CHAPTER I: An Overview of the Journalists in Armed Conflict Situations

1.1 Introduction:

Conflict is a state of opposition, disagreement or incompatibility between two or more people or groups of people, which is sometimes characterized by physical violence. It is the fender-bender humans have experienced over the centuries when two or more parties, with perceived incompatible goals, seek to undermine each other’s goal seeking capability.\(^1\) Psychologically, a conflict exists when the reduction of one motivating stimulus engages an increase in another, so that a new adjustment is demanded.\(^2\)

A clash of interest, values, actions or directions, often sparks a conflict. The word is applicable from the instant the clash occurs. Even when somebody says that there is a potential conflict, it implies that there is already a conflict of direction even though a clash may not yet have occurred. Conflict is a struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or demands. Conflicts which are not readily resolved

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1 Wikipedia-cid-17717
2 Ibid.
may cause the contending parties or individuals to suffer helplessness and anxiety.3

Conflict as a concept can help to explain many aspects of social life such as social disagreement, conflict of interests, and fights between individuals, groups, organizations and nations. In political terms, conflict can refer to wars, revolutions or other struggles, which may involve the use of armed force as in case of armed conflicts.4 Military conflict or war is an international relations dispute, characterized by organized violence between the military powers of the warring nations.

In his seminal work “On War”, Carl Von Clausewitz termed war as the continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means. According to him, war is an interaction in which two or more militaries have a “struggle of wills”.5 When qualified as a civil war, it is a dispute inherent to a given society, and the conflict has more to do with the state of governance rather than sovereignty. Military conflict is different from

3 www.britannica.com
4 Wikipedia-cid-17717
murder or genocide because of the usually organized nature of the military's participation in the struggle, and the organized nature of units involved.\(^6\)

Conflict may also be an armed struggle or clash between organized groups within a nation or between nations in order to achieve limited political or military objectives. Although regular forces are often involved, irregular forces frequently predominate. Conflict often is protracted, confined to a restricted geographic area, and constrained in weaponry and level of violence. Within the state, military power in response to threats may be exercised in an indirect manner while supporting the other instruments of national power. Limited objectives may be achieved by the short, focused, and direct application of force.\(^7\)

Even though many global bodies and independent groups attempt to monitor the situation of ongoing conflicts, the definitions of war, conflict, armed struggle, armed violence, revolution, terrorism and other terms which describe violent opposition between states or armed organised groups, are not precise enough to distinguish completely one from the other. For example, the word terrorism is used indifferently by many governments to

\(^6\) ibid.
\(^7\) www.answers.com/library/military
delegitimize every kind of armed revolt and at the same time by many rebel groups to delegitimize the armed repression of the governments.  

Conflict can exist at a variety of levels: intrapersonal conflict (divergent thoughts and inconsistency in the mind of an individual when he or she tries to make a decision), interpersonal (disagreement between two persons), community conflict (quarrel between two ethnic communities), intra-state conflict (like civil wars), international conflict (like the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan), environmental resources conflict (the war in Iraq which may be seen as a manifestation of conflict for control over huge oil resources in the gulf countries), ideological conflict (conflict between the capitalists and the communists), religious conflict (differences between the doctrines of Islam and Christianity, the conflict between the Islamic nations and Western countries may also be considered as a prodigy of religious conflict), diplomatic conflict (like the gulf of difference one sees between the diplomatic contentions of India and Pakistan with regard to the issue of Kashmir for mobilizing the international community) etc.

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8 Wikipedia-cid-17717
The Arab-Israel conflict is a historic conflict and it may also be regarded as a conflict between Arab and Israel interests. The Catholic-Protestant conflict in Northern Ireland is a notable example of historic conflict. Many conflicts in the world have a supposedly racial or ethnic basis including the conflicts in Kosovo, Rwanda, Somalia etc. Another type of conflict, which will be the focal point of the present discourse, is the conflict between government and guerrilla groups or groups engaged in asymmetric warfare.

1.2 Defining an armed conflict:

The term armed conflict, though in use for many years, became all the rage with the advent of the term international humanitarian law (IHL). At the later part of nineteen forties, the United Nations Organization declared war of all forms illegitimate except the wars of defence and wars sanctioned by the UN Security Council and the laws of war existed earlier became irrelevant. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) coined the term international humanitarian law by the mid twenty century to replace the laws of war. Since then wars of all forms came to be popularly known by the term armed conflict.
According to the interpretation of ICRC, an international armed conflict involves the armed forces of at least two states in the conduct of armed hostilities. A non-international armed conflict is a confrontation within the territory of one state between the regular armed forces and identifiable armed groups, or between armed groups. Internal disturbances occur when the state uses armed force to restore and maintain order, without there being a full fledged armed conflict. Internal tension occurs when, in the absence of internal disturbances, force is used as a preventive measure to maintain law and order.\(^9\)

As far as armed conflict is concerned, even defining the same is not free from conflicting interpretations due to clashing national and regional imperatives and different compulsions and conflict of interest between two countries. Wallensteen, Peter and Margareta Sollenberg observed: “An armed conflict is a contested incompatibility which concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which

at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths.”

A minimum of 25 battle-related deaths per year and/or per incompatibility is really an ambiguous area in the above definition. The separate elements of the definition are operationalised as follows.¹¹

Use of armed force: use of arms in order to promote the parties’ general position in the conflict, resulting in deaths.

Arms: any material means like that of manufactured weapons and also sticks, stones, fire, water, etc.

25 deaths: a minimum of 25 battle-related deaths per year and per incompatibility.

Party: a government of a state or any opposition organization or alliance of opposition organizations.

Government: the party controlling the capital of the state.

¹¹ Ibid.
Opposition organization: any non-governmental group of people having announced a name for their group and using armed force.

State: a state is an internationally recognized sovereign government controlling a specified territory or an internationally unrecognized government controlling a specified territory whose sovereignty is not disputed by another internationally recognized sovereign government previously controlling the same territory.

Incompatibility: It is stated as generally incompatible positions concerning government and/or territory, as stated by the parties.

Incompatibility concerning government: incompatibility concerning type of political system, the replacement of the central government or the change of its composition.

Incompatibility concerning territory: incompatibility concerning the status of a territory, e.g. the change of the state in control of a certain territory (inter-state conflict), secession or autonomy.

An armed conflict may be international or internal (national). In international armed conflict, the combatants belong to two different
countries whereas in internal armed conflict the combatants belong to the same country. In case of international armed conflicts there is not much contention while terming a war or war like situation between two nations as an international armed conflict as in the cases of the international armed conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. However, in case of internal armed conflicts, different perceptions are developed many a time. One group would like to term a secessionist armed struggle as internal armed conflict, the activists of the movement are appreciated as a force to be reckoned with and their activity is justified as martyrs’ duty for a genuine cause of self determination as envisaged in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations Organization. On the contrary, the other group who does not subscribe the former school of thought would definitely have termed it a law and order problem, created by insurgents and sometimes by terrorists.

Global and local perspectives on the same situation of armed conflict and its potential movers do have drastic differences sometimes. An opinion poll of 1,044 Pakistanis jointly conducted by D3 Systems and Pakistan Institute of Public Opinion in August, 2007 (with a margin of error +3 percent) about the popularity of Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf and Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden, the latter scored 46 percent of the votes
while the former follows him with 38 percent. Following the US-led coalition force’s invasion of Afghanistan, tribal areas of Pakistan have become a new centre for Taliban and Al-Qaeda. An estimated 15,000 militants of the fundamentalist forces are now based in Pakistan. In the global perspective, any attempt to root out the militants from such areas by state forces of Pakistan alone or with the help of the American forces, is a law and order problem of Pakistan. However, if the result of the above opinion poll is to be believed, why should not the majority of the local populace of the tribal belt of the Islamic country see it as an armed conflict between the Islamic forces and the American interest?  

Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse has accused Britain of playing double standards in dealing with the global menace of terrorism. He asked the British Government to take effective steps to prevent the LTTE from raising funds in the United Kingdom which are sent back home (Sri Lanka) for buying weapons. Indirectly accusing British government of adopting double standards, he said: “You (UK) can’t have two different

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attitudes towards terrorism. I don’t agree that there are good terrorists and bad terrorists. There is only one kind of the terrorist.” 13

The harsh criticism made against the British government by the Sri Lankan President, per se, explains the differences which come up in the outlook of branding an armed violence either as an armed conflict or as an act of terrorism. On the international community’s perception of Sri Lankan government’s heavy hand in dealing with the ongoing bloodshed, he further asserted that the government is taking steps to protect human rights. He blamed his government’s poor international reputation due to “clever propaganda” by the LTTE for this perception. He also admitted his government’s failure in the propaganda war. The Tamil Tigers have outsmarted the Sri Lankan government in publicity and propaganda and hence have succeeded in informing the international community the military excesses of the government and portraying a good image of the outfit. They have succeeded considerably in convincing the international community about the outfit’s compelling necessity of using violent measures for the cause of self determination as the government is cultivating discontent in the Tamil dominated regions of the country.

According to Dr. Banerji Chaka, Legal Officer, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), South Asia Delegation, New Delhi; whatever be the circumstances, the defining criteria for an armed violence to become an armed conflict remain on the following factors.\(^{14}\)

Recognition by the international community: The armed violence in a region remains a mere law and order problem even if it is continuing for a significant period of time and claimed a considerable number of human lives until and unless the same is recognized by the international community as an armed conflict.

Magnitude of the conflict: Sometimes the cost of human life and properties claimed by an armed violence comes out in such a large scale that either the international bodies or the influential countries of the world have no option but to recognize the situation as an armed conflict. Either by compelling necessity or by virtue of its magnitude, only the term armed conflict fits the situation.

If one goes by the above consideration, it may so happen that a real situation of armed conflict requires recognition by the international bodies

and/or influential countries of the world before it could be globally accepted as a situation of armed conflict. It may even need a strategic media planning and hectic lobbying to get recognized by the international community as an armed conflict. The lobbying of the non-state actors at times has to outsmart the endeavors of the state or government in power. Media framing to have an edge over the rival in the psychological war in national as well as international media, is really a significant imperative here.

A new paradigm of armed conflict called new conflict is also being increasingly observed with the advent of the weakening of state administrations and assertion of ethnic identity in some parts of a country. There is much talk today of new conflicts. This expression covers different types of armed conflicts: those known as anarchic conflicts and others in which group identity becomes the focal point. These terms are used fairly loosely. Anarchic conflicts, the upsurge of which doubtless results from the end of the Cold War, is often marked by the partial and sometimes even total weakening or breakdown of state structures. \(^{15}\)

In such situations, armed groups take advantage of the political vacuum in an attempt to grab power. This type of conflict is however

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marked above all by a weakening or breakdown in the chain of command within the same armed groups. Conflicts aimed at asserting group identity often seek to exclude the adversary through ethnic cleansing. This consists in forcibly displacing or even exterminating populations. Under the effect of spiraling propaganda, violence and hatred, this type of conflict strengthens group feeling to the detriment of the existing national identity, ruling out any possibility of coexistence with other groups. In Manipur also, the most recent genre of armed conflict had already come into sight. The Kuki-Naga conflict of the recent past is a glaring example of the same.

1.3 Media’s interest in armed conflicts and communication politics:

A Guide to Advanced Techniques in Journalism, prepared by the Editorial Study Centre of the Thomson Foundation, lists 20 categories of what makes news and conflict is positioned at sixth. News of armed conflict and its relevant views contributed by strategic analysts, media commentators and policy researchers are hot cakes for the newspaper readers, radio listeners, television viewers and webcast media browsers. For the sake of circulation and advertisement compulsions also, media need contents of armed conflict. The news and views of the armed conflicts in Iraq,
Afghanistan, Somalia, Uganda, Sri Lanka and Middle East are brought to the media audience of the globe by international news agencies-Reuters, AFP, AP, UPI, TASS etc. and the same contents are among the most read or heard or viewed items. If the importance of conflict content is fueled by proximity, the coverage of the same is done at a more prominent page of print media or at a prime time spot of electronic media. Such editorial contents are regular features not only in national media but also in local media like daily newspapers published in Imphal. The quantum of coverage of news and views of armed conflict in the local media explains per se the demand of armed conflict in media.

The key role played by media during the course of an armed conflict is known to the nations or states and non-state parties who have a stake in the conflict. Each party tries its best to win the media war first as the psychological war is fought first. If a party wins in the communication politics of armed conflict, success of the party is almost certain in the long run. This happened time and again in US-Iraq, US-Afghanistan and NATO-Serbia armed conflicts. Even if the group gets defeated physically, support of the international community will be with the group if it could have
influenced the global media. Such communication politics really helped Kosovo in the long run and it could become a sovereign country recently.

In the present communication politics of the world, media framing of issues or media framing of individuals/groups/nations is really working very effectively. It is because of this reason that the majority view of the world is against Taliban, Al-Qaida and Osama Bin Laden while none of the organizations and Laden were terrorists when they were on the battle line to throw out the Russian forces from the soil of Afghanistan with the help of US intelligence network CIA. The communication politics played by the West to influence the world media during the height of armed conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq shows the compelling necessity of winning media war beforehand. It is in this line that the US-led coalition force was criticised for intentionally targeting journalists who defied their command and also for bombarding the work places of Al-Jazeera TV in Baghdad and Kabul as the news organization is considered to be pro-Islamic.
1.4 Human security in the armed conflict:

If human development is about expanding choice and advancing rights, violent armed conflict among and within nations is the most brutal suppression of human development. The right to life and security are among the most basic human rights. These two are also among the most widely and systematically violated. Insecurity linked to armed conflict remains one of the greatest obstacles to human development. It is both a cause and a consequence of mass poverty. Violent armed conflict is a major hindrance in achieving human security, development and peace. The world has witnessed 57 major armed conflicts in 45 locations during 1990-2001. Its effect has spared no developing region of the world and Sub-Saharan Africa has been hit the worst. Lost of human lives during such violent moments are hard to count and estimates vary. But it is estimated that as many as 3.6 million human lives have been claimed during the period and as many millions got injured and became homeless.

The new entry in the above calculation is the deaths in Iraq after the country is occupied by the US led coalition force. According to a report of a

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17 Ibid.
survey conducted jointly by Iraqi government and the World Health Organization (WHO) in January, 2008; nearly five years of war in the country had claimed lives of some 4,000 Americans and another 300 personnel of the US-led coalition troop and 1,00,000-2,23,000 Iraqis.\textsuperscript{18} The horrible truth is that majority of the victims of the human made devastations are innocent civilians and not combatants who are taking part in the conflict. It is accounted that more than nine tenth of deaths and injuries have been civilians. At least half of the civilian casualty is estimated to be children.

Almost after 18 years since the end of cold war, there is a perception that the world is becoming less safe. In industrialized countries, public opinion polls suggest that this perception is linked to terrorist threats. This threat is really looming large. At the same time, the West also creates a distorted perception of the distribution of human insecurity.\textsuperscript{19} Since 1998 terrorism has been responsible for approximately 20,000 fatalities globally. Meanwhile, the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo is estimated to

\textsuperscript{18} Bush stimulus plan under pressure, The Hindu, Jan. 27, 2008, New Delhi, p-12.
have caused nearly 4 million deaths, the majority not from bullets but from malnutrition and disease.\textsuperscript{20}

The major armed conflict regions of the world like Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Palestine, Uganda et al are experiencing humanitarian tragedies that flicker intermittently into world news in both print and electronic media. Scaling the cost of human life in such countries at the time of armed conflicts really dwarfs the threats facing people in the developed West. Almost all of the deaths directly attributable to armed conflicts have happened in developing countries and underdeveloped countries of the world.

Apart from the immediate human costs, violent armed conflict disrupts whole societies and can roll back human development gains built up over generations. Armed conflict disrupts public distribution system of food and other essential commodities, hits to the livelihood of the civil populace, contributes to hunger and malnutrition and undermines progress in health and education. About 25 million people are currently internally displaced.

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid
because of armed conflicts and human rights violations in major armed conflict zones of the world.\textsuperscript{21}

The world is becoming an increasingly violent planet. The century that just ended was the most violent one humanity has ever experienced. Nearly three times as many people were killed in armed conflicts in the twentieth century as in the previous four centuries combined. The last decade of the twentieth century witnessed a marked reduction in the number of armed conflicts. But the beginning of the twenty-first century had come with looming international armed conflicts like those in Afghanistan and Iraq. The fact that armed conflicts steadily cost human lives is evident from the following table:\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{21} Op cit, p-152
\textsuperscript{22} Op cit, p-153
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Armed conflict related deaths in millions</th>
<th>World population, mid-century in millions</th>
<th>Armed conflict related deaths as share of world population in percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sixteenth Century</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>493.3</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventeenth Century</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>579.1</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighteenth Century</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>757.4</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nineteenth Century</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>1,172.9</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twentieth Century</td>
<td>109.7</td>
<td>2,519.5</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From a high of 51 armed conflicts in 1991 there were only 29 ongoing armed conflicts in 2003. Although the number of conflicts has declined, the wars of the last 17 years have exacted an extremely large toll in human lives. Even if most of today’s conflicts are internal, they often affect entire regions, thus assuming international dimensions.
A graphical representation of international and internal armed conflict in the past six decades may be presented in the following curves with respect to the frequencies of armed conflict in different regions of the globe.²³

frequency of conflict


(In the above graphical representation, the upper curve signifies internal armed conflict while the lower curve implies international armed conflict).

²³ ibid
1.5 Journalists in armed conflict:

The history of laws of war and history of the professional hazards of journalists in an armed conflict situation are often intertwined. Even if the laws of war clearly spared the messengers/peace communicators from time immemorial, they were not absolutely free from the menace of war or armed conflict. The risk associated with journalists in an armed conflict situation can be traced back to the Vedic Age in the Indian context. Chanting “Narayana, Narayana” saint Narada reached to the gods and to the demons, informing thereby the ambition and evil designs of war each group planned against the other. He was considered as a trouble monger and many a time had to invite wrath of one section or both and hence had to face the music.

Different regions of the globe are experiencing armed conflicts of greater or lesser intensity. News of the same hits the front pages of newspapers and comes as breaking news in 24X7 television news channels. The civilian populace is in a catch twenty-two situation in such regions of the world. The devil’s grip doesn’t spare even the journalists. The quantum of human suffering in such situations in the present day world is calling for immediate attention of the international community for avoiding conflicts
and settling differences amicably through peaceful means. Here comes the significant role of media in bridging the gulf, promoting awareness for the need of justice and reconciliation.

Even in armed conflict zones, journalists are in a unique position to collect reports from the battle front, from the combatants and civilians, international/national/regional humanitarian organizations and government authorities into a coherent and compelling account and to disseminate the same all over the world with an impartial outlook. But the impartiality of Embedded Journalists (EJ) is being increasingly questioned. At the same time, journalists are paying heavily for this unique opportunity.

One of the most dubious legacies of the invasion and occupation of Iraq by the US-led coalition force is that war reporting will never be the same. Journalists have traveled with troops before but this was the first time that they were effectively co-opted into the British and American armed forces, undermining a long and robust tradition of war journalism in the West. Embedded reporting turned journalists into an extension of the army, governed by a rigid code of conduct that hugely cramped their independence. The deal was that they would get a ringside view of the war
but, in exchange, they would not see, hear or report anything that the army with which they were embedded did not want.  

The issue before the media was: what is better? Independence minus privileged access to the war front or access with stifling strings attached? From the fact that hundreds of war correspondents, including those from some of the world's avowedly most independent news organizations agreed to embed, the answer should be obvious: access at any cost. But that has not settled the debate over the role of embedded reporting and questions continue to be asked about the moral and professional aspects of a practice that amounts to reducing journalists to vehicles of official propaganda.

Cardiff University's School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies has produced a study whose main conclusions are not likely to make happy reading for the critics of embedded journalism (EJ). Most of the research work discussed in the report entitled “Too Close to Comfort” was commissioned by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) which because of its tradition of relative objectivity has been less enthusiastic about the practice than some other sections of the British media. The research, conducted by a team led by Professor Justin Lewis, who heads Cardiff

University's Journalism School, is claimed to be the most thorough analysis of the issue to date and draws on interviews with what it calls key actors in the broadcast coverage of Iraq invasion (reporters, editors and heads of news departments) and key personnel of the British Ministry of Defence and the Pentagon.

According to the report, EJ has its advantages in that it provides journalists unprecedented access and protection; and contrary to what critics allege embedded journalists or simply embeds are pretty much free to report what they like. While some of the journalists who had embedded in the US-led coalition force provided the researchers with a long list of complaints about the embed program, the general consensus was that it worked reasonably well and that degree of interference and censorship involved was lower than expected. The report also rejects the idea that embeds were necessarily in bed with the British/US military establishment and tailored their reporting to suit the official agenda. The notion that EJ is intended to be a substitute for unilateral reporting is wrong, the report contends, arguing that all it does is to offer an alternative to official military briefings.
The channels of mass communication thrive on the reporting of debate and more strenuous forms of conflict. Yet the stakes are high in many of those conflicts and how they are reported and how they are perceived by the public can have grave, long-term consequences. How does and how should the media deal with its mission while covering international armed conflicts which are of life-and-death importance to the participants, which impinge on the vital interest of the United States, and may affect the lives of many people over many years to come? What can and what should a democratic government do to influence, control or prevent full coverage of military actions? These are sobering and not altogether welcome questions. These are the questions that have been asked again and again about the coverage of the troubles in Central America and in the Middle East and more recently about Grenada. All these issues call for careful and comprehensive examination. The debate over this question, both inside and outside the media, is a healthy thing. Yet, clearly, there are more productive and less productive ways of conducting that debate.²⁵

Echoes of the accusation of witting or unwitting aid to revolutionary movements are clearly heard in discussions of the coverage of the Salvadoran rebels and Sandinistas in Central America and of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the Middle East. Again, it is said that sentimental and naïve media representatives have been slanting their reports in favor of underdog revolutionaries. Again, it is charged that some reporters are not adequately informed about the complex political realities of the peoples and the governments they cover, that they are taken in by the humanitarian rhetoric of terrorists, that they fail to see that the injustices of the regime under attack may be nothing compared to the tyrannies the rebels will inflict if they win. 26

From a certain point of view, there may be some validity to these complaints. Journalists are not well prepared for predicting what will happen, certainly not in far away places beset by confusing internal and regional problems and afflicted with uncertain and unpopular leaders. Even others who may be willing to offer opinion like presidents, diplomats, members of Congress and the armchair critics of academia- have had few brilliant successes in foretelling what the future course of events may be

26 Op. cit, p-12
with regard to the Third World. Some journalists in every era appear, at
times, to become unofficial mouthpieces for the administration in power
while there is also another genre of journalists who are always anti-
establishment. In internal armed conflicts the above types of media persons,
however small their number may be, are bound to be groomed by the
confronting sections. 27

The parties having a stake in a conflict are quite willing to accompany
journalists. Though security of the newsmen is a big problem for which the
accompanying party takes care, it often also serves as a pretext for
controlling their work. This is the main problem of embedded journalists.
Media persons know the trick and often prefer to take risk rather than they
are subjected to rigors of control. This is not only an international issue and
its ramifications are coming also in emerging local armed conflicts or in
militancy prone areas.

The US-led coalition force’s invasion in Afghanistan and Iraq has
tattered the image of embedded journalism. It has also exposed the
communication politics played by the west to influence the world media to
serve their interest and to nip at the bud those who defy their dictum. Eason

27 ibid
Jordan, the Chief News Executive of Cable News Network (CNN) asserted that he knew twelve journalists who had not only been killed by US troops in Iraq, but had in fact been targeted, during a discussion at the World Economic Forum titled “Will Democracy Survive the Media?”. The world also had witnessed the fate of Al-Jazeera TV Network in both Kabul and Baghdad. US-led coalition force had bombarded the working centers of the television network for its slanting reports towards Islamic fundamentalists and later they resorted to the excuse that they had committed the mistake on mistaken identity.  

1.6 Reporting armed conflicts:

Four recent wars - the 1991 Gulf War, the aerial war over Serbia and Kosovo, US-led coalition force’s invasion in Afghanistan and Iraq, have dramatically altered the ways that armed conflicts are reported to the global media audience through newspapers, radio, television and internet. Although long standing frictions and suspicions persist between the press and military officials, the use of the new media technologies has inevitably altered journalism for better or worse. In the brief Gulf War, television and especially Cable News Network (CNN) turned much of the world into a

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global community witnessing a televised real-time war, as the brief conflict evolved from armed confrontation to spectacular aerial bombardment and finally to lightning ground warfare. The war became the biggest global news story in decades and reporting the same had to share resources from international news system particularly the western news media. More than 1600 newsmen from both print and broadcast media were on hand to report the 1991 Gulf War.

The 1999 NATO bombing campaign against Serbia, whose ground forces were mauling Kosovo civilians, was a new kind of armed conflict: an effort, mainly by the United States air power, to bomb a nation into submission without deploying ground troops or even incurring casualties. As in the first Gulf War, the press accused the military of withholding news and of spinning combat reports for political and strategic reasons and coverage was greatly facilitated by the satellite telephone, twenty-four hour cable television coverage and for the first time, the internet.

During the early period of the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan, relationship between the press and military was still evolving. The Bush administration made it clear that the press would receive less access to
combat-related information than in previous conflicts. Yet the news media in Afghanistan and from abroad, poured out a steady torrent of news, speculation, commentary and pictures of this multi-faceted conflict. The beginning of the twenty-first century was more completely wired for 24X7 coverage and journalists from many countries flocked to the region. The war in Iraq in 2003 dominated the world’s newspaper front pages and television screens as the US-led coalition force quickly overwhelmed the army of Saddam Hussein and captured Baghdad. However, the coalition force could not fully curb insurgency in the country even after five years of its occupation of the Islamic nation. This has made the work of the reporters still in Iraq increasingly dangerous and difficult. The role of news media in reporting and explaining the war in Iraq has gone through changes. Wars, particularly when they involved Western powers, are always at the top of the news agenda for foreign countries.

In World War I, about 500 American correspondents were covering the conflict for newspapers, magazines and press associations in France. Unlike British and French reporters; the American newsmens were free to go to the front lines without military escorts. Still, everything written by such star reporters of the stature of Richard Harding Davis, Will Irwin or Floyd
Gibbons etc. had to pass through the censorship of the press section of the Military Intelligence Service. Details about specific battles, number of casualties and names of units could be released only after being mentioned in official communiqués. US military censorship followed the same general pattern in World War II, with the added feature of controlling radio broadcast. Relation between the military and reporters were mutually trusting and supportive. Despite occasional differences over withheld information, everyone seemed to be on the same team. During the Korean War also relationship between press and government was pretty much the same.\textsuperscript{29}

The change began in the 1960s Vietnam War when relation between the US forces and media soured and reached its lowest ebb. Reporters and camera crews were given free access to roam Vietnam during the war without field censorship. Some consider it to be the best reported war in history, yet many in the US military believed that critical reporting contributed to the American defeat by over stressing negative aspects including graphic pictures of dead and wounded, highlighting scandals such as My Lai massacre.

The combatants of an armed conflict try to control and manipulate the media with subtle and no so subtle propaganda and misinformation messages. Sometimes what the military authorities brief during armed conflicts is not news but illusion of news. Information is tightly controlled in such circumstances and for best known security reasons, distortion of news is seen at times. As the frontline journalists are covering incident after incident, it becomes next to impossible for them to please both the warring parties and sometimes it happens that the group a journalist is embedded with becomes so furious that its armed personnel target him or her in the garb of mistake. Killing the messengers in the crossfire is a regular case. Taking them into hostage and intentionally targeting them while they were performing their duty of informing the common populaces are no longer rare cases. On the part of journalists also, some of these actions were against their own professional ethics thereby causing irreparable damage to the credibility of the profession.
1.7 Press, the fourth estate of democracy:

The content of mass media is a reflection of life and its activities. It spares no aspect of life within the horizon of human civilization and the whole universe is within the ambit of its area of interest. So, it is as complex as the life itself and as vast as the universe itself. A journalist is a thinking agent of newspaper readers, radio listeners, television viewers and browsers of webcast media. He/she is the hired eye, ear, leg, brain et al of the media audience. Everything they perform is guided by public interest. The media persons are paid to survey a small fraction of the world’s activities each day and tell the public what they find: what is happening, what is scheduled to happen, what people are saying about it, and (when they are reasonably sure) what it means. If they do their job well, they supply much of the current information that each person needs to develop a workable picture of reality. If they do it poorly, they become responsible for part of the public’s ignorance and prejudice.

Many people do rely on the mass media for a large portion of their information. They tend to believe what they read in newspapers and hear on the radio and see on the television. Most of the people do manufacture their
view of the world largely from the raw material supplied by the mass media. The second hand picture of reality provided by mass media is inescapable, because nobody can be omnipresent and see, hear and understand everything happening everywhere by himself or herself. That is why one finds have journalists all over the globe and media audience accepts what the journalists tell them largely on faith.

The public has neither time nor the resources to get the news story or to check its accuracy in most of the cases. That responsibility is to be shouldered by the contributors of media. And they must perform it in such a way that they merit the public trust. The fourth estate of democracy stands apart from other institutions and segments of the society, putting its public role and social responsibility above the unfettered pursuit of profits. Publishers, editors and other journalists alike claim that their organizations are not beholden to any special interest except the pursuit of truth.

Media's special status is codified in an ideology extolling objectivity and impartiality. According to this ideology, media should not reflect the views of any particular segment of society, but should try to provide a balance of all perspectives and points of view. These norms are
institutionalized in the daily practice of journalism. To guarantee that the judgments of journalists are not colored by their own affiliations, newspapers encourage and often require that journalists avoid potentially conflicting commitments. The media set the agenda of political, social and economic debate. They mold public opinion on crucial issues, socialize individuals to social roles and behavior and can legitimatize or undermine powerful institutions, individuals and ideas. The text, audio and audio-visual contents of mass media which are often termed as magic bullets, link individuals to the great and little events of their time. They also mobilize and connect the individual members of the society and help in molding public opinion on socially valued issues.

The popular narrators of everyday happenings, the print and electronic media play a pivotal role in a democratic country. The principal democratic function of media is to act as a check on the state. The fourth pillar of democracy should monitor the full range of state activity and fearlessly expose abuses of official authority. Even if the publication and broadcast of news is at the embarrassment of the national and state governments, practice of the same should not be deterred if it is outweighed by public interest and impartial conscience of the journalists responds to divulge the same.
The process of information dissemination is not however without its biases and asymmetries. The media persons of all ilks are also human. They have their own socio-political, economic and religious affiliations. Even if the ethical codes of professional conduct of the fourth estate of democracy clearly solicit to observe and maintain truth, accuracy, fairness, impartiality, justice and social responsibility, the same can not be guaranteed in practice. The situation is more critical in armed conflict zones in comparison to regions of peace and tranquility. This is because of the fact that the media professionals working in international or internal or low intensity armed conflict areas are more vulnerable to professional hazards.

At times, even honest officials are unjustly pilloried by the mob mentality of an over jealous press. Some of the journalists also sometimes got strayed from the journalistic ethics covertly of overtly. Moreover, very few journalists of the developing and underdeveloped countries actually have the skills to report on sophisticated forms of corruption that emerge with economic growth and the integration of local economies. Since the media is a part of the larger society in which corruption has become an integral element, it has seeped into the realms of media. People with certain
vested interests try their best to buy journalists either to defend themselves or to attack their rivals.

In 1998, the Philippine Centre for Investigative Journalism (PCIJ) polled 100 beat reporters and found that 71 had been offered money by their sources. Of these, 33 per cent admitted they took the money, with 22 per cent keeping the cash for themselves, and 11 per cent turning it to their editors. The competence of media persons to provide an effective public forum where all the sections of a society can engage at par, depends on the extent to which they are free from the influences of the dominant socio-political and economic interests of the times and the extent to which they are trained, equipped and committed to true professionalism and social responsibility.

In a public opinion survey of six hundred adults selected by random digit dialing, during the spring of 2001 for a national public radio station of the United States using a scale of extremely important, somewhat important and not very important; survey respondents were asked to rate a variety of traditional and public journalism characteristics of local news. Specifically,

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respondents were asked, “What do you think is the most important role of local news media?” The responses were (1) report the widest range of news, (2) concentrate on certain topics, (3) provide a forum of community views, (4) be a watchdog of powerful people and government, (5) highlight interesting people and groups in the community and (6) offer solution to community problems.  

When journalists cover the widest range of happenings around the globe, the armed conflict situations in many regions of the world and human security in such areas are issues worth to give attention to. The channels of mass media should provide a forum of contending views in respect of the activities of the state and non state actors in critical junctures of armed conflict or armed conflict like situations. The issues and concerns of the confronting parties deserved to get highlighted. Offering amicable solutions to the immediate problem of the society through the media contents of both print and electronic media will be really an immense contribution to the service of humanity.

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1.8 Role of media in conflict resolution:

Opening a two day regional seminar for senior editors from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan on the theme “Media responses to conflict” jointly hosted by Jamia Millia Islamia, Press Institute of India and ICRC on 28 and 29 March, 2006 in Delhi, former Chief Justice of India J. S. Verma told editors: “All conflicts arise in the minds of men and that is where they need to be tackled. The impact the media makes in influencing the mind is so great and it can make all the difference.” Many advocates of conflict resolution are of the view that mass media can play a pivotal role in defusing tensions and forging peace in armed conflict or armed violent situations. But journalists are reluctant to become actors in the developments they are covering; nevertheless there are opportunities for them to be won over to the cause of conflict resolution.

About a decade ago, the Centre for Conflict Resolution and the Media Peace Centre in South Africa started the Mediation Project for Journalists which was a series of workshops imparting conflict resolution skills to journalists. Many of the journalists they invited to attend the program declined to attend the program on the ground that learning about managing
or resolving a conflict is hardly accounted in their profession, and that their job is mainly to report the facts and conflict of interest may bound to jeopardize objectivity in news reporting. Still there is another view which contends that “media’s role in conflict resolution” debate is not about taking sides in conflict resolution, but to take the side of peace and confidence building measures.\(^{32}\)

Media can also exacerbate conflict. It is quick and easy to do, and will draw a following; it can also be irresponsible. Media can educate. Indeed, there is much evidence that it is the fastest educator in contemporary society. Once upon a time we thought that the three Rs would give us all we need; now we all need to "read, write, reckon and resolve". No-one can help us better than our media. It has the power to bring together sections of our society previously out of touch with each other. Media can mediate. Mediation is a neutral, objective process which helps conflicting parties to design their own solutions. It is a just and compassionate practice and does not demand that the mediator be value-free.

Mass media addresses problems of power-inequality and aims at "leveling the playing field". It makes available voice to the inarticulate and
provides audience for the unheard. While media research workers are recognizing the destructive role of media which had clearly been seen in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, and holding in mind the potential of free and independent media for fostering democracy, global bodies and non governmental organizations are of the view that media has a crucial role to play in peace building. The significance for media's role and its impact on peace building is mounting.

The conflict-resolving approach of media also enhances the consumer's interest in media reporting and analysis. Conflict is exciting. It is the very stuff of change. It is never to be ignored or swept under the carpet. It has always commanded an audience for media. Wherever media not only presents conflict but also points to its resolution, they get compelling stuff. Conflict resolution approach in the presentation of media content is another style often more creative and effective. Cynicism and disenchantment about the media can be overcome with a conflict-resolving approach.
1.9 Challenges before media in armed conflict situations:

The last year’s (2007) focus on the safety of journalists and the problem of impunity of crimes against journalists on the World Press Freedom Day (May 3) and conferring of UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize, 2007 posthumously to assassinated Russian investigative journalist Anna Politkovskaya and observing the occasion in Medellin in Guillermo Cano’s home country Columbia have a unique significance. The sharp increase in the number of journalists being killed and harassed while shouldering their responsibility all over the globe explains per se the reason for selecting the theme for this year’s press freedom day observation. A major share of journalists targeted happens to be in armed conflict zones of the world. New York based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) averred in its annual report of 2005(published in 2006) that more than three quarters of the journalists, who died all over the world, were murdered “to silence their criticism or punish them for their work”.

Journalists beheaded in Iraq and Afghanistan, US-led coalition force’s bombardment of Al Jajeera TV offices in Kabul and Baghdad, unbearable pressures and threats upon media persons in military regimes and

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major conflict zones of the world et al remind us time and again the scene of media under siege in violent armed conflict regions and in low intensity armed conflict zones as well. Helpless journalists beg for mercy to fulfill their professional commitment, all in vain, as the line between the protectors of democracy and its predators becomes blurred. Acknowledging the gravity of the issue, the United Nations Security Council unanimously approved a resolution on Dec.23, 2006 condemning all attacks targeting journalists in armed conflicts and urging the combatants to stop singling out members of the media and respect their professional independence.

Over 1,000 media personnel around the world have been killed while trying to report news in the past decade, with Iraq and Russia topping the list as the deadliest countries for the profession and India standing at sixth. More than 1,100 journalists and support staff have been killed carrying out their work in the past decade and the annual toll has jumped since 2003, the year of the US-led invasion of Iraq, as per a report of the International News Safety Institute (INSI), the Brussels-based coalition of international news media organizations and human rights groups. In most of the cases, according to the INSI which spent two years tracking the statistics, the killers were never identified or punished. Only one in eight deaths resulted
in prosecution. Every fourth of the journalist killed, died in war and other armed conflicts according to the report entitled “Killing the Messenger”. The vast majority of those killed were on staff (91%) and the remaining were freelance (9%).  

The most violent 10 countries over the past decade have been Iraq (138), Russia (88), Colombia (72), Philippines (55), Iran (54), India (45), Algeria (32), the former republic of Yugoslavia (32), Mexico (31) and Pakistan (29). Iran’s figures were swollen by one air accident in December 2005. A military aircraft carrying news teams to cover exercises in the Gulf crashed in Tehran, killing 48 journalists and media technicians aboard.

INSI was invited to carry out this analysis by press freedom and media support groups at a meeting in Geneva in 2004, called to discuss the rising news media death toll around the world. It formed an International Committee of Inquiry, comprising news organizations, individual

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21 Subir Ghosh (ed.), Over 1000 journalists killed in last 10 years, www.newswatch India
journalists, journalist support groups, and international legal experts. The team conducted a series of interviews with affected journalists and support staff in critical areas and compiled a database containing details of the deaths of journalists and media workers in violent circumstances which goes back 10 years to 1996. The database included details for 1,000 individuals of 101 nationalities, who died in 96 countries. Christopher Warren, the President of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) described it as a "wake-up call" to the media industry and the international political community, and added, "This report confirms the shocking reality that journalists and the people who work with them are at risk today more than ever before.

1.10 Targeted journalists: IPI death watch

International Press Institute (IPI) includes in its "Death Watch" journalists who were deliberately targeted because of their profession. They were targeted either because of their investigative reporting or simply because they were journalists. IPI also includes journalists who were caught in the crossfire while covering dangerous assignments. The following table
is a reflection of the number of journalists being killed all over the world in the last decade.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Journalists killed</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>91</td>
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Not less than 100 journalists breathed their last in 2006 while shouldering their responsibility of information dissemination all over the globe with Iraq claiming the highest followed by Philippines. The shares of killing statistics are as follows: Iraq-46, Philippines-10, Mexico-7, Pakistan-4, Afghanistan-3, Sri Lanka-5, Brazil-1, Colombia-3, Ecuador-1, Guatemala-1, Venezuela-2, Russia-2, Lebanon-1, Sudan-1, Bangladesh-1, China-2, India-2, Indonesia-1, Turkmenistan-1, Angola-1, D.R. of Congo (former Zaire)-1, Nigeria-1, Somalia-1, Dominican Republic-1, Guyana-1.  

According to a report filed by Michael Kudlak at IPI Deathwatch, 65 journalists were killed worldwide in 2005 - at least 23 in Iraq, 9 in

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35 The Imphal Free Press, 12 July, 2007, Imphal, p-3
Philippines, 3 each in Bangladesh and Haiti, and 2 each in Brazil, Colombia, Lebanon, Mexico, Nepal, Pakistan, Somalia and Sri Lanka. Journalists were also killed in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Libya, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, and Thailand. Almost all of these murders were committed with impunity. Iraq with at least 23 journalist fatalities, once again proved to be the most dangerous country in the world for journalists. Both foreign correspondents and Iraqi journalists continued to be caught in the crossfire in the deadly war between US-led coalition troops and insurgents.

The number of journalists and media staffers killed worldwide in 2004 is 78. At least 23 journalists and media workers died in Iraq alone, 12 journalists in Philippines, 5 in Bangladesh, 4 in Mexico, and 3 each in Brazil, India, Nepal and Russia. Journalists were also killed in 18 other countries. 27 journalists were killed in the Middle East, where Iraq once again proved to be the most dangerous country in the world to work as a journalist.

Sixty-four (64) journalists and media workers were killed worldwide in 2003. At least 19 journalists and media staff in Iraq alone, 9 in Colombia,
7 in Philippines, 4 in Brazil, 3 in Russia, 1 in Ukraine and 3 each in India, Nepal and Russia. Journalists were also murdered in 13 other countries. The Middle East, where 22 journalists were killed, proved to be the most dangerous region in the world to work in as a journalist in this year. In addition to the deaths recorded in Iraq, 2 cameramen were killed in separate incidents in the Palestinian territories, where media professionals continued to be caught in the crossfire.

The number of journalists and media workers killed worldwide in 2002 was 54 with 15 in Colombia alone, 8 in Russia, 4 in the Palestinian territories, and 3 each in India, Mexico, Nepal and the Philippines. Journalists were also murdered in 11 other countries. During this year, the Americas, where 22 journalists were killed, remained the most dangerous region in the world to work in as a journalist. In Colombia, journalists continued to be caught in the middle of a conflict that has lasted for nearly four decades. Despite President Alvaro Uribe's campaign pledge to clamp down on all propagators of illegal violence, at least 15 journalists were killed by leftist guerrillas, right-wing paramilitaries, drug traffickers or common criminals.
In 2001, 55 journalists and media workers were killed worldwide with 11 in Colombia, 8 in Afghanistan, and 3 each in the Palestinian Territories and the Philippines respectively. Journalists were also murdered in 24 other countries. The Americas, where at least 21 journalists were killed, was again the most dangerous region in the world to practice journalism. In Colombia, 11 journalists were killed by leftist guerrillas, right-wing paramilitary groups and organized criminals and 2 in Mexico near the U.S. border, where drug traffickers pose a significant threat to journalists reporting on corruption and criminal activities.

In 2000, 56 journalists and media workers were killed world-wide of which 11 journalists were killed in Colombia, 6 in Russia, and 4 each in India and Pakistan, respectively. Journalists were also murdered in 23 other countries. The Americas, where at least 20 journalists were killed, remained the most dangerous region in the world to work in as a journalist in this year too. In Colombia, journalists continued to be caught in the middle of a conflict that has lasted almost four decades. 11 journalists were killed – at least 6 of them because of their profession – by leftist guerrillas, right-wing paramilitary groups and organized criminals. Three journalists were killed in Mexico. Two of them were killed near the Texas border, where drug
traffickers pose a significant threat to journalists reporting on corruption and criminal activities.

In 1999, 86 journalists and media staff were killed in the course of their work. Most of them died because they were caught up in conflicts in the Balkans, in Sierra Leone, and in Colombia. Unexplained assassinations and murders of reporters and editors also accounted for many of the deaths. The 1999 total is second only to the horrifying toll of 1994 when wars in Bosnia and genocide in Rwanda were primarily responsible for a sudden surge in killings of journalists. These deaths are the tip of an iceberg of physical assaults, sending behind the bars and disappearances that affect journalists every year. For every death recorded there are numerous instances of intimidation and violence that are not listed. Some 25 journalists and media workers died in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, alone, of which 16 were victims of the NATO bombing of the Radio Television Serbia building in Belgrade in April, 1999.
1.11 Concluding Remarks:

There is no disagreement of opinion while terming a war or a war like situation between two nations as an international armed conflict as in the cases of the recent international armed conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. However, as far as internal armed conflict is concerned, even defining the same is not free from conflicting interpretations. Different perceptions are developed many a time and armed rebellion is obviously interpreted as per convenience by different groups to serve their specific interests. In a particular situation of armed violence between the regular armed forces of the government and identifiable armed groups, or between armed groups within the territory of one state, one section may like to brand it as an internal armed conflict while another section may opt to term it either as a law and order problem or terrorism.

The defining criteria for an armed violence in a country to become an internationally accepted situation of armed conflict remain that of recognition by the international community and magnitude of the conflict.\(^6\) However, the defining criteria itself is equivocal. As such, there is no internationally accepted mechanism that can define and redefine the

conditions of an internal armed conflict situation. Moreover, as a matter of diplomatic strategy, no ruling group of a country is ready to accept that there is an armed conflict situation in their country. It has been visibly observed from the situations of armed conflict in Sri-Lanka and Nepal.

Few months back, the Maoists of Nepal (presently ruling the country) were branded as terrorists and were banned by the monarchy in the Himalayan kingdom. The Sri Lankan government also is not yet ready to acknowledge the alarming violent situation in the Tamil dominated Jaffna region of the country as one of an internal armed conflict. Instead the government terms it terrorism. The ruling sections and the rebels definitely have divergent opinions in defining an internal armed conflict.

Even though there is a convention from the time immemorial of not targeting messengers during the course of a war or an armed conflict, the same is not honoured at times by the warring parties. In the past decade, as many as 1100 mediapersons and support staff have been killed all over the world. A major share of the journalists killed over the past decade is from the armed conflict zones and armed violent regions of the world.
Deeply concerned at the frequency of acts of violence, including deliberate attacks, in many parts of the world against journalists, media professionals and associated personnel in armed conflicts, the Security Council of the United Nations condemned such attacks and called on all parties on 23 December 2006 to put an end to such practices.\textsuperscript{37} The Council also recalled the war correspondents’ right to the status of prisoners of war (PoW) under the Third Geneva Convention. According to the Convention, journalists, media professionals and associated personnel engaged in dangerous professional missions in the areas of armed conflict should be considered as civilians, be respected and protected as such.

\textsuperscript{37} www.un.org/News/Press