Media and Conflict Resolution: Toward building a Relationship Model

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Abstract

The role of media has been immensely increasing in shaping and reshaping the nature of conflicts especially from the second half of the last century. The advent of 24/7 news coverage, advancement in satellite communication, rise of war reporting and peace journalism, and ever increasing role of media in shaping up social, cultural, political and diplomatic discourse has made it an important player in various types of conflicts. Media's role in conflict resolution is largely dependent upon organizational interests and ideology. This study proposes a Media-Conflict Resolution Model (MCR) that describes the media role in conflict resolution process as (1) an escalation agent, (2) a de-escalation agent and (3) as a mirror, and relates it to media relations with the conflicting parties and consequently the media position/stance either as watchdog, lapdog or neutral. Moreover, this model also discusses influence of global media on local media regarding conflict resolution and prevention.

Key Words: Media and conflict resolution, Media as mirror, Media as an escalation agent, Media as a de-escalation agent, Media-Conflict Resolution Model (MCR)

Introduction

Media Role in Conflict Resolution

The progression into the twentieth century has witnessed the increase in the number of conflicts around the globe as well as the rapid advancement in the field of mass media. The conflicts either internal/intrastate or interstate can take two forms i.e. violent and non- violent. Biddle (2004) and Thompson (1989) make a distinction between two forms of conflicts i.e. high intensity conflict (HIC), which refers to wars between the states (interstate violence) and low intensity conflict (LIC), which refers to limited scale violence between regular forces and irregular forces (pp. 2-5). Manoff (1997) claims that in the last Century quite a few severe armed conflicts have been reported and during which millions people have been killed, got wounded, crippled, and

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mutilated….Ours is the age of "ammunition affluence" (para. 1 & 3). Moreover, since the beginning of the cold war, the internal conflicts were higher than the interstate and following the end of the war the number of violent interstate conflicts went up sharply and new conflicts are emerging at the global level (Hewitt, 2008: 21).

Media have also achieved phenomenal growth around the world, especially during the last half of the twentieth century. Advancements in the telecommunication technologies and growth of the internet and cellular communications have affected all spheres of human life. Other than developed countries of North America and Western Europe, the reach of different media, especially TV, has increased to a great extent in Africa and Asia. According to Thomas by 1999, 350 million TV sets were present in China with the increase in TV audience from 18 million in 1975 to 540 million in 1985, and to 1 billion in 1995 (Thomas, 2003: para. 9). In addition, highlighting the status of media in Arab, he maintains that since the 1980s, access to, or ownership of, a television set has grown rapidly throughout Asia and the Arab world (Thomas, 2003: para. 5).

Global trend in the 24/7 news broadcasting has re-defined the ways politics is conducted around the world. This increasing influence of media, particularly news media, has also mediated into the modes, scales, levels, and resolution of conflicts at local, regional and international levels. Larson highlights the media importance in meditation and diplomacy during the conflicts and maintains "televisions offers an interactive channel for diplomacy which is instantaneous or timely and in which journalists often assume an equal role with officials in diplomatic dialogue" (Larson, 1988: 43).

Media role in conflicts is gaining more and more significance with the passage of time. It has been evidencing since the World War II in which Hitler used media for the purpose of propaganda. Then in the 1990s media efforts helped in resolving the Yugoslavia conflict and in the recent times in 2003, U.S. used media to wage war against Iraq in its pursuit to punish Sadam Husain and trace weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In this context, Patel highlights media reporting of conflict as "with the current developments in war/violence reporting, triggered by conflict in Iraq, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Kashmir, Middle East and other parts. The concept of peace journalism is raising a critical debate on the way media is reporting these conflicts and its impact on conflict prevention and resolution" (Petal, 2005: 31)

The basic purpose of resolving any conflict is to minimize human loss, reduce political and ethnic tensions and bring more harmony among the adversaries at intrastate, interstate and global level. The process of conflict resolution

generally includes negotiation, mediation and diplomacy in which government, conflicting parties, NGOs, affected communities, international mediators and media play a vital role. Among all the key players media enjoys a unique position because of the following reasons: (1) media is a source of information for all the key players and the world outside; (2) media can create the channels for communication if these are absent; (3) media can be manipulated by any of the key players to achieve their objectives; (4) media as a watchdog may make a stakeholder accountable by criticizing and creating awareness; (5) media can act as a central pillar in the dynamics of conflict resolution process and any player can refer toward it; (6) media can escalate or de-escalate conflict. Soderlund explains the importance of media in drawing inferences and shaping up judgments for most of international crises and maintains that "public perceptions of the world events are influenced by mass media is indisputable" (Soderlund, 2003: 155) because mass media has ability to shape the minds of the people and influence their thoughts and behaviors (Metzl, 1997: 15-21).

The role played by media in conflict resolution depends upon the nature of the conflict, media position or stance to particular issue and the involvement of global actors in a conflict. Panickar argues about the ambiguity of media role in conflict resolution. She states that although all the journalists like the idea of media playing a positive role in conflict prevention, nobody has been able to define precise characteristics of the envisaged role (Panickar, 2001: 295-307). The ambiguity about the role of media is due to complexities involved in the onset, progression and termination of the conflict as well as changing nature of roles played by different actors in it. Leonhardt identifies following factors in ethnic conflicts: (a) *Structural factors,* including socio economic and political background of society; (b) *facilitating factors,* including the degree of politicization and ethnic consciousness; (3) *triggering factors,* such as a sharp economic shock, abrupt escalation of inter-group tension or the collapse of central authority (Leonhardt, 2000: 25).

Media plays the role of an escalation agent when it initiates tensions, sensationalizes events and indulges in false propaganda against adversaries. On the other hand, media plays the role of a de-escalation agent when it pursues the conflicting parties, governments and communities to resolve any conflict and helps in shaping up public opinion for this task. Sometimes media just works as a 'mirror' in a conflict when it is only concerned in transmitting actual facts to people without taking any position.

Despite the importance of media role at all stages of a conflict, i.e. onset, escalation/de-escalation and termination or reconciliation, there is a dearth of literature that may help in theorizing and developing any conceptual model for the analysis and prediction of media role in conflict resolution. Gilboa indicates that role of media in resolving conflicts has been relatively neglected by both scholars and practitioners (Gilboa, 2009: p. 88). He proposes a framework for

analyzing media and conflict resolution dynamics but that framework lacks the integration, and deals with the different elements of media and conflict as separate entities. Moreover, it does not comment or predict the media treatment/coverage of the conflicts.

The Media-Conflict Resolution Model (MCR) proposed in this study describes the media role in conflict resolution process as (1) an escalation agent, (2) a de-escalation agent and (3) as a mirror, and relates it to media relations with any of the conflicting parties and consequently the media position/stance either as watchdog, lapdog or neutral. Moreover, this model also discusses influence of global media on local media regarding conflict resolution and prevention.

Media as a De-Escalation Agent

Many studies focusing on media and conflict resolution maintain that media plays a significant role in resolving conflict by offering balanced coverage, minimizing biases, educating public, increasing trust among conflicting parties, promoting international norms regarding human rights and conduct of war, initiating communication between the parties when there is no formal negotiation, suggesting solutions, engaging in confidence building measures, avoiding the inflammatory language and historical tensions, motivating local and international communities for peace building, condemning the false propaganda and stereotyping, criticizing any effort that tends to promote racism, social hatred and xenophobia, and signaling the importance of reconciliation and accords that resolves conflict. Melone et al. states that media offers a wide range of information that contains a spectrum of facts, perspectives and opinions in the process of conflict resolution (Melone et al, 2002: 2). Information plays a vital role in the coverage of any conflict. Scarce information can trigger more misunderstanding between the parties and escalate the conflict further. When media gives all the information along with facts and figures, it, in a way, decreases misperceptions and creates mutual understanding in the process of conflict resolution. Veen maintains that the better the media, the less the chance of an outbreak of violent conflict (Veen, 1997: para. 17). Therefore, it is important for media to give a balanced coverage of the entire conflict and provide an equal opportunity to all the parties involved in the peace building process.

McNair suggests following functions of media in an ideal democratic societies so that it can give a balanced coverage and provide proper information that can help in resolving a conflict; first, to inform people of what is happening, second, to educate them as to the meaning and significance of the 'facts', third, to offer a forum for public political discourse including space for the expression of dissent, fourth, to promote government and political institutions, and fifth to serve as a network for the advocacy of political viewpoints (McNair, 1999: 21-22).

In addition, media serves as a channel for advocacy to build consensus for resolving conflicts by securing a free flow of accurate information, countering misperceptions, and identifying the interests underlying the issues (Manoff, 1998:11-15). By doing so, media can build up confidence between conflicting parties and at the same time, persuading them to foster the negotiation process. Media can offer alternative options to violent conflict reflecting an ordinary person's desire and need for peace, communicating the process of negotiations to all stakeholders and providing them with a forum for the on-going dialogue (Siebert, 1998: 3).

Media working as de-escalation agent avoids propaganda and provides adequate and quality information based on truth as Melone et al. (2002) states, "..may act as a watchdog on leaders to help ensure long-term accountability, monitor human rights violations and, in a wider sense, provide some early warning on potential escalations of the conflict" (Melone et. al. 2002: 4). Similarly, historical references to conflicts, both in interstate and ethnic violence and clashes, should be handled with great caution. Montville notes that media should offer a balanced analysis of the background of conflicts as well as recognition of injustices and historical wounds inflicted by different groups to each other or to public (Montville,1991). Moreover, media role in reconciliation after violent conflicts is also important and media should highlight the transactional contrition and forgiveness between the historical arch enemies because this process is vital for the gradual establishment of a new relationship based on mutual trust.

In ethnic conflicts, the media role is to reduce communal differences, and to avoid such stereotypical frames and identities that may exacerbate the tensions, rather media can create and promote themes that have commonalities and acceptance to all the stakeholders. Sofos (1997) maintains that media content must promote "identities other than ethnicity." For example, in conflict ridden societies, media can focus on issues having common grounds and interests such as women's aspirations and feats, common environmental problems, business prospects, or disaster relief etc., for promoting and strengthening of trans-ethnic identities that laydown the foundation for non-ethnic notions of citizenship (p. 269).

If media uses balanced approach in order to provide quality information, it enhances understanding of the public at large, that leads toward changing thinking of individuals and society from the top-down to the bottom-up (Melone, 1997: 188). Another role that media can play as a conflict resolving agent is to identify the root cause of a conflict. In addition, media must focus more on covering facts and events that may help in resolving the conflict rather than covering violence. Galtung states that news coverage of conflicts should be more focused on conflict transformation rather than simply covering and reporting violence. He stresses the need for coverage of a conflict in such a way that it explores the deeper roots of conflict, identifies parties beyond the conflict

zone, reports the invisible effects of violence, and highlights the parties working to prevent violence (Galtung, 1998:7-10)

Similarly, Manoff asserts that at the times of conflict, media can play significant role in reframing issues to make the conflict more manageable. Therefore, media framing can help to bring the counter parties to negotiation table by creating conducive environment for confidence building (Manoff, 1997: 4-7). Therefore, there is a need of using the media for strategic communication by launching comprehensive campaigns for the peace building so that conflicting parties can be persuaded to resolve the issues causing tensions and rifts. Wolfsfeld considers the following influences of media on peace process: (1) Media plays an important role in defining the political atmosphere; (2) It shapes and sets direction of the debate; (3) It influences behavior and perceptions of the parties, communities and individuals involved in the conflict (Wolfsfeld, 2004: 11); (4) In addition, media can facilitate the conflicting parties by promoting the mediating values. These values help to compensate and reward both parties in order to make the peace agreement (Edmead, 1971).

In some cases, the media downplays the impact of the public as well as the parties who involve in creating hindrances in the peace process. In this context, peace journalism can play following proactive role in conflict prevention and resolution: (a) Focus on conflict transformation; (b) Identification of initiatives; (c) promotion of peace; (d) Abstention from dehumanizing any side involved in the conflict; (e) Prevention of violence; (f) Identification of all stakeholders, their goals and roles (Galtung, 1998: 7-10). To accomplish these tasks journalists must be equipped with the latest knowledge not only about media and conflict, but also of information technology and other related fields. It is pertinent to mention that advancements in communication technology have enabled the journalists to play their role more effectively as conflict defusing agents. Moreover, they can also mobilize the community and enhance its participation in the resolution process by using internet, blogs, YouTube, social networking sites (SNS) and websites etc. It is further believed that peace journalism is committed to conflict prevention and resolution through creative approaches to reporting conflict; (1) It will aim to explore the conflict background and investigate its deeper roots, in structure and culture, in order to make conflict transparent. (2) It will have empathy with all parties, focus on suffering of all sides, and give a voice to all. (3) It will be proactive in its strategies to prevent war/violence. (4) It will focus and highlight invisible effects of war/violence like psychological trauma and suffering due to long term consequences of violence. (5) It will depolarize by showing the black and white of all sides by trying to name all wrongdoers. (6) It will focus on areas of common ground

between the parties instead of highlighting and strengthening differences between them (Patel, 2005: 27-34).

Moreover, Davison highlights the following points regarding media role in conflict resolution: (a) Media compels the policymakers to do something and think about the alternatives through repeated reminders (b) media keeps the policymakers on right track by continuous feedback, morale building, criticism, capacity building of the communities; (c) Media reveals the unsighted conflicts and also brings to light the hidden aspects of the sighted conflict; (d) Media facilitates the negotiation process by removing misperceptions and misunderstandings (Davison, 1974: 41).

Furthermore, Lubecka maintains that for the purpose of conflict prevention and resolution it is important that media should promote understanding for democracy and its values. Therefore, media give major support to create a new awareness of acting 'civis' (Lubecka, 2000: 37). The communication barriers are the main hindrance in peace process that can be removed by promoting a culture of peace, tranquility and harmony. Moreover, media role is of paramount importance when there is no direct communication among the conflicting parties. In such a situation, the media acts as a mediator by becoming an alternate channel of communication for them. The media helps in exchanging information which further helps in starting the negotiation process between the conflicting parties. As Dascal states that in deep-rooted violent conflict, when the parties are not even negotiating or negotiations are stalled, the media may act as an alternative way of communication. Through the media, so-called "balloons" and deliberate "leakings" are used in order to check the opponent's reactions, to make each other's demands mutually known, and to facilitate the public for the upcoming developments. In this context, media's role is important in reducing tensions and of paving the way for the conflict resolution. (para. 2)

Both local and international media have great potential to contribute in conflict resolution process. Indicating the influence of international media, Gilboa discusses media broker diplomacy and furnishes three roles that media plays: (1) direct intervention, when journalists temporarily become mediators and particularly help parties to begin negotiation; (2) bridging, when journalists attempt to help parties to realize the value of negotiation for restoring peace; (3) secret mediation, when journalists secretly propose a possible solution (Giloba, 2005: 101).

At local front, Bajraktari and Parajon suggest that "local media can promote peace by restoring levels of trust and self-worth in a population on the brink of or emerging from violence" (Bajraktari & Parajon, 2007: para. 6). When media promotes tolerance, presents diverse viewpoints and reduces the misperceptions, its audience pool also increases. In this context, Botes states "media that are sensitive toward the task of promoting tolerant and diverse viewpoints can be both

informative and entertaining as well and have a large potential audience" (Botes, 1996: 6-10). That helps in formulating public opinion by demanding peace and building up moral and political pressure on policymakers for conflict prevention and resolution.

Media as an Escalation Agent

Many studies and historical evidences highlight and elucidate the media role in the escalation of conflict. Media contents create the feelings of fear prior to and during the conflict that the riots and violence are inevitable by shifting toward consistently negative reporting, "Across the globe, media have been used as tools to inflame grievances and accelerate the escalation towards violent conflict. In Rwanda radio was used to provoke such sentiments that spread genocide. In Serbia, television was manipulated to stimulate ethnic tensions prior to civil war. In the former Soviet republic of Georgia, territorial disputes were intensified by the propagation of nationalist mythology in the media" (Frohardt & Temin, 2003: 1). They also observe that media creates the environment of fear that justifies preemptive strike, "Media were used to make people believe that 'we must strike first in order to save ourselves.' By creating fear, the foundation for taking violent action through 'self-defense' is laid" (Frohardt & Temin, 2003: 6). Advancing the similar view, Melone et al. (2002) argues "The media in conflict-ridden countries often play a significant role in creating and furthering both facilitating factors and triggering factors, by utilizing 'oppositional metaphors' ('us' vs. 'them') linked to internal and external issues or 'threats' facing the nation" (p. 1).

Media can create and escalate the conflicts by putting pressure on policymakers and adversaries, shaping public opinion in the favor or against of conflicting parties, acting as a lapdog by not giving proper coverage to the conflict, using provocative and inflammatory language, applying clichés in reporting and news making to defame and typecast the adversaries, emphasizing on the harsh facts from history and highlighting stereotypes, taking position in favor of one party in comparison to other, marginalizing the coverage of peace initiatives, creating ethnic, religious and communal tensions, giving more importance to the conflicts than the peace process because conflict sells more in the market, media reliance on spokespersons for information, corporate and organizational influence, promoting racism, social hatred, xenophobia and biases-laden discourses, and creating the feelings of cynicism for reconciliation and accords that resolve conflict.

Many studies validate the argument that media gives negative portrayal of the events and hence escalate the conflicts. Dascal articulates that negotiations are usually conducted in a cordial or at least businesslike ambience and the discussion is "to the point", even if disagreement prevails. However, what spokespersons for the negotiating parties publicly declare – "for the record" –

is likely to be much tougher, at least as long as agreement has not been reached. Therefore, the media's coverage is usually stressing the differences and emphasizing conflict (Dascal, n.d: para.1)

Sometimes the media coverage have negative impact on the peace process, and it has an effective role in exaggerating the situation by deliberately picking up, highlighting and eventually playing up aggressive statements given by the officials. Consequently, media puts such a face to the issue that gives an entirely different identity to conflict resulting into more tension among the adversaries. In this context, words used by the media in news coverage are not empathetic towards conflict resolution, and these kinds of words and commentary often generate more confusion and ambiguity, hence generate more mistrust among the parties concerned. For instance, the coverage of President Bush's statement regarding the "Saddam/Hitler comparison during the Gulf War" (Dascal, n.d. para:10-11) and phrase "axis of evil" for Iran, North Korea and Iraq etc. (White House, State of Union Address, 2002: January 29), show that these rhetoric can be used to trigger the conflict.

In ethnic conflicts use of inappropriate language, historicity of crisis and stereotypes escalate divergence and violence amongst ethnic entities. This creates more ethnic tension that serves to reinforce dissimilarities which accelerates a disintegrating effect on the homogeneity of the population (Reljic, 2004: 2). Similarly, Krimsky indicates that irresponsible and inaccurate journalism (or its nefarious cousin, the hate-mongering media) can ignite the flames of violence in ethnic or communal confrontations (Krimsky, 1996, as cited in Marin & Langel, 2002: para. 6). Media tends to dramatize conflicts by focusing on irreconcilable differences between the parties, extreme positions and belligerent statements, violent acts and win or lose outcomes.

Journalists also play a vital role in creating hatred arguments through their coverage to sell their news in a competitive media environment (Thompson, 1994; Pech, 2000: pp. 1-28). Moreover Tornau (2006) argues that in the age of rich and intensive global information flow, the public attention can be gained only when one thrilling story per day or per week is covered by media. (p. 31)

In addition, influence of government and owners ideology also has a great impact on triggering role of media when the media shares same views with the former regarding escalation of conflict. For instance, Indian media fully supported its government policies to take aggressive measures, both military and diplomatic, against Pakistan after the Mumbai attacks in November 2008, that portrays media's posture as an escalation agent in that particular incident. Similarly, if the media owner belongs to a certain group, he/she will try to project and promote the interests of that group. Therefore, organizational and structural influences create slanting and distortion in the news coverage, creating more tensions among the conflicting parties (Terzis & Ozgunes, 2000).

Media also has a negative effect on the policymakers for shaping their perceptions regarding different local, regional and international issues. Tornau describes following ways of media influence on policymakers: (1) Media repeats the same news and issues again and again to set agenda; (2) it forces the policymakers to take fast decisions because of real time coverage due to new media technology (Tornau, 2006: 11); (3) media builds up pressure by ceaseless 24/7 news that restrain the span of receiving, covering and fact–checking of information; (4) Media dramatizes news stories by using emotionally catchy phrases: (5) sometimes media provides inaccurate information regarding both military and civilian causalities and on-ground situation. He further adds, "In the Northern Iraq emergency in 1991, media criticised U.S. military and other aid relief agencies as failing to respond properly to a huge spell of meningitis epidemics in the Kurdish refugee camps. Apparently, it turned to be a cholera epidemic, where clean water and oral dehydration salts rather than medication was needed" (Tornau, 2006: 32). Hence, ubiquitous 24/7 media coverage puts immense pressure on policymakers that not only makes it difficult to verify the information and reduces decision making time, but also results into wrong decisions leading toward conflict escalation. In case of U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 the U.S. and allied media vigorously talked about Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) that shaped public opinion for war which was later proved to be wrong information. In many instances, media reliance on official sources, or government and secret agencies manipulation of media to shape public opinion to get favourable response from masses for government policy line, acts as a tool of war and produces biasness in the whole scenario. In addition, Tornau (2006) maintains that "special press conferences and strategic-level news presentations are held to inform field reporters about the proceeding of military actions and, in some unusual circumstances, journalists are furnished with the wrong information to spread misinformation and disorient the enemies" (Tornau, 2006: 26).

In modern times, government uses the media in conflicts in following ways: (1) to get favourable response from public; (2) to level and shape the public opinion; (3) to project official point of view: (4) to use it as tool of psychological warfare to counter local and international propaganda. Therefore, when government wants to exaggerate conflict or go to war, media acts as a tool in the hands of government. For instance, after the attack on the Indian parliament in 2001, the Indian media, while acting as a lapdog went a step ahead of its government, in Pakistan bashing, and asserting that India must use military option against Pakistan.

Many studies suggest that the media acts as a lapdog in conflict resolution by using following techniques: Firstly, it gives importance to an issue over other,

prioritization; Second it reduces the coverage of one party or issue over other, *marginalization*; Third, it supports and magnifies one point of view over other, *magnification.* In this context, sometimes the U.S. media works as a state propaganda organ because it ignores or marginalizes the voice of those who are suppressed by the Americans, American client states or friends and any offers by enemy states for negotiation when the U.S. is determined to invade that state on one hand and over magnifies the wrong deeds by enemy states on the other. Chomsky points out that people can believe that when we [the U.S.] use force against Iraq and Kuwait it's because we really observed the code that illicit occupation and human rights abuses should be met by force. They do not see what it would mean if those principles were applied to the U.S. behavior. That's a victory of propaganda of quite a "spectacular type". (Chomsky, 2002: 53).

He reveals that the U.S. media overlooked the voice of Iraqi democratic opposition when they demanded some kind of support from the U.S. and world community for the restoration of democracy in Iraq. The U.S. government had no interest in it because the Bush [Senior] administration's support for the dictatorial regime of Saddam in Iraq and Bush-Saddam friendship and trade partnership. (Chomsky, 2002: 54). When the U.S. turned against Saddam Hussein after the Iraqi attack on Kuwait, and sent its troops to the Gulf region to liberate Kuwait, the U.S. media again overlooked the voice of Iraqi democratic opposition who demanded a peaceful resolution of the crisis because they did not want their country devastated. As Chomsky quoted "we do not hear a word about Iraqi democratic opposition. If you want to find out about them, pick up the German press, or the British press. They do not say much about them, but they are less controlled than we are and they say something" (Chomsky, 2002: 55). He summed up that the voices of Iraqi democrats were totally omitted from media. Street says that sometimes war compels states to use media for propaganda purposes. In the Persian Gulf War of 1991, "the U.S. government deliberately project the notion that Saddam Hussein was a tyrant ['the butcher of Baghdad'] and that protecting Kuwait was a cause worth fighting for" (Street, 2001: 111 -112). Kellner treats the Gulf War as a "media construct" and "a cultural-political event as much as a military one" (Kellner, 1995: 198). He argues that news reporters were biased while covering the war because they created support for the U.S. military strategy (Kellner, 1995: 198). In many cases socially irresponsible media can create the conflict as Gliboa reveals that Danish cartoon controversy reveals that media can even cause a violent conflict (Gilboa, 2010: 88). Purvis maintains "the hyping or overlapping of stories had its impact on political attitudes and actions, most notably in case of Spanish-American war. Decades later media would be a powerful influence on the American foreign policy, but not in a blatantly overt manner that was seen in 1898 when Hearst used *Journal* to urge war against Spain and to inflame public opinion" (Purvis, 2001: 14).

Media as Mirror

Historically media scholars appear to be divided into two groups regarding media role in conflict resolution i.e. either as an escalation agent or de-escalation agent. Both perspectives ignore one fundamental role of media that is to act as a mirror. This role of media, especially the news media, is embodied into the basic principle observed in production of news, i.e. the principle of objectivity that "the underlying assumption of such a concept of objectivity is the belief that an observer can perceive an object completely, precisely and accurately from what it is without letting his or her own experience and frame of reference affect that perception. It means that one can see the things as 'the way it is'" (Yuezhi, 1989: 1). The conflict resolution is a complex process; in many cases media neither escalates nor de-escalates it rather acts as a mirror. Therefore, when media acts as a mirror it is merely an observer that is neither supporting nor opposing any conflicting party as well as any solution or controversy related to conflict. Altschull maintains that press is no more watchdog, adversary or agenda setter, than it is a disinterested, objective observer (Altschull, 1984: 195).

Media influence in conflict resolution is one factor; the others are regional and international environment and commitment to resolve issues, and the role of various non-profit organizations that motivate and put pressure on policymakers. Adelman argues that the regional security generated by cross-border refugee flow trigger intervention rather than media coverage in humanitarian crisis (Adelman, 1992: 74). Moreover, Livingston assessed the CNN effect [media effect] on foreign policy as "minimal" (Livingston, 1997:1). He also maintains that the majority of humanitarian operations in many conflicts are conducted without media coverage. In 1991, the U.S. agency for International Development's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and Food for Peace Program had shipped some 12,000 tons of food to Somalia. This was done before the media acknowledged the crisis there in August 1992 (Livingston, 1997:7). In an interview with Strobel on February 1, 1995, former acting Secretary of State Eagleburger revealed:

> The images [influence of media images] were a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for U.S. action. Although it was not by accident or media independence, once those images appeared, they accentuated the other factors that went into the decision. Along with international communication, they helped bring the urgency of the issue to the attention of senior decision makers, including the president. Perhaps the best way to describe the role of images is that, rather than determining the direction of U.S. foreign policy, they shaped the environment in which decisions were made. (Strobel, 1997: 142)

Moreover, Serfaty suggests that media is "neither hero nor villain" (Serfaty, 1990: 229). In today's world, media, in general, is more profit oriented and economic interests keep media at a certain distance from the conflicts and controversy, but at the same time media seldom compromises its duty to communicate information to the audience in order to survive in a highly competitive media environment; so the best option that remains available for the media is to be the mirror.

The media government interdependent perspective also holds that press neither escalates nor de-escalates conflicts. Berry conducted a series of important case studies to highlight that the press is not a major, autonomous participant. He further suggests that the press is not knowledgeable enough to perform the role of analyst, but it is knowledgeable enough to accurately call a foreign policy outcome (Berry, 1990: 24).

Sometimes conflict resolution demands confidentiality and secrecy of information and it is desired and required by the adversaries and other stakeholders involved in resolution process to keep the media out of the whole process, and in those cases media just act as a silent observer. It is quite important, as in many instances the hype created by media about possible outcomes of negotiation could disturb the tempo and environment of the dialogues, and any negative outcome of conflict resolution process may result into more dismal and gloomy situation for the affectees. In July 2001, in the Agra summit (between India and Pakistan) the same phenomenon happened, and the media-hype that was meant to resolve tensions between the two neighbors created more disappointment among the people of both countries. Learning the lesson from the past when Pakistani Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza GIllani met his Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh at non-aligned movement summit in 2009 in Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, the Pakistani media acted as a mirror and focused more on reporting than advocating peace or animosity between the two states that resulted into resumption of the peace dialogue. Both escalation and de-escalation perspectives give the media a role to act as a participant along with other stakeholders in the conflicts, whereas media as a mirror tends to curtail this exaggerated role of media and puts the media role in the conflict resolution into more acceptable, conventional and realistic mode.

To sum up, the argument is (1) media primary responsibility is to be objective in its coverage, (2) media provides the information and analysis but that is not necessarily meant to create the escalation or de-escalation of the conflict, (3) media's economic interests also keep it at a certain distance from the conflicts, (4) media's influence, sometimes, itself is the consequence of official actions. (5) Therefore, it is concluded that the conflict resolution is a process in which adversaries, international actors, non-government organizations and direct

stakeholders are involved, and media role is only restricted to act as a mirror that only covers events and provides the information to its audience.

Media-Conflict Resolution Model (MCR Model)

On the bases of the above discussion, this study proposes a media-conflict resolution model that describes the media role in conflict resolution as (1) a mirror, (2) an escalation and (3) a de-escalation agent. This model proposes that when media has friendly relations with one of the conflicting parties it escalates or de-escalates conflict and sets agenda or shapes public opinion according to party's point of view and acts as a lapdog. On the contrary, if there is a disharmony between media conflicting parties, media takes an independent position and acts as an escalation or de-escalation agent and shapes the opinion in favor or against that party. In addition, this model suggests that when global actors are involved in conflicts the influence of international media is likely to be increased on the local media. This model also proposes when media adopts neutral position in conflict, it is un-biased and provides more accurate information and acts as a mirror without taking position in the conflict. Moreover, when uncertainty prevails in the media understanding of conflict or media relations with conflicting parties, media role in conflict will be fluctuating from neutral to escalation agent and from escalation to de-escalation agent in various stages of conflict resolution (see figure 1).

Figure 1

Media-Conflict Resolution Model (MCR Model)

Media Relations with Conflicting Parties	Media Stance/Position on an Issue	Type of Media Role	Outcome (Role of Media in Conflict Resolution)
Friendly	Lapdog	Escalation Agent or De-escalation Agent	1. When media takes position in the process of conflict resolution: A. It will play the role as an escalation or de-escalation agent depending upon relations between media and the parties involved in it. B. It will increase the media power to set agenda or shape public opinion according to its perspective. 2. When global actors involve in conflict resolution the influence of international media is likely be increased on local media.
Unfriendly	Watchdog		
Neutral	Neutral	Mirror	When media takes a neutral position/stand, the

			role of media in conflict resolution process is best seen as mirror.
	Ambiguous / Mixed	Fluctuating (Escalation to De-escalation and from De-escalation to Neutral)	When there is a greater uncertainty in media understanding of conflict, it is assumed that media coverage will highly be ambiguous /mixed in tone.

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