foundation, of the international presence in Kosovo. Was it sufficiently carefully conceived to uphold principles of neutrality and transparency? Was the emergence of the NLA conditional, to a certain extent, on those ambiguities?

What, then is the most relevant material from Western speakers – reiterations of previous positions from Messrs Robertson and Cook – or something like the interesting Reuters interview with Brig Rollo? Which, in Conflict Analysis terms, helps us to map the conflict? ■

4.3. Two versions of Africa – the assassination of President Kabila, January 2001

When President Laurent Kabila was killed in Kinshasa at the beginning of the year, details were initially sketchy of what immediately struck most newspapers as an important development. Many, therefore, took the opportunity to offer a more discursive treatment, viewing Congo's recent history through the prism of Kabila's death.

4.3.1.

Death of reviled leader brings new chaos to Africa's heart of darkness

Few will mourn the passing of Laurent Kabila, reported shot by an assassin's bullet in his marble palace in Kinshasa last night, his regime finally snuffed out by the swirling chaos he brought to Africa's heart of darkness.

It's four years since Kabila swept to power, in what was then Zaire, as the puppet of powerful neighbouring governments. He promptly renamed his sprawling country, with no apparent irony, the Democratic Republic of Congo. But Kabila managed to alienate both the international community and his African backers as he embroiled a total of eight other countries in what's been called the continent's 'First World War'.

The conflict grew from the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, when eight hundred thousand Tutsis were massacred in just three months by extremist Hutus, a programme of ethnic cleansing organised and spearheaded by the Interahamwe militias.

Raids

Driven back by the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front, the militias re-grouped to take control of huge refugee camps set up in neighbouring Zaire, from where they carried out raids across the border into Rwanda with the complaisance of the country's ailing president, Mobutu Sese Seko.

So Rwanda and its ally, Uganda, where the RPF was incubated in the days before the genocide, led an invasion to establish a buffer zone under their own control. For political cover they needed a Zairean front-man. Kabila, who had once held territory himself in the contested area of Kivu Province, in a former incarnation as a Marxist revolutionary, was plucked from obscurity in the fleshpots of

Dar-es-Salaam to be the figurehead.

Acclaim

As the new leader rested up in a colonial villa in Goma, Rwandan and Ugandan shock troops were encountering little resistance from the dilapidated local army - so little, in fact, that they marched all the way to the capital, Kinshasa. Shortly afterwards, Mobutu betook himself to a Swiss clinic for treatment on his prostate cancer. The path was clear for Kabila to step in, to the acclaim of hundreds of thousands of his fellow citizens, sickened by Mobutu's corrupt and kleptocratic rule.

The West briefly dared to hope his arrival could be the next step in Africa's rebirth,

Kabila managed to alienate both the international community and his African backers as he embroiled a total of eight other countries in what's been called the continent's 'First World War'

with US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright conferring Washington's blessing. But almost as soon as Kabila had won his prize, diplomats realised he had lost his head in the jungle of savagery and despair which in many ways has not changed since Joseph Conrad wrote *Heart of Darkness* a century ago.

By refusing to co-operate with a United Nations investigation of refugee massacres carried out by his rebel army, he quickly squandered goodwill on the global stage. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund found him so obstructive, talks on new aid were abandoned.

Genocide

Kabila repositioned himself as a patriot, whipping up anti-Tutsi feeling on the streets. Crucially, he now befriended the remnants of the Hutu Interahamwe militias which had wrought havoc in the Rwandan genocide. At that, his allies in Kigali and Kampala turned on Kabila - they had installed him in the first place, the reasoning went; they could just as easily depose him now.

With negligible military resources of his own, Kabila needed new friends. He instantly set about mortgaging his country's vast mineral wealth to neighbouring powers,

Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia, dragging them in to what quickly acquired the contours of a full-blown regional crisis.

Rebels

Angola, whose president Eduardo dos Santos sent 2,500 troops, wanted to deny the use of Congolese territory to Unita rebels. In return for a 2,000-strong detachment, President Sam Nujoma of Namibia got a stake in the Miba diamond mining company. For its commitment of 11,000, Zimbabwe briefly had the management of Gecamines, the DRC state mining company.

The Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (Zesa) signed a deal to double its import of hydro-electricity. A joint venture between a company formed by the Zimbabwe military (Osleg) and the DRC's Comix tried to float the Oryx mining consortium on the London stock exchange last year.

Mobutu having been seen off with relatively little trouble, Congo's people thought they'd escaped major bloodshed in the transfer of power. But now, savage battles for territory began to exact a toll in civilian lives - running, on one recent estimate, into

millions. Time for outsiders to intervene in an attempt to stop the fighting. A peace deal was brokered in Lusaka, the capital of neighbouring Zambia. But it didn't suit everyone, least of all Kabila.

The president scuppered any real chance of bringing the conflict to an end when he refused to allow unhindered access for UN troops to government-controlled areas. Last year, the United Nations and the United States blamed him for blocking the deployment of 5,500 UN peacekeepers along 1,500 miles of frontlines between the various armies.

Addicted

Little in Kabila's record has modified the assessment of Che Guevara, who came to Congo in the mid-1960s to help him run a totally ineffective jungle war against the Mobutu regime. "Nothing leads me to believe he is the man of the hour", the famous revolutionary concluded: "He is too addicted to drink and women. His men are lazy, brutal parasites".

With power in Kinshasa now looking set to pass to Kabila's son, Joseph, and no end to the war in sight, the darkness is descending on the Congo once again.

4.3.2.

Congolese dreams of peace and democracy still on hold as leader is assassinated

The death of President Laurent Kabila to an assassin's bullet last night came after four years in which the hopes invested in him by the long-suffering Congolese people rapidly gave way to pain, anger and frustration. Millions have died in a hideously complex war under his rule, involving as many as eight other countries scrambling for the Congo's vast wealth of resources.

Kabila was propelled to power by an alliance of Rwandan and Ugandan troops, but his triumphant arrival in Kinshasa was greeted by hundreds of thousands of his fellow citizens as a chance for a fresh start in the country's post-colonial era.

Congo endured some of the

worst excesses of European subjugation under Leopold II of Belgium. Joseph Conrad's classic, *Heart of Darkness*, based on a trip he made up the Congo River captaining a steamship for the colonial company, was originally understood as referring to African 'savagery'; today's critics see the novel as more ambivalent, with the 'darkness' to be found in western civilization and the treatment its emissaries meted out to the Congo and its people.

Coup d'etat

When the Belgians left in 1960, the left-leaning independence leader Patrice Lumumba was killed in a coup d'etat. The historian, Adam Hochschild, author of *King Leopold's Ghost*,

has recalled being in Kinshasa at the time and hearing a senior CIA man boasting over drinks one night that the Americans had known exactly when and where he was to be shot dead.

The Agency then oversaw the installation in Lumumba's place of Marshal Mobutu Sese Seko, the coup leader who became one of America's key Cold War allies and renamed the country 'Zaire'. The president ruled for three decades; he was an elderly man, ailing with prostate cancer, by the time aftershocks from the genocide next-door in Rwanda finally shook his grasp on power.

The programme of extermination, led by the Interahamwe Hutu militias, was brought to an end halfway through 1994 by the Rwandan

Patriotic Front, which then went on to form the present government. By that time, though, eight hundred thousand Tutsis and moderate Hutus had been massacred. As many as two million Hutus, fearing reprisals in kind, then fled the country.

Camp

The militias regrouped in the sprawling refugee camps which quickly formed in neighbouring eastern Zaire, and continued to attack Rwanda and murder its citizens in cross-border raids. As the UN and western aid agencies grappled with the dilemma of providing humanitarian relief to civilians, amid mounting evidence that the camps were sheltering the Interahamwe, Mobutu turned a blind eye.

The Agency then oversaw the installation in Lumumba's place of Marshal Mobutu Sese Seko, the coup leader who became one of America's key Cold War allies

So Rwanda and Uganda, where the RPF was incubated in the days before the genocide, invaded, initially to set up a buffer zone for their own protection. Enter Laurent Kabila, a former Marxist guerilla leader who had once held territory in the eastern province of Kivu where the camps had coalesced. He was picked as a Zairean front-man to dress up the insurgency as a home-grown rebellion.

Token

Shock troops from Kigali and Kampala encountered at best token resistance from the dilapidated local army. Within a few months they had marched all the way to Kinshasa, Mobutu decamped to a Swiss clinic and Kabila was installed as president.

The Congolese themselves were not alone in seeing his arrival as a promising development. The airport, once

the most notorious centre of bribery in Africa, was cleaned up. When Kabila's aides set up an anti-corruption unit to eliminate graft, the praise echoed around the world's conclaves.

But the colonial view of the Congo, as a mountain of resources ripe for exploitation, remained essentially intact. Even as he entered the marble palace, a UN investigation has found, Kabila was already under obligations to private companies which had made financial contributions to the war in return for mining and forestry concessions.

Authentic

Kabila's credentials as an authentic leader of all the Congolese were under attack from those who'd stayed in Kinshasa to oppose Mobutu. His response was to pull up the

drawbridge, installing family members to positions in government, encouraging anti-Tutsi feeling on the streets and turning on his former allies. The remaining power in the land lay with the remnants of the Interahamwe militias, with whom Kabila now made common cause.

This was the cue for Uganda and Rwanda to send troops back in, ostensibly for the same security aims as before. By now, though, a more sinister process was underway. The armed gangs in Kivu are no longer plotting incursions into neighbouring territories, but instead, preying on the local population. Neither do the invading troops seem much interested in stopping them, according to reports from on the ground.

Territory

They are concentrating on pushing south and consolidating

their grip on more territory – territory where precious minerals abound. These include col-tan, found in only two places in the world, here and Western Australia, and prized in advanced economies as an essential component of electronic equipment from Playstations to space stations.

The same UN inquiry panel concluded: "Presidents Kagame [of Rwanda] and Museveni [of Uganda] are on the verge of becoming the godfathers of the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the continuation of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo".

Lucreative

Kabila turned to other players – Angola came to his aid with 2,500 troops, partly to stop UNITA rebels using the Congo as a base. Namibia sent 2,000 and got a stake in the Miba diamond

The fighting and the scramble for the Congo's wealth has infected surrounding countries with a debilitating contagion – the 'militarisation of politics'.

mining company. For its commitment of 11,000, Zimbabwe was rewarded with lucrative mining concessions and contracts for hydro-electricity. So the die was cast for what's been called 'Africa's First World War'.

The fighting and the scramble for the Congo's wealth has infected surrounding countries with a debilitating contagion - the 'militarisation of politics'. Okwiri Rabwoni, a former Ugandan MP now in exile in London and a spokesman for the Pan-African Movement, explained: "Ninety-nine percent of Ugandans were against the invasion of the DRC, in Rwanda people are complaining that

children are getting killed in the DRC and in Zimbabwe there is a very strong movement against involvement in DRC.

"The biggest problem is that the decision to invade countries is taken by two or three generals and the president. The people are never consulted."

Betrayal

Many from the region speak of a profound sense of betrayal by the international community. To begin with, aid was withheld from Kabila's government because he would not help with a UN inquiry into massacres of Hutu refugees, allegedly by Rwandan commandoes. At the time the Rwandans were

Kabila's allies and protectors, which helped to constrain any inclination he may have felt to cooperate.

Kabila then proved obstructive to efforts to broker a ceasefire in 1999, by which time his new backers all had reasons of their own for wanting to remain involved in the war.

There are accusations, strongly denied by official sources, of double standards being applied from Washington. Cynthia McKinney, a Representative from Georgia who has raised the plight of the Congo on the floor of the US Congress, said: "The whole world knows that Uganda and Rwanda are allies of the United States and that they have been given carte

blanche for whatever reason to wreak havoc in the Congo".

Force

The UN's own effort to sort out the crisis was supposed to include a force on the ground, but, while the US and Britain drew up the blueprint, it was left to Pakistan and Senegal as the only countries to promise any troop commitment. The Congo's fifty-million strong population continues to dream of a peaceful democratic future, but it will be difficult for them to resolve all the problems unless neighbouring - and Western - countries consider where their own responsibilities lie for what has unfolded.

"The whole world knows that Uganda and Rwanda are allies of the United States and that they have been given carte blanche for whatever reason to wreak havoc in the Congo".

4.3.3. Commentary

Demonisation

One strong strand in coverage of the war in the DRC, including the pieces which appeared after Kabila's death, has been the demonisation of, first Mobutu, then Kabila himself.

It is, at least, not the first task for reporters to involve themselves in adjudging the merits of a particular leader, but, in the context of a discussion about international news, there is, in any case, slightly more to the phenomenon of demonisation than simply whether the individual concerned really deserves it.

Colette Braeckman, a correspondent for *Le Soir* who is respected as one of the leading journalistic authorities on the DRC, spoke at Seminar Three. She said:

"During the DRC crisis you had the bad guy; you had Kabila. It is easy to go back to the press and find how many stories demonise him - some with good reason some bad but all were exaggerated. The world community wanted to get rid of Kabila for so many reasons, also for reasons of economic interest and people closed their eyes to what was really going on".

Sunday Times Diplomatic Correspondent Tom Walker made a similar observation about coverage from Zimbabwe which illustrated the need for British media to find a 'bogey-man' as part of a 'downward spiral of news values'. The point is the same – if all the problems can be presented as the fault of one man, whether Mugabe or Kabila, it enables us to close our eyes to any other factor.

Version one here demonises Kabila in terms very closely based on those used in London newspapers at the time. The intention is not to

present a caricature which makes an easy target. The following sentence, for example, actually appeared verbatim on page 3 of the *Independent* on January 18, 2001:

"Almost as soon as Kabila had won his prize, diplomats realised he had lost his head in the jungle of savagery and despair which in many ways has not changed since Joseph Conrad wrote *Heart of Darkness*".

Version two is candid about Kabila's policies, his shifting alliances and the unscrupulous way he pawned his country's resources to shore up his grip on power. But it hopefully illuminates processes which, to some extent, shaped the options available to Kabila. Any assessment of the prospects for change under a successor would include considering whether and how those processes could themselves be changed.

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other factor

The *Heart of Darkness*

The contest over the true meaning of Conrad's beguilingly ambivalent novel touches on many of the issues raised in today's reporting of Africa in British media. Often the drama is one of intervention, either actual or prospective, by Europeans – 'give now, or these children will die'.

This was widely criticized by participants, both during the seminar and in preliminary conversations to prepare the discussion, for perpetuating the notion of Africans as helpless to help themselves. It is also rather convenient since it may obscure the existing or previous interventions - the complicity, in events and processes affecting African people, of African and western governments, commercial or other interests.

One seminar participant, Anne Koch of the BBC, suggested that, since the Congo is so firmly associated with the novel in the public imagination,

it was futile to ignore it – better to interrogate the link between them, challenging assumptions with new and searching questions.

Ron McCullagh, of Insight Television News, suggested that decisions readers and audience members in the West make about, for instance, what to buy in the shops, links them with people involved in African conflicts. He proposed 'consumanism' – an amalgam of consumerism and humanitarianism – as an analytical factor which journalists could use to draw the connections.

Realism

Most journalism broadly accepts the realist view of international relations, which sees states and governments as the only important change agents. Okwiri Rabwoni's comments, made at the seminar and

quoted here in version two, illustrate the dangers of this. The 'militarisation of politics' is not something one set of belligerents is doing to another – it is a problem shared by the peoples of the region, which calls for a common solution.

Journalists can help to make change agents at the grassroots more visible, which not only gives their readers and audiences a clearer picture of who is doing what to whom; it also expands the space to consider how the violence can be removed, and how the aspirations of Congolese people themselves can be brought nearer reality. A useful antidote to the off-putting discourse of hopelessness which itself creates difficulties in 'selling' stories about Africa to sceptical newsdesks and commissioning editors.

A useful antidote to the off-putting discourse of hopelessness which itself creates difficulties in 'selling' stories about Africa to sceptical newsdesks and commissioning editors.

4.4. Two versions of Iraq, February 2001

4.4.1.

Allies strike to snuff out Iraqi threat

The United States and Britain last night launched the biggest air raid on targets around Baghdad since Operation Desert Fox in December 1998, damaging President Saddam Hussein's new command-and-control facilities and a high-tech air defence network developed with help from China and Serbia.

The bombing mission, which involved at least 80 aircraft, including 24 American strike planes such as F16s, and nine RAF aircraft, including six Tornado GR1s, was the first military attack to be authorised by President Bush since taking office last month. The American aircraft carrier, USS Harry S. Truman, launched raids with F14s and F18s from the Gulf.

The Ministry of Defence said that six sites, all part of the Iraqi integrated air defence system, had been hit, five of them outside the southern no-fly zone. "All aircraft returned safely. Initial reports are that weapons hit their targets successfully", it said. Early battle damage assessment using high-resolution cameras indicated that no civilian areas had been hit.

Threat

Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon said the attacks had been a "proportionate response" to the increased threat to the aircraft patrolling the southern no-fly zone. "Saddam Hussein should be clear that we will not tolerate continued attempts to endanger the lives of

our aircrew", he said.

The decision to mount the raid was personally approved by Tony Blair who was involved in discussions from the beginning, according to military sources. It follows concerns raised by RAF commanders in Kuwait that pilots patrolling the no-fly zones were coming under growing risk of being shot down by Iraq's increasingly sophisticated weaponry.

Alarm bells began ringing more insistently in Washington and London after Saddam staged a display of military hardware in the New Year's Eve parade in Baghdad. Since the end of the Gulf war, Iraq has had a severely depleted stock of weapons. But after the parade American military analysts concluded that his inventory of SA-6 missile batteries had jumped to about 40.

American intelligence reports also showed that Iraqi anti-aircraft capabilities were about to be upgraded by underground fibre-optic cables linking radar and missile positions.

The system was imported from Iraq's ally, Serbia, under President Milosevic, and installed with help from the Chinese, according to Pentagon officials quoted in the *Washington Post*. One said the technicians developing the network were mostly civilians, but some officers of the People's Liberation Army were also involved.

Another explained that the strikes were timed to avoid any risk of hitting them, with planners determined to avoid a repeat of the

diplomatic row over the bombing of China's embassy in Belgrade during Nato's campaign to liberate Kosovo.

President Bush, on a visit to Mexico, said last night the action was taken to drive home to Saddam that he must abide by the agreement signed after Operation Desert Storm in 1991. "We're going to watch very carefully as to whether or not he develops weapons of mass destruction, and if we catch him doing so, we'll take the appropriate action", he declared.

Critical

Iraqi state television later claimed that a woman was killed in the raids, with eleven other people injured, some in a critical condition.

Yesterday's action came amid growing signs that the Iraqi dictator is once again stepping up his drive to threaten his neighbours and carve out a dominant role in the crucial strategic region of the Middle East.

Last month a military engineer, who fled Iraq a year after United Nations weapons inspectors left the country, said Saddam already has two fully operational nuclear bombs and is working to build several more. The defector, who is in hiding somewhere in Europe, said the weapons programme is being developed in a top-security compound in the north-east of the country. Experts at the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna are assessing his evidence.

In London, the Foreign Office has said it shares American fears that Iraq has rebuilt factories capable of producing chemical weapons. President Bush promised during his election campaign to find Saddam's weapons of mass destruction and "take 'em out".

Since taking office he has received CIA briefings that America faces growing global uncertainty, with threats from Iraq and Iran top of the list of security concerns.

Appetite

Two weeks ago, George Tenet, the new head of the CIA, told members of Congress that "we are likely to see greater assertiveness" by Saddam over the next year as he attempted to wriggle free of UN sanctions and finance the rebuilding of his military. And last Sunday Donald Rumsfeld, the US defence secretary, gave a warning about the Iraqi dictator's "enormous appetite for nuclear, chemical and biological weapons".

British and American diplomats are also re-examining the sanctions regime, imposed after the Gulf War to prevent Saddam acquiring the means to replenish his germ or chemical arsenals, in parallel with the then UNSCOM inspection teams trying to locate his existing supplies.

Colin Powell, the US secretary of state, who is visiting the Middle East this weekend, indicated the Administration would seek to re-focus the sanctions to make them more effective against the Baghdad regime itself. "Containment has been a successful policy and I think we should make sure that we continue it until such time as Saddam Hussein comes into compliance with the agreements he made" at the end of the Gulf war, Mr Powell said.

President Clinton once vowed the sanctions would continue "until the end of time, or as long as he is there" - Washington's usually unstated 'Saddam clause' as a condition of Iraq's re-entry into the international community.

Donald Rumsfeld, the US defence secretary, gave a warning about the Iraqi dictator's "enormous appetite for nuclear, chemical and biological weapons".

4.4.2.

GULF STATES CONDEMN AMERICAN AND BRITISH BOMBING AS THREAT TO REGIONAL SECURITY

Iraq's neighbours last night led criticism of American and British bombing of the country after state television said a raid on the outskirts of Baghdad had left one woman dead and 11 people wounded.

The bombing raid was aimed at anti-aircraft installations, following concerns raised by RAF commanders in Kuwait that pilots patrolling the no-fly zones were coming under growing risk of being shot down by Iraq's increasingly sophisticated weaponry.

The Ministry of Defence in London said that early battle damage assessment, using high-resolution cameras, suggested no civilian areas had been hit. "All aircraft returned safely. Initial reports are that weapons hit their targets successfully", it said. But a spokesman admitted it would be

several days before a full appraisal could be concluded.

Iraqi youth television, run by President Saddam Hussein's son Uday, said at least three children were among civilian casualties, and showed footage from a hospital of the children as well as three women and two men, who had leg and stomach wounds. A health minister said some of the injured were in a critical condition.

Strikes

US President George W Bush, in Mexico on his first diplomatic mission since taking office, said the strikes were part of a strategy to contain what he called an Iraqi threat. "Saddam... must abide by the agreement signed after Operation Desert Storm in 1991. We're going to watch very carefully as

to whether or not he develops weapons of mass destruction, and if we catch him doing so, we'll take the appropriate action", he declared.

There have been occasional suggestions from Britain and America that Iraq is in a position to threaten them directly. Intelligence sources have inspired several stories that unmanned drone aircraft are being adapted to carry germ warfare payloads, 'enough to wipe out' a major city in the West. But, according to Ken Munson of Jane's Defence Group, the plane in question, an M18 Dromeda, has a range of some three hundred miles, and there has been no claim that Iraq possesses long-range ballistic missile capability.

Of the countries within reach of Iraqi firepower, Iran, which fought for eight years to

There have been occasional suggestions from Britain and America that Iraq is in a position to threaten them directly

repulse an invasion by its neighbour in 1980 and suffered several attacks with chemical weapons, complained that the bombing was counter-productive to regional security. Official Tehran radio said: "This surprise attack adds to the growing violence in the Middle East. Bush is trying to demonstrate his strength against Saddam Hussein".

Concerns

Saudi Arabia, base for the American aircraft which carried out the raid, was another to raise concerns over the likely effectiveness of the US/UK approach. It was partly to guard against a supposed threat to Saudi Arabia that the Gulf War was fought, after Pentagon claims - later renounced as mistaken - that Iraqi troops were massing in then-occupied Kuwait on the border with Saudi territory.

But Prince Saud al-Faisal, the country's foreign minister, said last night that the "recent escalation against south Baghdad" raised "feelings of denunciation and anxiety".

London and Washington said the bombing of locations on the outskirts of the capital came in response to an increasing number of near misses by Iraqi surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft fire, targeting their pilots.

Britain and America have flown patrols over the no-fly zones since 1991. The UN has never explicitly approved them, but one resolution mandates member states to do whatever they can to protect Iraqis from internal repression by the regime.

America accused China of supplying civilian and military technicians to instal high-tech air defences, with a fibre-optic

Prince Saud al-Faisal, the country's foreign minister, said last night that the "recent escalation against south Baghdad" raised "feelings of denunciation and anxiety

cable network connecting radar installations with surface-to-air missile batteries. Beijing reacted by dismissing the allegation as an attempt to distract attention from the bombing.

British defence sources said the system had been supplied by Serbia, but cooperation from Belgrade had ceased with the election of President Vojislav Kostunica and popular uprising which swept him to power, leaving the Chinese to carry out the task of installation.

The Ministry of Defence said that six sites, all part of this new integrated air defence system, had been hit, five of them outside the southern no-fly zone. Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon said the attacks had been a "proportionate response" to the increased threat to British and American aircraft. "Saddam Hussein should be clear that we will not tolerate continued attempts to endanger the lives of our aircrew", he said.

But other permanent members of the UN Security Council criticised the strikes. Russian President Vladimir Putin called them "counter-productive for the process of a political settlement".

Pointless

The French Foreign Minister, Hubert Vedrine, said the exercise was pointless and lacking "any legal international basis" as it was not UN-approved. "We are looking to the new American administration to redefine its Iraqi policy because at the moment it is clearly not working".

The Bush administration had promised to develop a new policy, tougher on security but gentler on the Iraqi civilian population, Mr Vedrine said. "What they have just done is neither the one nor the other".

Concern over Iraq's chemical, biological

and possible nuclear weapons programmes is not confined to the Bush White House, however. Shahram Chubin, of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, believe Iraq is driven partly by historical fear of its larger neighbour, Iran and partly by Saddam Hussein's ambitions to lead the Arab world in confrontation with Israel.

The lessons for Baghdad of the last decade included "first, that only nuclear weapons will deter a future humiliation like the one suffered in 1991, and, second, that nuclear weapons may be the only way to deter an Israeli [nuclear] attack".

Dr Chubin was contributing to a paper published by the International Commission

for Security and Cooperation in West Asia, which has representatives from Iraq, Iran, the Gulf Cooperation Council states led by the Saudis as well as the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. The British member is Lord Frank Judd of Portsea.

Experts with the Commission have called for the Middle East to be established as a 'weapons-of-mass-destruction-free-zone', an ideal to which all states in the region have committed in principle at some time or other, and one which is set out in article 14 of UN Resolution 687, the ceasefire terms of the 1991 Gulf War.

Some analysts believe a re-think of sanctions is needed, as a way of providing for

the long-term social and political changes necessary to build trust and confidence among Iraq's neighbours. Faleh Abdul Jabbar, an Iraqi sociologist based at London's Birkbeck College, said the no-fly zones had succeeded in protecting three million Kurds, but other elements of sanctions had merely strengthened the regime.

The oil-for-food programme had increased Iraqi people's dependency on the state: "Iraq is a command economy, we don't have any separation of the economy from politics - that's why the people are dependent on the state for their livelihood. Now they are dependent on the state for their daily provisions".

4.4.3. Commentary

A many-sided question

The HUGG (Human Security and Global Governance) project, the International Commission on Security and Cooperation in West Asia, is an interesting initiative by the Toda Institute.

This sets out to consider the relative security needs of countries throughout the Gulf region, essentially as a three-cornered question. Whatever the nature of the governments in their respective countries, basic strategic and geographical factors will always lead Iraq, Iran and

the Gulf Cooperation Council states around Saudi Arabia, to assess their security relative to one another.

This creates space for more options, more ways to assess any particular change affecting any of the parties. 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.

Considering several parties may assist understanding of how we got

Why is Baghdad so bellicose? Simply because Saddam Hussein is mad and/or bad – if he is? Or is it also rooted in perfectly comprehensible – in a sense, *reasonable* – security concerns?

here in the first place. Why is Baghdad so bellicose? Simply because Saddam Hussein is mad and/or bad – if he is? Or is it also rooted in perfectly comprehensible – in a sense, *reasonable* – security concerns, faced with revolutionary Iran on one hand, and nuclear-armed Israel on the other?

Examining other security regimes around the world suggests that building trust and confidence among these states requires them to foster social and political development – one factor in the ASEAN model put forward by one expert adviser to the Commission.

This might offer another way to examine the issue of sanctions as contributing – or otherwise – to the long-term prospects for shared security among states in the region. Hence Faleh Abdul Jabbar's point, that the oil-for-food programme is counter-productive because it increases people's dependency on the government, so further collapsing Iraqi society into the state itself.

Propaganda and manipulation

Many seminar participants complained that this story has been more fraught with propaganda and attempts at manipulation – from all sides – than any other.

It is entirely proper, for example, to be scrupulous in attributing claims of casualties to Iraqi state sources, and to describe accurately what was shown, and where.

It might also be useful, now and again, to alert readers to some of the misleading claims of the past. The Pentagon pictures of Iraqi troops massing on the border with Saudi Arabia, key to the characterisation of Saddam Hussein as a reincarnated Hitler, bent on regional domination, never materialised.

And the headline, that Iraq has enough nerve agent 'to wipe out London/New York/Sydney' recurs around the world, on stories inspired by intelligence sources, from time to time. There is a fine line, of course, between this, and saying that anything either side says must, *ipso facto*, be a lie. A distinction between helping and impeding readers in thinking for themselves.

4.5. Two versions of Indonesia, August 2001

4.5.1.

The Black Bats strike back – *fear and loathing in Poso*

It is said that a group of killers in Indonesia hold magic properties that make their enemies powerless when they pass.

The Black Bats have cast their deadly spell on Poso, a port town in central Sulawesi province haunted by the burnt-out shells of rattan-and-bamboo houses, ghosts from three years of vicious interreligious clashes.

To the Christians of this remote coastline, the Bats are avenging angels; Muslims fear them as murderers who swoop on villages by night and spirit

away boys as young as nine who are never seen again.

The conflict erupted in late 1998 when a street brawl between rival youths left a Muslim man with a knife wound to his arm. He ran into a nearby Mosque and roused believers to take revenge; the first round of house-burnings, known latterly as ‘Poso I’, duly followed.

Shadowy

No account of violence in Indonesia is complete without the involvement of shadowy

‘provocateurs’ operating behind the scenes. Just as a court was finally about to rule, last year, on a case against the local politician accused of orchestrating the trouble, Christian neighbourhoods in Poso were again besieged by Muslim mobs.

Christians believed they’d turned the other cheek, as the New Testament demands, after the first riots, then had that one slapped as well, in what became known as ‘Poso II’. Time to slip the Black Bats from their cage – within weeks of the court case,

Poso III had broken out, with the area wracked by round after round of savage reprisals.

Bodies

Men who followed the army round the rivers and creeks later picking up bodies counted more than 300 Muslim dead who were considered identifiable. Many others were beheaded before being pitched into the rushing green waters, and Poso’s Muslims refused to eat fish for months.

The sporadic murders of the

Men who followed the army round the rivers and creeks later picking up bodies counted more than 300 Muslim dead who were considered identifiable. Many others were beheaded.

last few weeks have followed the death sentences handed down to two Christian leaders of Poso III – Cornelius Tibo and Domingus Soares. And so the cycle of revenge continues. The most grievous sin, in Muslim eyes, was last year's massacre at Kilometre Nine, an abandoned settlement too small to warrant a name, on the road south from Poso.

Today, the charred remains of a Mosque bear an ominous warning in the form of graffiti, promising: "Laskar Jihad is coming" – the armed band who've terrorised the Moluccas, just to the east of here, in nearly three years of intercommunal warfare. The silent walls of Kilo Nine have already witnessed bloodcurdling scenes of Holy War, however.

Enraged by the firebombing of Christian homes and several churches, truckloads of red-

masked men exacted their revenge on the villagers. Some perished in the defence of their homes but many surrendered and were rounded up in the Mosque before being slaughtered, according to witnesses.

Conflict

The thirty thousand people displaced by the conflict have fanned out across this mountainous territory, most in the direction of the provincial capital, Palu. On the main road lies the town of Parigi, where a number of Muslim families have found shelter in a large wooden house belonging to a local charity.

The refugees remember their good relations with Christian neighbours, whose religious observances were formerly restricted to attending Holy

Communion on a Sunday. Suddenly, as trouble brewed, they began visiting Church several times a week, on various pretexts – a 'children's evening' or 'planning meeting'. Eventually the neighbours told the Muslims to leave, or face the consequences in the form of a visit from the Black Bats.

The Parigi refugees were convinced that Laskar Jihad's arrival was imminent – members had been seen praying at a Mosque located within the charity's own compound.

In Palu itself, thousands of Muslim men have signed up to join the war. "The entire situation could explode at any moment", says Yahya Amri, the regional head of Nahdlatul Ulama, the powerful religious education movement which today boasts thirty million members. A sinister calendar is in circulation, with a

local Christian named and pictured in each month of the year and earmarked, it is implied, for execution.

Resentment

Resentment is brewing at Gawalise stadium, on the outskirts of Palu, where some 700 Muslim refugees are packed into a sports hall. Families tell of burnt-out homes, and the menfolk slip back to Poso under cover of darkness to snatch a few coconuts or cocoa crops from plantations now being reclaimed by the encroaching jungle.

"I have seen some of the lists and my contacts say at least 10,000 have signed them", Mr Amri says. "They are preparing for war in Poso and unless the government can solve this situation, terrible things will happen".

The pitched battles between

"They are preparing for war in Poso and unless the government can solve this situation, terrible things will happen".

Christians and Muslims in Poso have been mainly fought with improvised weapons – machetes, kept for harvesting ripe bananas and simply honed to a sharper edge, along with home-made guns, or ‘dum dums’, accurate to a range of 80 metres or so. Some, in Poso III, were killed with chainsaws, according to some witnesses.

But rumours abound that the security forces are helping either

side. Police investigating last year’s clashes arrested well over a hundred people, including a number of soldiers. Their commanding officer explained 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”.

One Western diplomat,

speaking on condition of anonymity, said complacency in Jakarta over the Poso conflict posed a potential threat to the stability of the country.

“The situation has the potential to further inflame Muslim fundamentalists”, he said. “It’s a tinderbox. But the political powers here are so preoccupied with political and banking scandals, cabinet shuffles and so

on, that Central Sulawesi is just more background noise”.

The government’s determination to stamp its authority on the situation, the diplomat added, would be one factor in deliberations by the International Monetary Fund, due shortly on a fact-finding visit in reaching a decision over whether to grant Indonesia any further assistance.

4.5.2.

Communities join to contain conflict in troubled tropical paradise

Tears well up in the eyes of the young woman perched on the balcony of a wooden house in Palu, capital of Indonesia’s Central Sulawesi province.

Surrounded by children, she is recalling family life with their father, the childhood sweetheart she married, then lost in the intercommunal violence which has uprooted thirty thousand people from around the town of Poso, just across the mountains.

The refugees have been singing about their love of the river and their parents, simple pleasures in the old life of the Pamona people, the first to make their home on this fertile tropical coast.

Converted to Christianity a century ago by Dutch missionaries,

they watched as mainly Muslim migrants joined them in the decades following the country’s independence, a prelude to the violence of the last three years in which hundreds have died and countless rattan-and-bamboo dwellings have been put to the torch.

At least the Palu refugees are in a position to provide for their own material needs, thanks to the remarkable efforts of a local aid organisation, Bantaya. The lilting melody rings out across immaculately tended crops of black pepper, chilli and sweetcorn; local landowners have been persuaded to lend fields for these unfortunates to cultivate.

Abdul Gaffar Karim, one of the organisers, explains: “We see them as our guests. We must look after them”. Bantaya refuses offers of

involvement by outsiders, including large relief agencies, in favour of local initiative and hospitality. Families in Nunu, a suburb of Palu where Bantaya is based, have taken the refugees into their own homes.

At stake is the threat that strife in Poso may spread. Across town, seven hundred Muslim refugees are packed into a sweaty sports hall, six families to a room in the tropical heat. The provision of food and medical supplies is being coordinated by Oxfam, but there is no salve here for the festering resentment of people forced to flee their seaside home, cooled by salt breezes in the afternoons, for these oppressive conditions.

Plight

There is evidence that their plight is being used by ill-intentioned elements to stir trouble. A sinister calendar is in circulation, with a prominent local Christian named and pictured in each month - and, by implication, earmarked for a sticky end. Some have drawn up lists of volunteers to join the fighting with as many as ten thousand names, according to Yahya Amri, regional head of the Muslim education organisation, Nahdlatul Ulama, which boasts thirty million members.

“They are preparing for war in Poso”, he says, “and unless the government can solve this situation, terrible things will happen”.

Not every local religious leader is content to wait for a solution from above, however. Piter Palungkun, a local Christian pastor, helped to form an ecumenical group in Nunu to smooth the arrival of those displaced by the conflict. One initiative was to ask local

Christians to move their pigs to fields away from where Muslims, to whom pork is unclean, would be staying. “This livestock can be extremely dangerous as a conflict motivator”, he explained.

The Nunu activists say the fighting in Poso is not really about religion, however; that is just the form taken by a conflict in which larger political developments proved divisive. The trigger came in late 1998 when a street brawl left a Muslim man with a knife wound.

Instead of taking his grievance to the police, he ran into a local Mosque and managed to rouse believers to revenge against the Christians he blamed for inflicting it. The first round of house-burnings, known latterly as ‘Poso I’, ensued.

This combustible sequence of events was not as spontaneous as it first appeared, however. Accused of pulling the strings was a local Muslim politician, Agfar Patanga, ambitious to secure the post of bupati, or town regent.

A tradition had grown up whereby the office - filled by appointment from Palu, not elected by Poso people - would go alternately to each section of the community. Arif Patanga, the incumbent, seized on the fall of President Suharto and his New Order as an opportunity to overturn this procedure and instal his brother at the expense of the Christian candidate.

Upheavals

As a regional administrative centre, large numbers of Poso families depend on public sector jobs for their livelihood. Simultaneous upheavals in both national and local political life may have given rise to feelings of insecurity over the succession, ripe for exploitation by

The Nunu activists say the fighting in Poso is not really about religion, however; that is just the form taken by a conflict in which larger political developments proved divisive.

local power-brokers.

The younger Patanga was on trial as a provocateur, in April of last year, with the court about to return a verdict, when Christian areas were, again, mysteriously besieged by armed men and attacked – that was ‘Poso II’.

The third round of violence, a couple of months later, the Christians’ revenge, saw the most grievous atrocities including a massacre at Kilo Nine, a village too tiny to have a proper name, on the road inland from Poso. Aid agencies believe the total number killed in the trouble may be as high as five hundred, twice the official figure.

Recent weeks have seen a series of murders, and tensions, once more, on the rise, following death sentences handed down to Cornelius Tibo and Domingus Soares, two of the prime movers in ‘Poso III’.

Graffiti on the walls of the Mosque at Kilo Nine, where local people were rounded up and slaughtered, carries an ominous warning – “Laskar Jihad is coming”. This armed group has been implicated in some of the worst violence in the Moluccas, just to the east of here.

Refugees at Parigi, a small town on the road to Palu, believed they had already arrived, with members coming to pray at a Mosque belonging to the local aid organisation which took them in. The head of the local *pesantren*, or religious high school, laughed aloud at this suggestion – they had mistaken his white-robed students for militiamen, he said, come from outside to join Poso’s quarrel.

One expert, conflict and peace worker Judith Large, who researched the conflict for the British Embassy in Jakarta, said the existence of shared problems in central Sulawesi, such as deficient political and information systems, proved the need for reformers in Indonesia to be supported. Devolution plans now being implemented may result in people like those in Poso being able to elect their own local leaders.

Great care was needed, Dr Large said, to ensure that this was the orientation of any outside intervention; Westerners needed to be on guard against “the lens being used to show us events there being coloured very much by our particular national definition of stability, which means conditions where British interests can continue working and which might mean admitting, if we look deeply enough to our own history, that, for us, Suharto was a good guy”.

Graffiti on the walls of the Mosque at Kilo Nine, where local people were rounded up and slaughtered, carries an ominous warning – “Laskar Jihad is coming”

4.5.3. Commentary

Explaining violence

Central Sulawesi is one of many examples of modern conflicts to pose the troubling question – what makes people, who were content for years to live in peace as friends and neighbours, suddenly take sides against each other?

Were they always, underneath, united by mutual loathing and suspicion? Is there some irremediable antinomy between, say, Serbs and Croats, Arabs and Jews or, in this case, Indonesian Muslims and Christians, waiting to be revealed when the relatively thin veneer of civilisation is stripped away?

Or is the hatred *constructed* by identifiable political, social and economic processes, permitting intervention to correct them, and therefore to remove the violence and transform the conflict?

The first of these explanations is the one that arises out of much, perhaps most reporting of conflicts in Indonesia. John Sidel, an expert on the region from the London School of Oriental and African Studies, told RtW Seminar Five that Indonesia is commonly presented as a large, mysterious and threatening country.

Choice of Language

One of the most important issues here concerns the choice of language used to describe the perpetrators of violence. A trap many reporters fell into, Dr Sidel said, was “to turn words that could and should be used at most as adjectives, words like Muslim and Christian, Dayak and Madurese, into nouns, so that the Madurese,

the Dayaks, the Muslims, the Christians ‘do things’, and by speaking in that sort of language there is a tendency to reinforce the notion that these are meaningful and correct ways to understand who people are and why they do things.

“When in fact to say instead Christian gangsters, Muslim politicians, Dayak thieves, crowds of young men, you know, go a bit more sociological as opposed to essentialist in this regard.

“If journalists just see people as just belonging to these ethnic groups, then that’s very sad and smacks of racism, when in fact this is a complex society with people of different occupations, jobs, power relations and so forth”.

Superstitious Beliefs

Fires don’t just ‘erupt’, and that kind of understanding of how politics works is very problematic. In time you have to look at who is stoking fires, who lights fires and who puts them out.

The mystery surrounding Indonesia is deepened by journalists dwelling on superstitious beliefs, like the Black Bats in Poso or Dayak warriors eating the livers of their victims, in the conflict in Kalimantan.

This helps to construct the sense of Indonesia as incorrigibly prone to conflict, full of savage killers perennially hovering above the abyss. There was a parallel tendency, Dr Sidel suggested, to see violence as a natural phenomenon, requiring no more analysis of process than the reporting of, say, an earthquake or tornado.

There was a “tendency in popular and even academic literature to talk about riots and violence by using a combustion or conflagration model”, he complained.

“People always say violence ‘erupted’ and they use words that smack of fires and explosions, and if you think about this for a while

you realise that that's not always appropriate. Fires don't just 'erupt', and that kind of understanding of how politics works is very problematic. In time you have to look at who is stoking fires, who lights fires and who puts them out and so forth as opposed to people or fires just erupting".

Intervention

The essentialist rhetoric of version one here conditions what we think of as an appropriate form of intervention. If violence is forever liable to erupt in Indonesia, between groups of people who harbour a secret hatred of each other, then it makes sense to support policies to ensure 'stability'.

Dr Large was one among several contributors to caution against 'stability' as the keynote of assessing conflicts in Indonesia, in particular by flagging the risk of 'another Yugoslavia' if too much 'instability' were permitted.

Geoffrey Robinson, Associate Professor of History at UCLA, said: "The discourse on Balkanisation did not just happen - the point about this, and it's another reason for doing some background, is that the discourse of Balkanisation began under Suharto in order to justify a seriously repressive regime.

"It was not just Suharto who did it; it was all of the embassies and all of the Western governments based in Jakarta who endorsed the

Suhartoist, unitarist, repressive view, and said 'look, if we didn't have Suharto there we would have another Balkans'.

"This was the argument that was made against freedom for East Timor before suddenly it became flavour of the month. And it is now the argument that has resurfaced, although, somehow there is no origin to this. The fact is that there is a distinct political origin, an historical origin and it has to do with the power of those in the Suharto regime and those who supported it for so long, and to suggest that has suddenly emerged independently of that power configuration is naive in the extreme".

Peace Initiatives

If a conflict is an expression of endemic hatreds, which suddenly erupted, there is no point reporting peace initiatives since they cannot possibly hold the prospect of change, that is to say they cannot be newsworthy.

If, as in version two here, the specific political processes that construct violence are exposed, then peace initiatives, like the ones at Nunu, are worth reporting because they represent raw materials from which a solution can be found. ■

... all of the Western governments based in Jakarta who endorsed the Suhartoist, unitarist, repressive view, and said 'look, if we didn't have Suharto there we would have another Balkans.

5. REPORTING THE WORLD AND THE REFORM AGENDA IN NEWS

5.1. A sense of purpose

The first civilian war reporter was William Howard Russell of the *Times*. The paper's present-day Diplomatic Editor, Richard Beeston, on looking up some of Russell's dispatches from the Crimea before the RtW Round Table, found that they comfortably withstood the years:

"I was struck, even with the passage of time, if you'd taken that report out today it would still read absolutely brilliantly. Factually correct, rigorously detailed and dispassionate".

Dispassionate, in contrast with previous battlefield journalism, which was invariably done by members of the military. But the decision to deploy Russell, the risks he ran and the enterprise involved in overcoming daunting logistical challenges to get his material into print were all actuated by a passionate sense of purpose.

Providing *Times* readers with compelling copy was not – or not wholly – an end in itself, as suggested by an anecdote in *The First Casualty*, Phillip Knightley's classic history of war reporting. The paper's editor would withhold material judged too strong for the audience, but, instead of simply spiking it, he took it to show the Prime Minister as a trustworthy account of what was really going on.

Half the cabinet were sacked, and the government eventually fell as military incompetence and the appalling conditions for British soldiers were revealed. Putting reports of conflict into any kind of public realm is still something many journalists do with a sense that 'something must be done' in response to what they have found.

Film-maker Damien Lewis, of Century 21 TV, explained to the RtW Round Table that, without this sense of purpose, the journalist's presence in the face of suffering would be purely voyeuristic:

...you go out to a war zone or a conflict situation, you wade through lots of shit, you have to film people dying, or kids that have been enslaved, really, really horrible stuff and you do that time after time.

"Basically you go out to a war zone or a conflict situation, you wade through lots of shit, you have to film people dying, or kids that have been enslaved, really, really horrible stuff and you do that time after time. You have to deconstruct yourself as a human being, I'm a cameraman so you have to think of a situation, let's say a mother's been shot, the child is lying there and is about to die, as a cameraman and journalist, do you help the child or do you film the child dying? Well actually your job really is to film the child dying because that's what you're there for, and you think, well, if I bring these pictures back then maybe they will get shown and they will change something".

But this ethical orientation came at a price:

"So you go out there and wade through all this shit, it gets all over you emotionally, psychologically you come back with this huge burden of responsibility. 'I have to get these pictures shown', and nobody wants to broadcast them, and then you do go personally within yourself because that is really bad news, the worst thing is not being able to live up to the responsibility, but then you have to go and do exactly the same thing next week, because otherwise you won't be able to go and earn money. "That is what it's like being an out-there, front-

line journalist. I was thinking what other professions would do to deal with what we do. If you're a policeman and you were at the Heysel Stadium disaster you can claim compensation and you can get counselling and go on leave, if you are a freelancer you have absolutely nothing, you have no support network, you have no insurance, no pension and no-one to turn to".

It's worth quoting at some length because it captures the emerging

nexus between the ethics of international news, the difficulties of applying them in a modern setting, and the well-being of journalists themselves. Is a journalist covered, in Lewis's evocative phrase, in emotional and psychological ordure, well-equipped to provide ethical reporting?

Mark Brayne, Europe Regional Editor of the BBC World Service and a qualified psychotherapist, has been a key contributor to Reporting the World. In a paper reproduced in full on our website, he argues that, if 'dispassionate' is to mean 'without passion', it is a chimera, and a dangerous one for journalists to pursue. To deny one's emotional response to a story is to distort it, decanting into print or onto the air a version of events conditioned by an unexamined bias, and presenting it as 'the truth', singular. Instead, Brayne argues for an emotionally intelligent journalism and one that recognises many truths:

"In our new electronic age, journalists *matter* – more than ever before in history. They compile not only the first draft of that history; they reflect back to the world an understanding of itself. They tell the story of the planet which helps or hinders each individual to understand his or her place, role and potential in how our world is changing. Distorted journalism – just like inadequate parenting or poor psychotherapy – will reflect back to that world a distorted self-image, and block the self-healing powers that lie in every individual and every society as in nature itself.

"In business, managers today are routinely trained in emotional intelligence. They are sent on outward bound courses in the mountains to learn how they work in teams, and how they impact on others. They are coached in how different people, including themselves, have different strengths and weaknesses and how they

respond differently to change and stress. They learn the importance of feedback and respect; how to differentiate between an employee's behaviour and his or her abilities and potential.

"And how much such training is there for journalists? So far, at least in Europe, absolutely none. Journalists are taught how to write a good introduction; how to construct tight and compelling sentences; how to set a story in context and provide background; how to edit sound, perhaps, or compile pictures; how to conduct themselves in an interview or at a press conference".

Brayne compiled a fascinating MA thesis, drawing upon confidential interviews with colleagues and contemporaries and titled, *The Personal Experience of the Foreign Correspondent*. This study, of the

complex reality for reporters covering important and sometimes traumatising stories, led him to regret that:

"They are not taught to understand themselves and how they might respond emotionally to the stories they observe. Nor, in most training courses, are they taught about the complexity of truth – how there may in fact in any story be many different and competing truths, depending on the perspective of the observer.

"Unlike the arts or literature, physics or even political science, journalism so far seems largely untouched by the debate of the past 30 years and more about what's been called post-modernism - and the recognition that merely by observing an event, one becomes part of it and affects how it unfolds. Journalists still like to believe, and are explicitly trained in this thinking, that they report objective facts dispassionately. They are not taught self-insight or – to be brutally frank – humility".

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One consequence of this lack of self-insight was to leave journalists, both individually and collectively, at the mercy of a stifling consensus about the news agenda and how it should be covered. This could impose a form of self-censorship and often impeded an honest engagement with the real issues in a particular story, especially when reporting conflicts.

Brayne is one of a group now working in conjunction with the Dart Centre of Washington State University to explore the implications of journalists' contacts with trauma, especially in the kind of situation Damien Lewis described.

An inaugural conference at the Freedom Forum European Centre in London drew some sixty journalists and others to listen to Dr Anthony Feinstein, of the University of Toronto, unveil the results of the first systematic study of the impact of post-traumatic stress disorder on journalists who have exposed themselves to reporting conflicts.

5.2. The public interest

This document began by examining the constraints placed on journalists' ability to put ethical values into practice in their work, in a media-savvy world increasingly saturated by commercialism. Lewis's remarks suggest this may not be simply frustrating for journalists, but also bad for their health. Mark Brayne points up the need to re-think those values to take account of the journalist's own part in the process on which he or she is reporting.

Reporting the World set itself the task of drawing up an effective ethical framework for international news. The checklist proposed here

has arisen from discussions involving many journalists who grapple daily with modern conditions 'at the newsface'. But access to news about world affairs which is commissioned, reported, edited and produced according to effective ethical standards is also an issue of public interest, affecting, as it does, our understanding of our place in the world, as Mark Brayne suggested.

One factor sharpening the sense of competition in the market for television news has been the contest for the ITV news contract, with incumbent provider ITN having to beat off a challenge from a five-member consortium including its direct rival in the 24-hour stakes, Sky News.

Both rivals received a 30-page tender document from ITV, specifying in some detail what the channel expected from its news provider for the coming years.

Some months before the result was announced, ITN Chief Executive Stewart Purvis told *Media Guardian* that the contents of this document made him relaxed at the prospect of having to reduce newsgathering budgets to keep the contract; later,

ITN sacked 90 staff in a move directly attributed to the cut in its fee from ITV. The channel had been "very specific" about its expectations, he said – ITN would not be required, for a lower figure, to provide the full range of coverage viewers had become accustomed to.

But this document was never, at any stage in the process, made public, even in the most outline terms. No-one outside the bidding process knows if it called for, say, more or fewer pieces about celebrities and the entertainment industry, or indeed for a more or less critical approach in covering those stories. And it remains unclear whether more, or less airtime will be available for "real coverage that

...access to news about world affairs which is commissioned, reported, edited and produced according to effective ethical standards is also an issue of public interest.

is meaningful and that works” of conflicts which resonate across our interdependent world.

Reporting the World discussions have opened the potential to link a reform agenda centred on journalists’ well-being, and one which calls for greater democracy, including more openness, in a regulated industry, about the terms on which news is provided for the country’s most popular television channel.

There are some signs that the space for extending these agendas may be expanding. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport will, some time in the parliament beginning in 2001, unveil its long-awaited Communications Bill. According to the Executive Summary of the Communications White Paper, published during the last parliament, “public service broadcasting will continue to have a key role to play in the digital future, potentially an even more important role than it has now”.

Moreover, it promises that the new regulator, OFCOM, “will promote systems to help people make informed choices about what they and their children see and hear; and have a duty to promote media literacy”. There will be “a new consumer panel to advise the regulator. It will be able to research consumer views and concerns on service delivery, represent these concerns to OFCOM... and publish its findings and conclusions”.

Journalists wanting to apply traditional values in a modern setting have everything to gain from a media-literate public, aware of what makes good international news *worth having*. Such awareness is more likely to flourish if there are generally accepted, specific ethical criteria against which to assess any given example - criteria which could be drawn up on the basis of the checklist proposed here.

5.3. Open and closed texts

John Lloyd, associate editor of the *New Statesman*, pointed up an important paradox in his contribution to the RtW Round Table. There had been a narrowing of focus and a shortening of attention span in what he called “high-profile media”, typified by the prevalence throughout the industry of an old maxim with which Harold Evans, who led the *Sunday Times’* Insight team in the 1970s, used to prime his reporters.

While interviewing politicians, always ask yourself, he told them, “Why is this lying bastard lying to me”? This had since lost its novelty value, and indeed become a touchstone of journalists’ approach to public affairs in general, accentuated by what Lloyd called ‘the two-minute, soundbite culture’ of television.

At the time of the Round Table, rumours were circulating about a story the *Guardian* was preparing on Michael Portillo, then a candidate for the Tory leadership. It was understood to be damaging, not on the basis of the policies he planned to adopt if elected, but in terms of his personal probity. (As it turned out, it centred on undeclared donations to constituency party funds in exchange for speeches to corporate gatherings while Mr Portillo was a cabinet minister).

This, Lloyd said, typified an approach to reporting politics, equally discernible in writing about international affairs:

“It’s a phenomenon of our media times that journalists take a largely unearned position of moral superiority under various rationales, which, because they are unexamined, become dangerous journalistic practice. The danger is that we cease to interrogate power properly because we assume its degeneracy in advance.

Journalists wanting to apply traditional values in a modern setting have everything to gain from a media-literate public, aware of what makes good international news *worth having*

"I suggest that it would be more radical to pose - not to accept, but to pose - the possibility that politicians are losing power rather than abusing it, that they are more responsible because they are elected and have constituencies to which they have a mandate, and that they are valuable and vulnerable actors in civil society, of which we are also a part. Therefore, our interrogation of them would be better if it were more broadly based than our concentration on scandal and on interpersonal political struggles".

The paradox

It was paradoxical, he suggested, that while this narrowing of media focus had taken place, journalistic endeavour as a whole - on the broadest definition from books to websites - was making *available* to the public a greater breadth and variety of material than ever before. But it all required time and effort to sift through.

What makes us want to? When the addresses of related websites are appended to a newspaper report, what inclines us to visit them? What prompts us to find out more for ourselves, from ordering a book online to spending half an hour just 'googling' around the subject?

That politicians must, *ipso facto*, be lying bastards has joined the stock of clichéd explanations for the way things work - a new neighbour for long-established ideas of Arabs as actuated to violence by 'ancient hatreds' and of Africans' propensity for anarchy and general 'backwardness'.

Within this general picture, the suggestion that people in, say, Angola may be our counterparts in a system of relations linking an interdependent world, their prospects connected with decisions we

make in everyday life, appears as a rogue, counter-intuitive thought. It was a detail at the margin of the *Ten O'clock News* piece about landmines, but viewers in the focus group described by Jonathan Baker seized on it as a prism through which to re-examine a key element of the story - the explanation for violence and how it might be stopped.

It suggests another parallel from a field other than journalism, in this case literary criticism, with its concept of 'closed' and 'open' texts. A 'classic realist' Victorian novel, with its hierarchy of discourses, topped with the unironic authorial or narrative voice as in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, is an example of the former. A postmodern novel like *Gravity's Rainbow*, by Thomas Pynchon, is a radically 'open text'. In turn, different discourses, including the novel structure itself, are undercut, made to seem partial and contingent. There is no offer to adjudicate between them - instead, the focus is on a series of disturbing ambiguities produced by their interplay.

News neither invites nor demands as much attention from the reader as an ambitious work of fiction. But the distinctions are analogous. Stories that inhabit familiar discourses, reiterating what we already think of as the answers, are 'closed texts'. They naturalise narratives, leading us to believe we are looking through them, as a window, to retrieve events as they happened. Open texts proclaim their own 'textuality' - the equivalent of sticking a length of masking tape across the pane, drawing our attention to the limits of the frame. We immediately realise we have only been given part of the picture, making us wonder what the rest of it is like, as the focus group members did with their questions about the consequences of buying a litre of petrol.

News which leaves undisturbed the old, linear theories - 'they cover

That politicians must, *ipso facto*, be lying bastards has joined the stock of clichéd explanations for the way things work.

what's happened'; 'we just report the facts' - can act as a form of camouflage, lending authenticity, sometimes even to the most contrived events, providing the rest of the picture is kept in shadow. Journalists bestow this authenticity by offering selective access to the press or the airwaves, and, in doing so, exercise power.

The power of the media

Here is Lloyd again: "Power has to be interpreted, power has to be interrogated. One could say that's our mission, our mission statement as journalists. But we are now the power to some extent. Corporations, but also we journalists who work for some of these corporations..."

"There's this concept that the real power in the world is not so much physical power - but access. Because the media corporations control access, to communications, to fantasy, and information, they control real power, more real power than, if you like, physical asset corporations.

"We need to take our power, media power, seriously. And we need to unpick what we are doing to the world because we are constructing the world, through advertising, through the new media, the e-media,

through media corporations themselves, through television, radio, through to newspapers and magazines".

One way of seeing the ideas under discussion in Reporting the World, and the ethical checklist, is as a way of making news more interrogative - to leave readers and audiences not reinforced in the belief that 'that's the way it is,' as they were for so many years with Walter Cronkite; but asking themselves, instead, 'I wonder how that came to be?' The availability of so much material, in so many forms, is not a reason for being less demanding of 'high-profile media', but more.

One practical aim of the arguments advanced here is to fortify the reporter arguing for an extra thirty seconds or hundred words to contextualise the story. But it does not require every piece to be a treatise - what is at stake is the implied shape of the rest of the story, the part that lies outside the frame, and whether we are alerted to it.

Even in television's two-minute culture, the process of choosing soundbite and picture is something viewers need to be aware of, if power is to be properly interrogated. That requires them to be offered open texts, which encourage and equip them to unpick the way power is constructing the world around them.

Power has to be interpreted, power has to be interrogated. One could say that's our mission, our mission statement as journalists. But we are now the power to some extent.

5.4. Reform priorities

Participants at the Round Table drew up a list of priorities in a broad reform agenda for international news, falling into three main categories:

Training & Discussion

- More open discussion of the ethics of conflict reporting, in newsrooms, journalism schools and the wider community.
- Continuous RtW style discussions to enable journalists to overcome their own self-censorship.
- To foster dialogue between UK-based journalists and locally-employed journalists in conflict zones: discussions on the RtW model with seminars in conflict zones, with findings and participants then being brought to London for seminars here.
- Journalism training to be explicitly linked with Conflict Analysis across a broad spectrum of educational institutions.

Resources

Resources to support freelance journalists seeking to make and deliver ethical international news:

- a Cooperative to provide counselling
- legal and accounting services
- public funding for documentary and current affairs films, as is currently provided through the National Lottery for feature films
- a database to support cross-disciplinary approaches of the kind embarked upon in this document
- an independent journalism 'think-tank'.

Research

Drawing on methods pioneered by the BBC to ascertain the real needs of the audience, as distinct from marketing-driven models. To prove there is a market for ethical international news.

Regulation

- A stronger role for regulators to implement the findings of research.
- More openness about the contents of codes of practice, contracts and tender documents.

Reporting the World is a series of public seminars, round table discussions, publications and an interactive website www.reportingtheworld.org, conducting an ongoing conversation between journalists and other interested professionals about issues of representation and responsibility in international news.

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Praise for this publication:

"A thoughtful blend of academic rigour and journalistic experience... To read it is to learn a little more about the true nature of events" - **Peter Preston, columnist and former editor, *The Guardian***

"A convincing argument" - **Susie Orbach, author and psychotherapist**

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