

# Media representations of social conflicts: Identifying theoretical foundations for typology<sup>1</sup>

Elena Vartanova

Anna Gladkova<sup>2</sup>

Denis Dunas

Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russia

To cite this article: Vartanova, E., Gladkova, A., & Dunas, D. (2023). Media representations of social conflicts: Identifying theoretical foundations for typology. *World of Media. Journal of Russian Media and Journalism Studies*, 2: 26-45. DOI: 10.30547/worldofmedia.2.2023.2

## Abstract

The paper suggests integrated theoretical foundations for systemizing media representations of social conflicts and defining major roles attributed to media coverage of conflicts in current academic research. Using theoretical modeling, we identify the main types of social conflicts identified by Russian and foreign scholars, which is essential for revealing diverse media representations of conflicts. Then we show the key variables used by Russian and foreign media scholars to categorize the roles played by media in representation of conflicts, and discuss the results within broader media conflictology paradigm.

## Keywords

Social conflicts, media conflictology, media representations, theoretical modeling.

## Introduction

For many decades, the issue of conflict typology has been in the spotlight of conflict theorists from across the globe. As a result, current conflict typology is highly diverse, in accordance with the rich ensemble of factors affecting existing tensions and incompatibilities. Different criteria employed by researchers can intertwine and run together, and at times operate in cause-effect relationship,

---

<sup>1</sup> This work was supported by the Russian Science Foundation (project number 22-18-00225)

<sup>2</sup> **Corresponding author:**

Anna Gladkova, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Russia.

Email: gladkova\_a@list.ru

allowing for a cross-categorization. Although the scholars are often conflicted on the typology elements, it is possible to distinguish major sets of grounds for categorization. Today, the research of conflicts represented by media has become a diverse research area merging broadening fields of conflict and media studies which aim to explore nature, types, social roles, effects of conflicts themselves and their media representation. The aim of this paper therefore is to build up integrated theoretical foundations for systemizing media representations of social conflicts and defining major roles attributed to media coverage of conflicts in international academic research, which has not been done on a large theoretical scale before.

In this vein, the research questions we address in this study are the following: *first*, what are the main types of social conflicts identified by Russian and foreign scholars, essential for studies of media representations of conflicts; and *second*, what are the key variables used by Russian and foreign media scholars to categorize the roles played by media in representation of conflicts. The method used in this study is theoretical modeling, which is an indirect study of social objects, during which they are reproduced in an auxiliary system (model) that replaces the original in the cognitive process and allows obtaining new knowledge about the subject of study, which is media conflictology.

### **Typology of conflicts: Theoretical background**

Early theorists convened on the fact that despite the common belief of that time, conflict can be positively functional for the antagonists. Thus, one of the earliest typologies drawn by the scholars is based on the functional consequences of conflicts, and boils down to the distinction between functional/dysfunctional or productive/destructive conflicts. Simmel (1904) was one of the first to talk about the necessity of conflicts for “conserving the total relationship”, and to distinguish between the functional and dysfunctional conflict based on their motives. Dubin (1957) writes that conflict can either disrupt social stability or point to the existing instability. In line with this, Coser (1957) distinguishes between functional and dysfunctional conflicts, stressing that the ability of conflicts “to remove dissociating elements in a relationship” and to “exert pressure for innovation” (ibid.). He goes further to draw a line of demarcation between functional consequences for internal and external conflicts.

Extensive typology by Dahrendorf includes classification according to social consequences with two aspects considered – whether the conflict is successful or unsuccessful, and creative or destructive (Dahrendorf, 1994). Dahl argues that conflicts lead either to polarization or to segmentation depending on

the level of antagonism (Khokhlov, 2014). Modern theorists still abide by the similar dichotomy (Gromova, 2000; Cottle, 2006; El-fatih Abdullahi, 2006; Reuben, 2009; Sapuzhak, 2019). As Cottle (2006) notes, conflicts can both entail the most tragic outcomes and “serve as vitalising spur for participatory democracy”. Focusing on the conflict typology in the Muslim world, El-fatih Abdullahi highlights that conflict has either productive or destructive potential depending on the strategies of implementation, underlying beliefs and level of flexibility (El-fatih Abdullahi, 2006).

The roles media play in numerous social conflicts are considered by media scholars in a multidimensional and multifaceted way and mostly reflect typologies of social conflicts based on the duration of their life cycle, the scale of their spread, methods and intensity of counteraction, goals and consequences (Castells, 2009; Hallin, 1986; Pickard, 2019; McQuail, 2010). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century theoretical visions of media roles in conflicts as independent observers, objective moderators or biased associates have been linked to the analyses of social conflicts rather than to understanding specific functions and effects that media fulfil and play in public communication while covering conflicts emergence, progress and resolution.

As was noted above, Coser draws the distinction between functional consequences on yet another division, which is internal and external conflict. Categorization based on the scale is a typical strategy for conceptualizing conflict types. Early scholars were concerned with another variation of this division, talking about the conflict “within the system and about the system” (Parsons, 1949). In line with this, Marshall (1939) distinguishes between the conflict over terms of cooperation within the system and conflict over the system itself that entails alternation of basic institutions and relations. To Coser, the most important factor in this is whether conflict occurs within or outside the group. According to the theorist, internal group conflict is low-level, more frequent and can lead to further social integration, while external conflict, most vividly exemplified by inter-state wars, can ultimately lead to higher levels of internal solidarity, especially if there is substantial rise of violence exercised in the course of the stand-off (Coser, 1967). He also distinguishes between types of internal conflict based on whether it “contradicts the fundamental assumptions of the group relationships”. Dahrendorf draws a more itemized division according to the scope of conflict manifestation, distinguishing between local, regional, inter-state, global, as well as micro, macro-, and mega-conflicts (Khokhlov, 2014). Following this strategy, Tsoi identifies a generalized dimension of conflict boundaries, talking about macro-level, meso-level, and micro-level

(Tsoi, 2001). A list of Russian scholars also talk about scale and scope of conflict manifestation (Gromova, 2000; Sapuzhak, 2019).

The category of scale is inextricably linked to the actor-based division, which is oftentimes stressed by the theorists in their attempts at conflict conceptualization. While distinguishing between individual and collective level of conflict, Johan Galtung also talks about intrasystem and intersystem conflicts, i.e. conflict in the small subunits of system versus conflict between systems or major subsystems (Fink, 1968). In this vein, Cottle identifies inter-personal and inter-state level of conflict, as well as its local and global scope. Kudryavtseva summarized the similar distinction under the term “complexity of actors” (Boikov, 1995). Wallensteen (2011) groups conflicts according to their scale into four categories: global, inter-state, internal and conflict triggered by specific state institutions. Singer draws a more complex distinction based on the political status of conflict parties, arguing that wars can be of interstate, extra-systemic (colonial), ‘civil’ and ‘complex intrastate’ nature (Ramsbotham, et al., 2005). The typology by an early theorist Stuart Chase is not confined to the realm of violent conflict and includes a variety of levels based on the participants involved: personal quarrels, inter-family conflicts, feuds (between clans), community quarrels (e.g. between towns), sectional quarrels (between territorial units, e.g. South vs North), national rivalries, inter-cultural conflicts (Fink, 1968). Khokhlov goes in line with most of the previous findings, while also highlighting the existence of inter-class and intra-class conflict. Having zoomed up the scale of categorization, Zvonitskaya ranges conflicts from intrapersonal to inter-group levels, with individual vs. society conflict in-between (Omelaenko, 2019). Other scholars adopt a more generalized approach, stressing the number of conflicting parties (e.g. bilateral and multilateral), as well as the similarity and difference in the structural composition of participants (e.g. cumulative and intersecting) (Gromova, 2000; Khokhlov, 2014).

Some theorists devise complex typologies that include both actor-based and origin/cause-based division. (Boulding, 1962) goes in line with the above-mentioned scholars in identifying different types of actors, while also adding categories based on the underlying issues, e.g. “boundary conflicts between groups” and “ecological conflict between groups”. (Smelser, 1994) categorizes conflicts according to the complexity of the actor, pointing to previously unmentioned intra- and inter-institutional conflicts, while also emphasizing the cultural grounds of conflicts. In doing so, he also distinguishes between three types of conflicts based on the cultural development of societies: anomie,

cultural delay, and alien influence. Huntington further stresses culture as a core underlying driving force of conflict, and talks about inter-civilizational conflict powered by cultural differences (Huntington, 1993). (Holsti, 1996) presents an even more intertwined framework, as he simultaneously outlines the actors and the conflict grounds in his four categories of non-inter-state conflicts: state versus armed intervention; decolonizing wars; ideology-based internal wars; and ethnic/religious state-nation wars. A plethora of other scholars, including the above-mentioned Stuart Chase (Fink, 1968) and, for instance, Russian political scientist Vladimir Amelin (1992), follow the same strategy in developing a two-fold classification, taking actors and conflict grounds as a basis for categorization.

Simmel (1904) sees antagonistic impulses as the foundation of any conflict, and makes a distinction between conflicts driven by objective struggle and social motives versus conflicts instigated by individual impulses, thus identifying war, factional strife, litigation, and conflict of impersonal ideas. In conceptualizing the origins of conflicts, Cottle (2006) talks about “structurally determined and purposefully enacted” conflicts. According to the same logics, Khokhlov (2014) analyses organization specifics of conflicts, identifying intentional, accidental, provoked and proactive conflicts.

Ayodeji, Theophilus, & Livian (2002) distinguish between conflicts of interest, values, goals, perceptions, roles, resources, and pseudo conflicts. Analysing conflicts in the African region, de Haan, et al. (2016) groups them according to goals and consequent forms of conflict into localized conflicts over resource access, criminal activities, rebellion and irredentism, and religious extremism. Objects and interests that constitute the source of occurrence are considered by a wide range of Russian conflict typologists as well, who sometimes also talk about goals, which is another highly linked notion (Tsoi, 2001; Gromova, 2000; Sapuzhak, 2019). In particular, Tsoi distinguishes between material (goods, natural resources, territory) and non-material (spiritual values, social norms, religion, ideology, information and facts) objects of the conflict.

Within the origins-related framework, there is a separate categorization described as ‘nature of conflict occurrence’ that gathers different sets of parameters that have to do with the perceptions by conflicting parties. For instance, Borodkin (1989) distinguishes four types of conflict situations based on expediency from the point of view of subject and object: objective expediency – objective in expediency and subjective expediency – subjective in expediency (Cottle, 2006) suggests a distinction between “objectively real and subjectively perceived” conflicts, a distinction further supported by Tsoi.

Origins of conflict are often found in the social sphere, since, as noted by (Dahrendorf, 1959) conflict groups are formed out of conditions of social structure. Thus, the division according to the social sphere presents a separate ground for categorization, which is widely agreed upon by conflict theorists. In line with the previous strategy, Zdravomyslov (1994) considers needs, interests and values as driving forces of conflict, cross-analysing them in the major spheres of life, namely, political, national-ethnic, and socio-economic realms of social existence. Categorization of inter-state conflict by Holsti (1996) includes five composite sets that are in large part concerned with social spheres – along conflict over territory and nation-state creation, the scholar talks about conflicts in the spheres of economics, ideology, and ‘human sympathy’ (i.e. ethnicity/religion). Typology of violent conflicts in the Muslim world developed by El-fatih Abdullahi (2006) draws the distinction between territorial dispute, economic conflict and conflict of ideas, the latter further split into the social spheres of religion, ideology and ethnicity. One of the classic theorists concerned with social spheres of conflict is Robert Dahl, who distinguishes between economic, social, political, legal, ideological, moral, religious, scientific, and management conflict (Khokhlov, 2014). Krashennnikova, & Nikolskaya (2022), who expanded Dahl’s framework by adding war conflict, found that this approach allows for a more objective conceptualization.

A more complex, multi-layer distinction is based on forms of conflict development, which is conceptualized according to a variety of traditions. Based on four criteria – starting point, image of the opponent, objective, and mode of interaction – Rappoport (1961) identifies three types of conflicts: fights, games, and debates. Dahrendorf pinpoints the same types of conflict, conceptualizing these characteristics as tactics used by opponents (Khokhlov, 2014). One of the important factor is the degree of rationality in the relationship between parties. In this line, Tsoi (2001) draws a clear-cut distinction between the socially-positive, rational and socially-negative, irrational opponents. Drawing on the similar criteria, namely, mode of interaction and objective, Simmel distinguishes between military game or tournament, legal dispute, and hostility within groups (Khokhlov, 2014). Closer look at the typologies existing within this framework allows to identify common sub-categories used by scholars for further distinction of conflict forms.

Many conflict theorists concur in analysing different forms of manifestation. In this vein, both early and modern theorists distinguish between latent and manifest conflicts (Coser, 1957; Cottle, 2006). Sandole (2003) suggests a typology that goes beyond this simple dichotomy to include latent conflicts (pre-

MCPs), manifest conflict processes (MCPs), and aggressive manifest conflict processes (AMCPs). Khokhlov (2014) takes a slightly different approach, talking about hidden, partially hidden, and open conflicts based not only on the ability to witness the physical manifestation of the conflict but also on the ability to adequately judge about conflict's causes and other features.

Going back to Sandole's classifications, the way the categories are labelled reveals their connection to another important criterion, which is the level of violence. From the beginning on, conflict theorists were highly concerned with the level of violence, identifying violent and non-violent forms (Coser, 1967; Boikov, 1995; Tsoi, 2001). Coser goes beyond this simple demarcation, and talks about two factors that can impact the degree of violence – emotional involvement and transcendent goals (Dahrendorf, 1959). Notably, Coser points to the fact that while the level of violence is linked to the form of manifestation, non-violent conflicts can be both latent and manifest. Following these scholars, Dahrendorf recaps the essence of the category of violence, highlighting the crucial role of “the weapons chosen by conflict groups to express their hostilities”. The theorist comes up with a continuum of conflict types depending on the degree of violence applied: discussion, debate, contest, competition, struggle and war (ibid.). Thus, scholars draw distinction based on methods and severity of confrontation (Gromova, 2000; Sapuzhak, 2019).

Apart from the level of violence, Dahrendorf (1959) is predominantly focused on the degree of intensity, which is a separate parameter of conflict that shows no clear-cut dependence on the violence. According to the scholar, this parameter indicates the involvement of opponents, which is largely determined by the value and importance attached by the participants to the ongoing stand-off. In this regard, Russian scholars can talk about the force of influence on the participants (Gromova, 2000), while others echo their international counterparts in viewing the intensity as it is (Tsoi, 2001). While conceptualizing this category, Dahrendorf also talks about the pluralism-superimposition scale, which denotes whether the opponents represent multiple conflicting groups at the same time, which substantially increases the intensity of the conflict.

Cottle (2006) goes on to suggest the inverse relation between the intensity of the conflict and its length. The latter presents another widely-accepted base for distinction, with scholars analysing conflict duration and studying its life cycle (Gromova, 2000; Sapuzhak, 2019), and differentiating between long-term, short-term (Tsoi, 2001), and protracted (Khokhlov, 2014) conflict. Another parameter that is identified as a ground for conflict categorization is



manageability that boils down to whether a conflict lends itself to containment or calls for extreme prosecution measures (Gromova, 2000; Cottle, 2006).

The list of parameters can in fact be extended indefinitely, since the number of typologies can amount to the number of theorists striving to conceptualize the phenomenon of conflict. Other kinds of criteria can include the direction of impact, the needs affected (Gromova, 2000), the resources involved, e.g. material vs social (Tsoi, 2001), the place of habitation, e.g. rural vs city (Fomenkov, 2018), position on the social pyramid, e.g. horizontal vs vertical (Khokhlov, 2014), and so on. The above-presented review attempted to include the most widespread types of criteria used in the categorization of conflicts.

## **Representations of conflicts: The roles of media**

### *A mediator between the public and elites*

According to Castells (2009), publishers and editors tend to index the salience of news and viewpoints according to the perceived importance of a specific issue among the elites and in public opinion. The capacity of the media to decide on indexing depends on the level of agreement or disagreement on an issue among the elites and opinion leaders. If there is little dissent, the media will index according to a single set of evaluation on a given issue (for example, 9/11 in its immediate aftermath in the United States, inducing the acceptance of the “war on terror” frame). On the other hand, as Castells notes, the more there is division and ambiguity in elite responses to a crisis (for example, the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in the United States), the more the media exercise their own diverse judgments in the indexing of an event. According to Bennett (2008), indexing by journalists does not depend on the importance of an issue for the public, but on the level of engagement by the elites. Public opinion polls are selected to support the narrative that fits into the news story.

Gitlin (1980), Hallin (1986), and Luther and Miller (2005) have found that, during times of war, the American press tends to marginalize dissenting voices (e.g., the anti-war movement), privilege political insiders, and often focus on the spectacle of the protest itself rather than the positions of the protestors. Hallin (1986) showed that the relation between the media and the government during Vietnam was in fact one of conflict: the media contradicted the more positive view of the war officials sought to project, and for better or for worse it was the journalists’ view that prevailed with the public, whose disenchantment forced an end to American involvement. Often this view is coupled with its corollary,



that television has decisively changed the political dynamics of war so that no ‘televised war’ can long retain political support.

‘Vietnam coincided with a number of other dramatic political events in which the role of the media was clearly central. First was the civil rights movement, played out largely on a media stage, then the urban conflicts of the late 1960s, the Democratic Convention in Chicago, the rise of a host of new political movements, and finally Watergate. The growing prominence of the media coincided with what seemed to be a crisis in political institutions. These developments have provoked a broader controversy about the relation of the media to the institutions of American government’ (Hallin, 1986). Today journalists often portray the Vietnam/Watergate era as a time when the media ‘came of age’, by which they mean both that the media became more autonomous in relation to government and the professional journalist more autonomous within the news organization (ibid).

Studies of Iraq War coverage have found that actors in official political positions are consistently granted more media time than those who dissent from them in the United Kingdom (Murray et al., 2008), in Sweden (Dimitrova and Strömbeck, 2005), and in Germany (Lehmann, 2005; Dornschneider, 2007). Castells (2009) notes in this vein: ‘As political criticism of the conduct of the war emerged among Democrats and intensified around the world, mainstream media stopped following the agenda set by the Bush administration, and disassociated the Iraq War from the dominant frames that had until then continued to influence their reporting. They began reporting misinformation, thus introducing counter-frames into the process. The more political competition transformed the landscape of agenda-setting, the more journalists in the mainstream media used decision-making bias (i.e., exercised their own professional preferences in the priming and indexing of the news) to produce different patterns of slant, depending on the interactions of elite politics and “facts on the ground.”’

Pickard (2019) adds here that one of the most pronounced weaknesses in the US news media system is an over-reliance on official sources. The fear of appearing controversial and jeopardizing access to elite sources often leads journalists to reproduce official accounts. ‘This tendency was cast into stark relief in news coverage during the build-up to the Iraq War in 2003. When asked at a Harvard forum about press performance from this time – what is seen now as a major press failure – the famous news anchor Dan Rather conceded that “more questions should have been asked” (ibid).

*An instrument of struggle*

The typology of media systems suggested by Hallin and Mancini back in early 2000s indicates that Polarized pluralist societies have been historically characterized by sharp political conflicts often involving changes of regime (Hallin, & Mancini, 2004). The media typically have been used as instruments of struggle in these conflicts, sometimes by dictatorships and by movements struggling against them, but also by contending parties in periods of democratic politics. ‘Through much of history ... that state has played the role of censor. ... The financial dependence of media on the state, and the persistence of restrictive rules on privacy and on the publication of official information have combined with the intertwining of media and political elites and – especially in the French case – with a highly centralized state not prone to “leaks” of information to produce a journalistic culture cautious about reporting information that would be embarrassing to state officials. ...investigative reporting and the exposure of corruption, incompetence, and conflict of interest were indeed rare. This changed dramatically in the 1980s and 1990s, as most of the Mediterranean countries experienced numerous political scandals’ (Hallin, & Mancini, 2004).

In the Italian case the Tangentopoli or “bribe city” scandal, which involved revelations of bribes paid by businessmen and corporations to most prominent politicians, produced a radical change of the political structure of Italian democracy, with the disappearance of almost all of the parties that ruled Italy for half a century – the Christian Democratic, Socialist, Liberal, and Republican parties – and the imprisonment of many important political leaders (ibid). Hallin and Mancini note that the exact dynamics of these scandals, and the role of the media in them, varies from country to country. Still, in all cases it involves important changes in the relation of the media to the state: media become less deferential and their relations with political elites more adversarial. In the French case, the exposure by *Le Monde* of the role of the French State in an attack on the Greenpeace ship the *Rainbow Warrior*, which was protesting French nuclear testing in the Pacific, is often seen as a watershed event in the shift toward a less deferential attitude toward the state.

In this vein, Hallin and Mancini apply their typology to the study of framing and conflict situations, arguing that ‘In all of the Mediterranean countries there is an increased tendency to frame events as moral scandals, and for journalists to present themselves as speaking for an outraged public against the corrupt political elite. These changes are not unique to the Mediterranean countries. They are connected with the growth of powerful, market-based media, with a

cultural shift toward “critical professionalism” in journalism, and with a deeply rooted decline of traditional loyalties to political parties’ (ibid).

*A producer and disseminator of meaning about the events*

One of the landmark studies in media and communication research, McQuail’s mass communication theory (2010) dealt with questions of values in regard to political and social conflicts. McQuail argued that all societies have latent or open tensions and contradictions that often extend to the international arena. The media are inevitably involved in these disputed areas as producers and disseminators of meaning about the events and contexts of social life, private as well as public. It follows from these remarks that we cannot expect the study of mass communication to provide theoretically neutral, scientifically verified information about the ‘effects’ or the significance of something that is an immensely complex as well as intersubjective set of processes.

An interesting observation in this vein was made by Bebawi and Evans (2019), discussing media roles in investigative reporting. A successful example of how investigative reporters have worked with foreign reporters is an investigative story entitled *Jordan’s Secret Shame*, which was conducted in collaboration with the BBC (Bebawi, 2016). This story aimed to uncover the maltreatment, negligence, and daily abuse of children with physical and mental disabilities in private care homes for children. The local investigative reporter, Hanan Khandakji, posed as a volunteer worker in these homes and documented beatings and abuse of children over a period of time. Both this role and the time it took to collect all the evidence is something that cannot be achieved by a foreign correspondent alone.

The news media are often accused of bias, especially on issues where emotions are charged and opinion sharply divided. In the case of the first and second (Iraq) Gulf wars, the media of Western participant countries were widely said to have failed to live up to their role of objective reporter and critical observer. In this vein, McQuail applies to the theory of the spiral of silence, noting that ‘in order to avoid isolation on important public issues (such as political party support), many people are guided by what they think to be the dominant or declining opinions in their environment. The result is that those views that are perceived to be dominant gain even more ground and alternatives retreat still further’.

On another note, he draws attention to so-called ‘CNN effect’: the term derived from the myth that new global television channels can connect governments at home most directly and quickly to unfolding events abroad. The

idea has much deeper roots, since the press has often played a role historically in decisions about war (for instance, the American–Spanish conflict in 1899). According to Gilboa (2008), the term implies that television coverage forces policy makers to take actions they otherwise would not have taken. Scholars and practitioners have also noted how the media, particularly radio, was instrumental in fomenting conflict and violence in places such as Rwanda and Bosnia (Buric, 2000; Kellow, & Steeves, 1998), and concluded that roles can be converted into positive contributions to conflict resolution.

*A dialogue- or peace-maker*

Another important role of media in conflict situations is related to so-called ‘solutions journalism’ which positions both causes and potential problem-solving at the centre of the coverage, rather than merely the conflict itself (Gutsche, & Hess, 2018), together with peace journalism. Richmond, & Visoka (2019) draw attention to peace journalism referring to a particular practice of journalism that aims to contribute toward peace in various conflict situations. ‘Peace journalism offers a framework to critique the shortfalls of traditional war journalism and it expounds a set of standards for practitioners to constructively report on conflict situations with a view toward achieving peace. Peace journalism could help to mitigate crises because it is based on constructive norms that enable journalists to report on the causes of societal problems and provide constructive strategies for social action and change’ (Richmond, & Visoka, 2019). Jamil et al (2022) note the important role of media in rapidly changing conflicting world during the pandemic, also when it comes to ‘media sustainability’ and building dialogue between conflicting parties in the society.

Peace journalism was developed with a critical view toward how journalists and news media treat conflict and contribute to rather than mitigate war and violence. Scholars note that Solution Oriented Peace journalism should crucially focus on reporting nonviolent societal initiatives of peace and conflict resolution to de-escalate and avert more violence. Rather than concentrating on “battle” and “war,” peace journalism should aim to highlight the consequences of conflict with a constructive as well as creative emphasis on “resolution,” “re-construction,” and “reconciliation” (Galtung 2003, p. 178). In this vein, Galtung suggests for journalists to implement the outlined components of peace journalism as part of their working routines.

If we look at the roles of media from a Cultural Discourse Studies perspective, we may note that the role of media in fostering intercultural-intellectual dialogue and debate, all with a view to enhancing human cultural coexistence, harmony

and prosperity, is essential (Shi-xu, 2015). In a situation when representatives of different ethnic groups generally trust each other, perceive each other rather positively than negatively, know about the culture, way of living, traditions of other ethnic communities, conflicts on ethnic grounds occur more rarely, and the intercultural dialogue between people belonging to different ethnic and cultural communities becomes more productive and beneficial. This is in line with the very fundamental principles of Cultural Discourse Studies suggested by Shi-xu (2014), including the very first principle, that is ‘to study human communication holistically and dialectically’ (Shi-xu, 2014: 28). In multi-ethnic contexts such as for example Russian context, Cultural Discourse Studies allows for holistic approach to communication between and also across ethnic communities, relying to a large extent on transdisciplinary and multicultural perspectives in research work (Shi-xu, 2015), and allowing for minimizing conflicts on different grounds.

## **Discussion**

As we can see, there are different approaches to categorizing both conflicts in the structure of the society, and the representation of conflicts in the media. The basis for the classification of social conflicts in the context of their media images is a variety of determinants. It all depends on which aspect of the conflict as a process attracts the attention of researchers. It is possible to single out the following basic classifications as possible determinants for constructing theoretical conceptualizations in the field of media representations:

- by conflicting parties / subjects of the conflict, where the levels of actors involved in the conflict are considered, i.e. the state or public systems, institutions, societies, communities, groups, individuals;
- by systemic attributes of the conflict, which can have both intersystem and intrasystem characteristics, which determine the logic of the conflict development and management; special attention in this case is paid to the size of conflicting systems in the case of an intersystem conflict, since the scale of the system gives certain dynamics to the conflict, i.e. the conflict between large systems and between small ones will differ significantly;
- according to the level of geopolitical confrontation: local, regional, international or macro-, meso-, micro-characters of the conflict in the context of the current processes of political and economic development of blocs of countries and continents, as well as individual countries, leave an imprint on the development and outcome of conflicts in general

and the structure and properties of media representations;

- according to the type of activity of the conflicting parties/subjects in the conflict: the quality and scale of manifestation of the conflicting party in the conflict differ (for example, duration, resonance and involvement of the parties). Special attention is paid to the fact of the use of violent methods, including weapons, or their absence in the activities of the conflicting parties;
- the fact of belonging to the sphere of public life. The most common is the typology of conflicts in the spheres of life of society: economic, social, political, legal, ideological, moral, religious, scientific, managerial, military.

Media studies traditionally have not associated the type of conflict with the role of the media. In general, the dynamics of academic knowledge about media in conflict conditions fluctuates between recognizing the active role of media in conflict escalation and highlighting the peacemaking, constructive role of media in resolving and de-escalating all types of conflict. Information that incites conflict is newsworthy (Lukina, 2021), it is easier to catch the eye of the media audience, at the same time journalists should focus on the long-term perspective in their work, in which the conflict is waiting for a peaceful resolution, supporters of the peacemaking approach in journalism believe (Galtung, & Ruge, 1965). This contradiction is reflected in many theoretical approaches to defining the role of media in the coverage of conflicts.

The conceptualization of peaceful journalism is based on the idea that in any conflict, the goal should be its resolution and termination, the elimination of contradictions in favor of human life, peace and universal well-being. Habermas emphasized in this regard that the goal-setting of any communication model should be based on morality (Habermas, 2006). He proposed an original model of the communication process, the effect of which is a certain communicative action based on moral consciousness. The purpose of communication as a social action is to reach agreement between the parties to the conflict on difficult issues. The rejection of other communication models in favor of a model of communicative action creates new forms of social management not only of communication flows, but also of the whole society. This philosophical clause, somewhat divorced from the real state of affairs, nevertheless corresponds to the normative model of journalism, in which compliance with ethical standards is a professional ideal.

The approaches of peaceful journalism orient journalists to cover military conflicts from the positions of peacekeepers – that is, not journalists in their

pure form, developing special norms that must be observed in such work. Peaceful journalism should shift its focus from the demonstration of war to its alternative — the demonstration of peace, which can re-orient readers from the mood of confrontation to interaction. It is based on the observance of certain norms: the use of neutral words that do not formulate a negative or positive attitude towards any one side of the conflict; lack of engagement by any political force; focus on conflict resolution and reduction of hostility of the parties to each other; focus on finding solutions and compromises (Lynch, & McGoldrick, 2000; Ruhanya, & Matsilele, 2022).

However, the idea of spreading peaceful initiatives in journalism, although it proceeds from high humanistic ideals, requires critical reflection. The implementation of this approach is possible only when covering a conflict that takes place outside the national state, on the territory of which the editorial office of the media operates and of which the journalist is a citizen. This is due to the fact that the role of the national state, its interests, the legislative framework for the media to carry out their activities on the territory of a particular country, as well as, in general, the special academic status of the military conflict as a concept in media studies are offset (Jamil, & Sohal, 2021). Making peace is possible when the conflict takes place within the system, has a local, internal character.

Russian researcher Tamara Yakova, analyzing the concept of peaceful journalism, studied how American, British and French mass media covered the confrontation between the USA and North Korea and the war in Syria, and came to the conclusion that in their publications attitudes to confrontation appear even at the headline level. About 80% of the materials of *The New York Times*, *The Guardian* and *Le Figaro* when covering various conflicts and crises do not correspond to the concept of peacekeeping journalism (Yakova, 2019).

The bias of journalists, even of the generally recognized highest-quality media in the world in relation to the actions of the participants in the conflict, the use of negative expressive vocabulary in materials, the lack of consideration of different opinions regarding confrontation – all these are the realities of national models of journalism in many countries of the world in conditions of military conflicts. Publications are oversaturated with markers with the connotative meaning of war and chaos, expressive vocabulary that gives value judgments aimed at one of the parties to the conflict, aggressive quotes from participants of the confrontation that discredit the authority of the other participant.

The representation of a military conflict in the media is one of the most widespread media representations in the world and is not an easy subject to



analyze from the point of view of researchers. Unlike structural social conflicts within society, where the media can perform a variety of roles – from an observer to a full-fledged participant, conflict relations between nation states change the normative roles of the media. The fact of the military manifestation of the conflict is one of the most significant milestones in the transformation of the media role model.

The scientific problem in media conflict studies is that in the research field there is no conventionally shared essential distinction between the roles of media for different types of conflict. The peacemaking role of national media is hardly feasible in the conditions of military conflicts taking place on the territory of the national state, and the conflict has an external character.

### **Conclusion**

In the most general form, the types of conflicts and types of media representation are poorly related to themselves and have not been developed theoretically. The only common distinction in the typologies of conflicts and media representations can be seen in the following pairs of dichotomies:

- 1) Media as peace- or war-maker;
- 2) Conflict within the system, or external conflict.

In the conditions of wars, military and armed conflicts, terrorist attacks and other forms of violence that lead to victims, the media cease to be distant observers, peacemakers and independent interpreters, and become the basis of the information security of the national state. When covering violent conflicts, the media are as important means of organizing a nation–state as a large-scale society and a single territorial integrity as the state language, culture and education. This role of the media in the representation of the conflict has been verified by the history of the development of mass communication, having found confirmation in regulatory documents and practice of media communications in many countries of the world (for instance, *USA Patriotic Act*, *Media Law in Ukraine*, etc.).

This is due to the fact that academic knowledge about media conflict studies is influenced, on the one hand, by political and sociological approaches that consider conflict as an inevitable fact of reality and an integral feature of the existence of modern societies; on the other hand, moral and ethical assessments are obvious, which media researchers are close to, which implies considering the conflict in the context of not only the conflict situations themselves, but also within the framework of a peacemaking process with the absolutization of the value of human life. However, the interpretation of the value of life is not limited

by the logic of a particular nation-state, but is understood very abstractly, which often does not correspond to reality.

In theoretical approaches, due attention is not paid to the differentiation of the role of the media in the representation of the conflict, depending on its type, as well as the context of the model of the media system and the national state.

Media change their structural and functional significance in the context of armed conflicts in the following way. Within the framework of peaceful functioning, media communications are embedded in the system of the social organism as one of the structural components for maintaining public order, balance and vitality. The condition for the harmonious functioning of society is the freedom of media communication in the coverage of social conflicts, except for the military, which requires systematic management. The key task of media communication is to ensure the interests of society and its citizens, acting from a position of social responsibility and in accordance with ethical principles.

In case of military violent actions against citizens of a national state, the institution of which is media communications, the structural and functional model of 'society – media communications' is transformed into the model of 'national state – society – media communications'. The task of the media in the case of armed conflicts is to act in the interests of the national state, ensuring, first of all, the integrity of its territorial and political form, the unity of the nation as a community, the security of the cultural and political organism. The media act as a guarantor of the security of the nation as a large community of citizens along with a common language, history, culture and traditions. Freedom of speech, respect for the diversity of points of view and open discussions in case of a threat to the lives of citizens fall by the wayside in favor of the ideal of national security, implemented, in particular, with the help of information security.

## References

Abdullahi, E. S. (2006). A typology of conflicts and conflict resolution in the Muslim world. *Peace Research*, 38:1, pp. 9–28.

Amelin, V. N. (1992). *Sociologiya politiki* [Political Sociology]. M.: MSU.

Approaches to the study of social conflict: A colloquium. *Conflict Resolution*, 1:2, June 1957.

Ayodeji, A., Theophilus, J., & Livian, O. (2002). Current discourse in peace and conflict studies. In: P. Wallensteen (ed.) *Understanding Conflict Resolution: War, Peace and Global System*. Third edition. SAGE Publications Ltd.

Bebawi, S., & Evans, M. (2019). *The Future Foreign Correspondent*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Boikov, A. D. (1995). *Yuridicheskaya konfliktologiya* [Legal Conflictology]. M.: IGiP RAN.
- Borodkin, F. M. (1989). *Vnimanie: konflikt* [Attention: Conflict]. Novosibirsk: Nauka.
- Boulding, K. (1962). *Conflict and Defence: A General Theory*. New York: Harper.
- Castells, M. (2009). *Communication Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Coser, L. A. (1957). Social conflict and social change. *British Journal of Sociology*, 7:3.
- Coser, L. A. (1967). *Continuities in the Study of Social Conflict*. New York: Free Press.
- Cottle, S. (2006). Mediatized conflict in the world today. In: Cottle, S. *Mediatized Conflict: Developments in Media and Conflict Studies*. Open University Press.
- Dahrendorf, R. (1959). *Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society*. Stanford University Press.
- Dahrendorf, R. (1994). Elementy teorii social'nogo konflikta [Elements of the Theory of Social Conflict]. *Sociologicheskie issledovaniya*, 5, pp. 35–40.
- De Haan, C., Dubern, E., Garancher, B., & Quintero, C. (2016). Pastoralism Development in the Sahel. A Road to Stability? *International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank*.
- Eytan, G. (2008). Media and conflict resolution. In: Bercovitch, J., & Kremenyuk, V. (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Resolution*. SAGE.
- Fink, C. F. (1968). Some conceptual difficulties in the theory of social conflict. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 12.
- Fomenkov, A. I. (2018). Social'nyj konflikt: genezis ponyatiya, evolyuciya idej, tipologiya [Social Conflict: Concept Genesis, Evolution of Ideas, Typology]. *Gumanitarnyj nauchnyj vestnik*, 6. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.2525380
- Galtung, J., & Ruge, M. H. (1965). The structure of foreign news: The presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus in four Norwegian newspapers. *Journal of Peace Research*, 1, pp. 64–91.
- Gromova, O. N. (2000). *Konfliktologiya* [Conflictology]. M.: EKMOS.
- Gutsche, Jr., R., & Hess, K. (2018) *Geographies of Journalism: The Imaginative Power of Place in Digital News*. Routledge: London.
- Habermas, J. (2006). *Moral'noe soznanie i kommunikativnoe deystvie* [Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action]. St. Petersburg: Nauka Publ.
- Hallin, D. C. (1986). *The Uncensored War: The Media and Vietnam*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. (2004). *Comparing Media Systems. Three Models of Media and Politics*. Cambridge University Press.

Holsti, K. J. (1996). *The State, War, and the State of War*. Cambridge University Press.

Huttington, S. (1993). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*. Simon & Schuster.

Jamil, S., & Sohal, P. (2021). Reporting under fear and threats: The deadly cost of being a journalist in Pakistan and India. *World of Media. Journal of Russian Media and Journalism Studies*, 2, pp. 5–33. DOI: 10.30547/worldofmedia.2.2021.1

Jamil, S., Panagiotou, N., Fragkonikolopoulos, C., & Gladkova, A. (2022). Media sustainability in the pandemic conflicting world: Reflections from diverse perspectives. *World of Media. Journal of Russian Media and Journalism Studies*, 2, pp. 5–12. DOI: 10.30547/worldofmedia.2.2022.1

Khokhlov, A. S. (2014). *Konfliktologiya. Istoriya. Teoriya. Praktika: ucheb. posobie* [Conflict Studies. History. Theory. Practice: a Study Guide]. Samara: SF GBOU VPO MGPU Publ.

Krashenninnikova, M., & Nikolskaya, E. (2022). Traditsionnye SMI i sotsial'nye media: dialektika sotsial'nykh konfliktov (2021–2022) [Traditional Media and Social Media: Dialectics of Social Conflicts (2021–2022)]. *Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta. Seriya 10. Zhurnalistika*, 5, pp. 103–135. DOI: 10.30547/vestnik.journ.5.2022.102128

Lukina, M. (2021). Konflikt kak novostnaja cennost' [Conflict as a News Value]. In: *Zhurnalistika v 2020 godu: tvorchestvo, professiya, industriya: materialy Mezhdunarodnoj nauchno-prakticheskoy konferencii* [Journalism in 2020: Creativity, Profession, Industry. Materials of the International Scientific and Practical conference]. Moscow: Faculty of Journalism, MSU.

Lynch, J., & McGoldrick, A. (2000). *Peace Journalism. What is it? How to do it?* URL: [https://www.transcend.org/tri/downloads/McGoldrick\\_Lynch\\_Peace-Journalism.pdf](https://www.transcend.org/tri/downloads/McGoldrick_Lynch_Peace-Journalism.pdf)

Marshall, T. H. (1939). *Class Conflict and Social Stratification*. London.

McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*. 6<sup>th</sup> edition. London: SAGE Publications.

Omelaenko, N. V. (2019). Social'nyj Konflikt: Diagnostika, Prichiny, Upravlenie [Social Conflict: Diagnosis, Causes, Management]. *Izvestiya vysshih uchebnykh zavedenij. Sociologiya. Ekonomika. Politika*, 12:4.

Parsons, T. (1949). *The Structure of Social Action*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Glencoe.

Pickard, V. (2019). *Democracy without Journalism? Confronting the Misinformation Society*. Oxford University Press.

Ramsbotham, O., Woodhouse, T., & Miall, H. (2005). *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Cambridge: Polity.

Rapoport, A. (1961). Three modes of conflict. *Management Science*, 7:3, pp. 210–218.

Reuben, R. (2009). The impact of news coverage on conflict: Toward greater understanding. *Marquette Law Review*, 93, pp. 45–83.

Richmond, O. R., & Visoka, G. (2019). *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Peace and Conflict Studies*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Ruhanya, P., & Matsilele, T. (2022). Public and private media coverage of the military coup in Zimbabwe. *World of Media. Journal of Russian Media and Journalism Studies*, 3, pp. 69–83. DOI: 10.30547/worldofmedia.3.2022.3

Sandole, D. (2003). Typology. In: Sandra Chelden, Daniel Druckman, and Larissa Fast (eds.) *Conflict: From Analysis to Intervention*. London: Continuum.

Sapuzhak, I. P. (2019). Tipologiya sotsial'nykh konfliktov [Typology of Social Conflicts]. *Vestn. MITU-MASI*, 1, pp. 44–49.

Shi-xu (2014). *Chinese Discourse Studies*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Shi-xu (2015). Cultural Discourse Studies. In: *International Encyclopedia of Language and Social Interaction*. Boston, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Simmel, G. (1904). The Sociology of Conflict. *American Journal of Sociology*, 9:4, pp. 490–525.

Smelzer, N. (1994). *Sociologiya [Sociology]*. M.: Feniks.

Tsoi, L. N. (2001). *Prakticheskaya konfliktologiya. Kniga pervaya: monografiya [Practical conflictology. Book One: Monograph]*. M.: Nauchnoe izdanie.

Wallensteen, P. (2011). *Understanding Conflict Resolution: War, Peace and Global System*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. SAGE Publications Ltd.

Yakova, T. (2019). Peace journalism theory in the practice of foreign mass media: a media geographic focus (a case study of the Guardian, the Independent and the Washington Times Newspapers). *MediaAl'manakh*, 2, pp. 104–117.

Zdravomyslov, A. G. (1994). *Issledovaniya konflikta na makrourovne. Teoreticheskie predposylki [Conflict Studies on Macro Level. Theoretical Background]*. Nizhnij Novgorod: Izd-vo Volgo-Vyat. kadrovogo centra.

Zdravomyslov, A. G. (1996). *Sociologiya konflikta*. 3-e izd. [Conflict Sociology. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition]. M.: Aspekt-Press.