

# IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE, CAN WAR SURVIVE?

SUSAN G. HACKLEY\*

*What if fighting, violence, and war were preventable—and we simply didn't know it? What if we didn't know it because we had never fully tried to prevent them? What if we had never really tried because we had never really believed prevention to be possible?*

William L. Ury<sup>1</sup>

*Most people understandably steer clear of violent conflict, only reading about it in their morning newspaper or online, or watching it on the evening news from the safety of their homes. Others, however, choose work that takes them directly into harm's way. Soldiers, of course, are in a profession that can send them to the epicenter of war. Many journalists specialize in the reporting of war, and this takes them, too, to places where their lives are at risk. A third group, conflict management professionals, also seeks out conflict zones, working with people to help prevent violence and develop and implement strategies for dealing with differences and living in peace.*

*This Essay studies the work of two of these groups, the journalists and the conflict management professionals, who operate in the demanding domain of violent conflict. It examines the commonalities and differences of the roles each plays and offers suggestions for further study and connection. The comments and examples are drawn primarily from Western media, but the recommendation that journalists and conflict management professionals learn from each other could apply globally.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

When examining the professions of journalism and conflict management with a goal of finding ways to create synergy and a deeper understanding between the two, it is important to note where their work overlaps and where it diverges. Both journalists and conflict management professionals are witnesses to the pain, suffering, mayhem, and waste of violent conflict. Journalists do their work publicly, while conflict management professionals often work behind the scenes. Both strive to have an impact. Journalists—who work as reporters, editors, photographers, broadcasters, cartoonists, and producers—know that it is often their work alone that bears witness to what is

---

\* Managing Director of the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School.

1. WILLIAM L. URY, *THE THIRD SIDE: WHY WE FIGHT AND HOW WE CAN STOP* xviii (Penguin Books 2000) (1999) (emphasis omitted).

happening in a war or conflict. Without their reporting, how many insurrections, battles, executions, bombing raids, revenge killings, terrorist attacks, genocides, ethnic killings, kidnappings, rapes, and other manifestations of violent conflict would go unmarked and unjudged? Conflict management professionals work among those who perpetrate violence and those who suffer as a consequence of that violence; their efforts help ease tensions, reduce suffering, forestall war, mediate agreements, guide peace talks, negotiate cease-fires, build consensus, and provide many other services that help prevent or end war.

Interestingly, members of both professions share a desire to not become actors in the conflicts they witness. However, while journalists work to be unbiased in their reporting, and conflict management professionals strive to not take sides with people in conflict, both invariably fail. Others will always stir emotions, generate sympathy or antipathy, or make persuasive arguments. Moreover, journalists and conflict management professionals alike make conscious and unconscious choices about the words they use, the issues they highlight, and the topics they choose to ignore. By their presence alone, they become players in the drama. Accepting the reality that they have some impact on the conflict should lead to a fuller discussion of what their role in the conflict really is, and what it could be.

Despite a shared purpose of wanting to deal with conflict and a shared concern for becoming, in some manner, part of the conflict, journalists and conflict management professionals have surprisingly little connection to or depth of understanding of each other's roles. Few journalists understand that people in the conflict management field have knowledge and a set of analytical tools that could help them in their reporting, and few conflict management experts understand how to present their knowledge and expertise in a manner that would be of use or interest to journalists and would help further the field of conflict management by making successes more visible.

## II. EXPERTISE IN MANAGING CONFLICT

Although people have been dealing with conflict forever, the field of conflict management (or conflict resolution) is largely a twentieth-century development that sprang from multiple sources and motivating factors, including a reaction to the horrors of World Wars I and II. Many thought, "There has to be a better way to deal with differences!"

In the years following World War II, scholars from a wide range of fields began to study conflict from the varying perspectives of psychology, anthropology, law, economics, decision theory, business, religious studies, sociology, political science, international relations, government, and public policy. What could they observe about people in conflict that would resonate

across disciplines?

As these researchers began to develop theories for why conflicts arose and how people could effectively deal with them, they discovered some intriguing common threads regarding motivations, incentives, partisan perceptions, core interests, emotional barriers, and other components of conflict. They realized that advice that would be helpful to someone negotiating a border dispute would also be helpful to a businessperson trying to put a sustainable deal together. Moreover, one could give competing parties in a dispute the same advice about how to have a productive negotiation process, and both parties would end up better off.

New theories helped practitioners negotiate more successfully; the experience of practitioners, in turn, helped inform and expand the theories; and the field continued to grow to a point where, now, it covers a broad range of activities, from negotiating to bring about social justice or an end to war, to settling a legal case or mediating an intractable labor dispute.

“What makes dispute resolution different as a field,” wrote Carrie Menkel-Meadow,

is its continuing aspiration to make the world a better place by seeking modes of communication to resolve unproductive conflict, to seek creative and efficient solutions to disputes, to prevent and reduce violence, to encourage reconciliation and peace where there has been violence, and, most important, to encourage every human being to approach every other one in the spirit of shared problem solving and respect for mutual existence.<sup>2</sup>

Despite—or perhaps because of—these aspirations, the field suffers from a lack of clear definition. For one thing, conflict is not always viewed as a problem; it can be an opportunity or even a force for good when, for example, it raises issues of injustice and can lead to needed change. In such a context, conflict does not necessarily need to be resolved—it can be managed. Other conflicts lead to war and destruction, and people who focus on those kinds of conflicts do conflict prevention work, while still others work on conflict transformation, helping people transform the relationships and tensions that led to the dispute.

Beyond lacking a crisp definition that includes these and other types of conflict work, the field also has practitioners who self-identify in different

---

2. Carrie Menkel-Meadow, *Roots and Inspirations: A Brief History of the Foundations of Dispute Resolution*, in *THE HANDBOOK OF DISPUTE RESOLUTION* 13, 26 (Michael L. Moffitt & Robert C. Bordone eds., 2005).

ways: negotiators, mediators, diplomats, peace builders, scholars, facilitators, dispute system design planners, dealmakers, consensus builders, teachers, and trainers.

Whatever their focus, most practitioners would agree that core concepts of the field include, to name just a few, the need to truly demonstrate an understanding of the other's viewpoint as a necessary component for finding agreement; the ability to describe one's own interests persuasively while listening respectfully to what is important to the other; and the knowledge of how to analyze a conflict, develop a process for dealing with it effectively, and create agreement that can be sustained.

When people are fighting, when their homes and families have been threatened or destroyed, the work of helping them discuss with their "enemies" how to live together in peace is extremely difficult work. This work goes on throughout the world, in the wake of violence, as in Rwanda<sup>3</sup> and Bosnia, and in the midst of violence, as in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Most often this work is done with little public attention, sometimes even with secrecy, to protect the privacy of participants. People who help prevent, manage, and resolve conflict often feel that they cannot talk about the delicate work they do—helping people at an impasse come to some kind of understanding or agreement.

### III. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT EXPERTS NEED TO TELL THEIR STORIES

Because conflict management activities are often done quietly, it is not surprising that journalists, for the most part, do not know about this work. Even when the work is made public, it generally falls to journalists to tell the story. Because journalists often do not *see* the whole story, they tend to focus on such things as the political fights and who is winning or losing, and they miss some of the important work of conflict management experts that can make a significant difference.

For four years, several programs at Harvard University (Program on Negotiation, Nieman Foundation for Journalism, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy, and MIT–Harvard Public Disputes Program) have co-sponsored a seminar series on the topic of "Negotiation, Conflict, and the News Media." These seminars bring together journalists and conflict management experts to discuss current international conflicts, how the conflicts are reported, and how the conflicts would be analyzed by conflict management professionals.<sup>4</sup>

---

3. See Phyllis E. Bernard, *Eliminationist Discourse in a Conflicted Society: Lessons for America from Africa?*, 93 MARQ. L. REV. 173, 191–200 (2009).

4. For more information regarding the Herbert C. Kelman Seminar on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution, see The Kelman Seminar, <http://www.pon.harvard.edu/category/events/>

At a recent seminar, discussion focused on Special Envoy George Mitchell, who worked in Northern Ireland in the 1990s with British Unionists, who were determined to keep Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom, and Irish Nationalists, who sought to unite with the Republic of Ireland. Participants discussed how Mitchell would likely conduct his diplomatic work in the Middle East, given what we know about his conflict management work in Northern Ireland.<sup>5</sup>

At the seminar, Harvard Business School professor James K. Sebenius, a negotiation expert, analyzed in considerable detail how George Mitchell handled the negotiations in Northern Ireland that led to the Good Friday Peace Agreement in 1998.<sup>6</sup> Sebenius described how Mitchell built coalitions, dealt with spoilers, orchestrated the sequencing of events, devised the concept of sufficient consensus, and strategically used deadlines, commitment strategies, and the media. The journalist who was co-presenting at the seminar, Charles Sennott, former Middle East bureau chief for the *Boston Globe* and co-founder of GlobalPost, said, “Wow, I was in Northern Ireland while all that was going on, and I thought that most of the time not much was happening. I had no idea about all this.”<sup>7</sup>

Conflict management experts can ill afford to overlook opportunities for spreading the word about their work, and it is unfortunate that to date so little has been done to be of service to—and influence—the media, particularly in light of the media’s multiplier effect. A single journalist can affect how millions of people view a conflict. Conflicts are typically complex enterprises, yet journalists rarely explore the full range of possible responses.

There are compelling reasons why conflict management professionals should be concerned with telling their story more effectively. First, news of successful conflict work can be inspiring to others in conflict who may feel discouraged or afraid. A vivid example of this is how Mohandas Gandhi’s work in South Africa and later in leading the independence movement in India inspired Martin Luther King, Jr. in the United States as he and his colleagues struggled for civil rights.<sup>8</sup> Successful conflict work can also inspire people who may feel that they are powerless to fight against injustice, corruption, or tyranny. In World War II, Danish citizens, under Nazi occupation, “refused to aid the Nazi war effort and brought their cities to a standstill in the summer of

---

the-kelman-seminar/?cid=75 (last visited Nov. 4, 2009).

5. Charles Sennott & James Sebenius, Remarks at the Herbert C. Kelman Seminar on International Conflict Analysis and Resolution: George Mitchell: Implications of Northern Ireland for the Middle East (March 17, 2009).

6. *Id.*

7. *Id.*

8. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., I HAVE A DREAM: WRITINGS & SPEECHES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD 40–48 (James Melvin Washington ed., HarperSanFrancisco 1992) (1986).

1944, forcing the Germans to end curfews and blockades; other European peoples under Nazi domination resisted nonviolently as well.”<sup>9</sup>

Finally, conflict management professionals should tell their stories to journalists, so journalists can do their own jobs better. If journalists were to view conflict with a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of conflict management concepts, including developing a knowledge of alternatives to violence, various frameworks for analysis, relevant historical lessons and parallels, and appreciation of complexity, they could help open up public discussion on a whole range of issues.

Even in times of peace, it can be difficult for conflict management professionals to get attention. While many journalists write substantive work on a wide range of topics, others focus solely on the dramatic and violent. Particularly in broadcast news, there is often an “if it bleeds, it leads” mentality.<sup>10</sup> It can be hard to break through that barrier to tell a story of conflict averted. In time of war, this difficulty is compounded.

#### IV. LESSONS FROM IRAQ

In fall of 2002 and winter of 2003, the U.S. government prepared for a possible invasion of Iraq, telling the American people there was imminent danger because Iraq possessed and would use weapons of mass destruction.<sup>11</sup> Media coverage of the lead-up to war focused on such matters as troop build-ups, intelligence reports, and the political ramifications of particular moves, such as the ultimatum given to Saddam Hussein or the withdrawal of weapons inspectors from Iraq.<sup>12</sup> Little attention was paid to what options might have existed beyond continued sanctions, ultimatums, or outright war. Few journalists questioned: What are the objectives? What if the intelligence reports are wrong? How have other people toppled dictators? Who are all the relevant stakeholders, beyond the Iraqis and Americans? What are neighboring countries likely to do in response to an invasion? What is the post-invasion strategy, or later, the exit strategy? For conflict management experts, these and other questions would arise in an analysis of the Iraq situation, including for example, questions about the alternatives, the process, possible outcomes, affected parties, and how sustainable a military outcome would be.

---

9. PETER ACKERMAN & JACK DU'VALL, *A FORCE MORE POWERFUL: A CENTURY OF NONVIOLENT CONFLICT* 3 (2000).

10. Editorial, *The Greenland Example*, BOSTON GLOBE, June 26, 2009, at A14.

11. See, e.g., David E. Sanger, *U.S. Disputes Iraqi Denial that It Has Weapons Banned by U.N.*, N.Y. TIMES, Nov. 14, 2002, at A21.

12. See, e.g., Michael R. Gordon, *Allies Will Move In, Even if Saddam Hussein Moves Out*, N.Y. TIMES, Mar. 18, 2003, at A16.

Because war with Iraq was being discussed barely a year after the September 11th attacks, it proved extremely difficult for voices in opposition to be heard. In *War Is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*, Chris Hedges described the horror and attraction of war:

[W]ar forms its own culture. The rush of battle is a potent and often lethal addiction, for war is a drug. . . . It is peddled by mythmakers—historians, war correspondents, filmmakers, novelists, and the state—all of whom endow it with qualities it often does possess: excitement, exoticism, power, chances to rise above our small stations in life, and a bizarre and fantastic universe that has a grotesque and dark beauty.<sup>13</sup>

There was a rush to join the war bandwagon, and even the media seemed to buy into the view that it would be unpatriotic and unpopular to be critical. The media relied on government sources, including many retired generals who had lucrative financial interests in military businesses benefiting from the policies they were asked to assess.<sup>14</sup> With some exceptions, the media failed to ask the tough and probing questions.

Elected leaders with doubts about the necessity of the war also failed to lead effectively in opposition, and the public likewise shares the blame for the lack of full discourse in the lead-up to war in Iraq. Many were for the war, and of those who were against it, most were silent or ineffectual in their dissent. War protesters were, for the most part, treated as curiosities or distractions, not as serious people with potentially helpful ideas. Cindy Sheehan became the most high-profile dissenter after her son Casey died in Iraq in 2004.<sup>15</sup> Despite considerable media coverage as she tried to confront President Bush over his war policies, Sheehan's views did not gain traction, and other dissenters failed to be taken seriously as well.

In the years since the beginning of the Iraq War, many journalists have come to deeply regret their failure to question the arguments in favor of going to war. "The press is embarrassed and humiliated by how they handled it," commented Robert Giles, curator of the Nieman Foundation for Journalism.<sup>16</sup> "The press had a responsibility to look at these stories from other points of

---

13. CHRIS HEDGES, *WAR IS A FORCE THAT GIVES US MEANING* 3 (2002).

14. David Barstow, *Behind TV Analysts, Pentagon's Hidden Hand: Courting Ex-Officers Tied to Military Contractors*, N.Y. TIMES, Apr. 20, 2008, at A1.

15. See Marc Santora, *Mother Who Lost Son in Iraq Continues Fight Against War*, N.Y. TIMES, Sept. 19, 2005, at B2; Anne Kornblut, *Mother's Grief-Fueled Vigil Becomes Nexus for Antiwar Protesters*, N.Y. TIMES, Aug. 13, 2005, at A7.

16. Telephone Interview with Robert Giles, Curator, Nieman Foundation for Journalism, Harvard University (July 14, 2009).

view and not just as breaking news to report. The best reporting breaks new ground.”<sup>17</sup>

When asked recently why “the press gave the Bush Administration a free pass on the misleading statements it made to get us into the war in Iraq,” the *New York Times*’s executive editor Bill Keller answered, “It was partly the insatiable desire for scoops people in the Administration were feeding about the potential threat in Iraq. But a lot of it was just that we floated along with the conventional wisdom, the worst enemy of journalism.”<sup>18</sup>

Negotiation scholars Max H. Bazerman and Michael D. Watkins have written about the “scanning failures” that can “occur when decision-makers discount or ignore evidence that does not fit with their beliefs.”<sup>19</sup> Refusing to be open to non-conforming information and failing to be curious can lead to catastrophic results. In their book, *Predictable Surprises: The Disasters You Should Have Seen Coming, and How to Prevent Them*, Bazerman and Watkins described the way war was sold to the American people:

In late 2002 and early 2003, the U.S.-led search for intelligence data to support its desire to overthrow Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein became a textbook case of self-serving interpretations of events.

. . . .

Rather than objectively gathering facts and connecting dots, [Deputy Defense Secretary Paul] Wolfowitz’s intelligence team “cherry picked”—they set out to find evidence that would support their preconceived beliefs and advance their agenda.<sup>20</sup>

If journalists, with the help of conflict management specialists, had undertaken a thorough analysis of the motivations and objectives of all the parties to the conflict, might not someone have posed the possibility that Saddam Hussein meant it when he said that he did not have weapons of mass destruction, but that he had reasons for keeping speculation alive that he might be lying? In fact, that was the case. In July 2009, the *Washington Post* reported that “[former Iraqi President] Saddam Hussein told an FBI interviewer before he was hanged that he allowed the world to believe he had weapons of mass destruction because he was worried about appearing weak to

---

17. *Id.*

18. Bill Keller, *10 Questions*, TIME, July 20, 2009, at 10.

19. MAX H. BAZERMAN & MICHAEL D. WATKINS, PREDICTABLE SURPRISES: THE DISASTERS YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN COMING, AND HOW TO PREVENT THEM 99 (2004).

20. *Id.* at 80–81.



Iran.”<sup>21</sup>

#### V. LEARNING FROM HISTORY, REPORTING WITH DEPTH

While many journalists fail to report the whole story or ask the right questions, there are, of course, many examples of reporting that give a nuanced, less polarizing view of conflict and that examine how countries have dealt with oppression and other forms of conflict. In his article, *Repression 101*, David Sanger analyzed the choices facing the regime in Iran following the 2009 presidential election and subsequent protests.<sup>22</sup> He cites examples from China, Poland, Burma, North and South Korea, Indonesia, and Nicaragua.<sup>23</sup> Describing a spectrum of possible responses to dictatorships, Sanger wrote:

The history of repression to save regimes—or at least their leaders—is long. And every case is different: Some regimes are brittle in the face of popular pressure while others are supple in adapting to it; some can use nationalism as their trump card, while for others, it is an Achilles’ heel. And if some regimes are simple tyrannies, the structure of Iran’s political system is especially complex and opaque.<sup>24</sup>

Sanger described various approaches and their effectiveness in twentieth-century history when people wanted to oppose an oppressive regime. In the years following the 1989 student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square and the subsequent government crackdown, the Chinese Communist Party loosened the reins in some domains, but remained firmly in power.<sup>25</sup> In the 1980s, the Solidarity uprisings in Poland against Soviet dominance did not result in immediate change for the better, but, over the course of a decade, diminishing support among union workers and security forces brought about an end to the Communist regime.<sup>26</sup>

Another recent example of the media taking note of countries solving their disputes without violence was described in a *Boston Globe* editorial about “Greenland’s peaceable accession to independence from Denmark.”<sup>27</sup> Greenlanders had voted in November 2008 to “exercise self-rule and eventually to be independent” and “Denmark, which has ruled that Arctic land

---

21. Glenn Kessler, *Hussein Pointed to Iranian Threat*, WASH. POST, July 2, 2009, at A1.

22. David E. Sanger, *Repression 101*, N.Y. TIMES, June 28, 2009, at WK1.

23. *Id.*

24. *Id.*

25. *Id.*

26. *Id.*

27. *The Greenland Example*, *supra* note 10.

since 1721, accepted the will of the people graciously.”<sup>28</sup>

Reporters should recall that other countries have divided without violence, including the separation in 1993 of Czechoslovakia into the Czech Republic and Slovakia, sometimes called the “Velvet Divorce,”<sup>29</sup> and the peaceful dissolution of the union of Norway and Sweden in 1905.<sup>30</sup>

In fact, while history seems filled with wars, it also abounds with examples of nonviolent change. In *Negotiation and Nonviolent Action: Interacting in the World of Conflict*, Amy C. Finnegan and I wrote:

Negotiation and nonviolent action are arguably the two best methods humanity has developed for engaging constructively with conflict.

. . . .

The history of the past one hundred years includes world wars and other catastrophic examples of violent conflict, in which the protagonists were armies battling to gain supremacy and dominate their enemies. As a consequence of these wars, more than one hundred million people died and many more suffered, national boundaries were redrawn, and governments rose and fell. Those one hundred years of history, however, also reveal striking examples of successful struggles for historic change accomplished without armies and violence. In India, El Salvador, South Africa, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Chile, the Philippines, the United States, and elsewhere, people succeeded in confronting oppression and over-turning dictators using strategies of nonviolent action.

Led in many but not all cases by courageous and innovative leaders, such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, Vaclav Havel, Lech Walesa, and others, nonviolent action movements have used a variety of disruptive actions, including strikes, demonstrations, economic boycotts, marches, media campaigns, sit-ins, civil disobedience, and noncooperation as components of their strategies. . . . [T]hese same leaders were also masterful negotiators who skillfully framed the issues, held high aspirations, articulated clear goals, built coalitions to increase their bargaining power, sought legitimacy, used leverage, and found ways to strengthen their own best alternatives while

---

28. *Id.*

29. See, e.g., William Flannery, *Reforms by Czechs Are Praised*, CHI. TRIB., Aug. 8, 1993, § 7, at 11.

30. See T.K. DERRY, *A HISTORY OF MODERN NORWAY 1814–1972*, at 164–71 (1973).

weakening the alternatives of their opponents.<sup>31</sup>

Reporting more actively on how these types of movements were successful would provide some needed balance, given how much “ink” is given to reports of military solutions to conflict. Gene Sharp wrote on this point in *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*: “Although much effort has gone into increasing the efficiency of violent conflict, no comparable efforts have yet gone into making nonviolent action more effective and hence more likely to be substituted for violence.”<sup>32</sup>

Conflict management experts learn from history and apply that knowledge to current conflicts. Negotiation scholar Robert Mnookin, Samuel Williston Professor of Law and Chair of the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School, has led an initiative to help Israeli Jews have more productive discussions about their internal disagreements over the settlement issue. When, in 2006, he traveled as a visiting scholar to Belgium, he was surprised to find some parallels and insights as he looked at the conflict in Belgium and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, two ethnic conflicts with significant ideological, political, material, and religious differences.<sup>33</sup> In his article, *Ethnic Conflicts: Flemings & Walloons, Palestinians & Israelis*, he wrote that before going on sabbatical to Belgium,

It had never occurred to me that the conflict between the Flemish and the Walloons, and Belgium’s governmental structure, would be thought relevant to the Israeli–Palestinian dispute. But . . . Palestinian intellectuals stated that the resolution of the conflict should involve the creation of a single secular state modeled after Belgium’s—with language communities and largely autonomous regions that would give both Jews and Palestinians substantially independent control over their own destinies within the framework of a single binational, federal state.<sup>34</sup>

Mnookin went on to note that there are:

some surprising similarities between these obviously very

---

31. Amy C. Finnegan & Susan G. Hackley, *Negotiation and Nonviolent Action: Interacting in the World of Conflict*, 24 NEGOTIATION J. 7, 7, 9 (2008) (internal citation omitted).

32. GENE SHARP, *THE POLITICS OF NONVIOLENT ACTION, PART ONE: POWER AND STRUGGLE* 4 (Marina Finkelstein ed., 1973).

33. Robert H. Mnookin, *Ethnic Conflicts: Flemings & Walloons, Palestinians & Israelis*, 136 DAEDALUS 103, 103 (2007); see also Martin Euwema & Alain Verbeke, *Negative and Positive Roles of Media in the Belgian Conflict: A Model for De-escalation*, 93 MARQ. L. REV. 139 (2009).

34. *Id.* at 105.

different ethnic conflicts. . . . [T]he size of Israel and the Palestinian territories combined is almost exactly the same as Belgium. . . . Both can be seen as conflicts between two peoples—with roughly equal numbers—where the issue can be framed as whether the appropriate resolution should involve two states or only one. Finally, in both disputes, if there is to be a two-state solution, a contentious and complicated issue is the fate of the capital—Brussels or Jerusalem.<sup>35</sup>

After lengthy analysis, Mnookin concluded that a Belgian-style “consociational democracy model”—or one-state solution—for the Israeli–Palestinian dispute would not be advisable or feasible, an example of a negotiation scholar adding insight to what is often an oversimplified discussion of options.

The documentary film *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*<sup>36</sup> provides an example of how the entire story is not necessarily told by what is happening on the surface. The film shows how a group of Liberian women stood up to dictator Charles Taylor and the warlords who opposed him, demanding that the violent conflict which had been raging in their country for decades come to an end. The women, dressed simply in white, assembled in public spaces with hand-lettered signs. At one point, they feared that the peace talks that were occurring would end without resolution. Outside the building where the talks were being held, the women linked arms to prevent the men who represented them from leaving the peace talks. Abigail Disney, the film’s producer, noted of the media who were there: “[Freelance journalists] said they didn’t film the women, because it wasn’t that interesting. They said the women looked ‘sort of lame.’”<sup>37</sup> While most of the footage from that time shows men brandishing weapons or giving speeches, an equally important part of the story was the quiet and resolute power of the women that helped tip the balance and bring about real peace talks. Disney went on to say, “If the historical record leaves these women out, then all we’ll get is the same thing over and over.”<sup>38</sup>

## VI. CITIZENS AS VICTIMS—AND NOW AS EYEWITNESS REPORTERS

Among the stakeholders in a conflict are the citizens, and their story is often under-reported. For example, in Iraq, six years into the war, one part of

---

35. *Id.*

36. *PRAY THE DEVIL BACK TO HELL* (Fork Films 2008).

37. Abigail Disney, Film Producer, Remarks at the Screening of *PRAY THE DEVIL BACK TO HELL* at the American Bar Association Section of Dispute Resolution 11th Annual Spring Conference (Apr. 17, 2009).

38. *Id.*

the insufficiently told story is how many non-Americans have died or been injured and how many millions are now refugees. In a war that was optional (that is, the United States was not attacked by Iraq), factoring in the Iraqi losses should have been an important part of the calculation of determining whether to go to war.

Throughout history, civilians have suffered grave losses in war, with examples from World War II among the most horrific (such as Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Dresden). As the nature of warfare changes to involve more non-state actors, many have noted that it becomes increasingly important to discuss the deaths, injuries, and displacement of civilians, and that as the potential costs of war mount, people may be less willing to engage in war. Jane Holl Lute wrote in *The Role of Force in Peacemaking* that the reluctance of many countries to join with the U.S. in the invasion of Iraq could have been because “in an age when so much destructive power is so readily available to such great numbers of potential belligerents, people the world over have become increasingly uneasy at the prospect of violent conflict—especially given its inherent ability to spread.”<sup>39</sup>

While civilians have often been victims, civilians are also becoming more empowered to play a more active role. In *Protest Vote*, Laura Secor wrote about the demonstrations following the 2009 presidential election in Iran in which President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was declared the winner, and the voters who had supported Mir-Hossein Moussavi and other candidates felt disenfranchised.<sup>40</sup> “Whatever its origins, the Moussavi wave has coalesced with extraordinary speed into a disciplined, tactically sophisticated, and strikingly moderate movement.”<sup>41</sup> In a reference that conflict management experts would appreciate, Secor noted that the people of Iran who were protesting were strategic about what they were asking for, not demanding too much (like a new election) but merely seeking to have their votes counted. “[T]he modesty of this demand is particularly moving, set against the majesty of the demonstrations.”<sup>42</sup>

Aiding the protesters in Iran was an array of new technology devices that enabled citizens to report firsthand and with immediacy what they were experiencing. A flood of information spread out around the world from Iran via cell phones and social networking sites, such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and various blogs. Cell phone cameras captured and instantly transmitted scenes of violence that were then broadcast on mainstream media,

---

39. Jane Holl Lute, *The Role of Force in Peacemaking*, in PEACEMAKING IN INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT: METHODS & TECHNIQUES 419, 420 (I. William Zartman ed., rev. ed. 2007).

40. Laura Secor, *Protest Vote*, NEW YORKER, June 29, 2009, at 23.

41. *Id.* at 24.

42. *Id.*

and e-mail and Twitter enabled people to quickly connect and organize in ways unimaginable a decade ago.

In the *Financial Times*, John Lloyd wrote of a transition period from the “heroic age of journalism,” when high-status investigative reporters and newscasters were famous and respected, to a “demotic age,” when citizen journalism may reign.<sup>43</sup> “In some respects, today’s internet and blogging activity marks a return to 17th- and 18th-century style journalism—an entrepreneurial time when people with something to say set up shop and published their own news sheets and pamphlets.”<sup>44</sup>

No one can know what the impact of this new media will be—on the media or on the conflict itself. In their article, *Reading Twitter in Tehran?*, authors John Palfrey, Bruce Etling, and Robert Faris describe the use of new media, including the 140-character “tweets,” or short messages sent via the social networking web site Twitter.<sup>45</sup> They write about the “countless tweets emerging from the Iranian Revolution Version 2009, in which a love affair between elite young Iranians and the latest Web technologies has become the feel-good story to the other frightening standoff in the streets of Tehran.”<sup>46</sup>

While admiring how such networking tools can empower citizens to make their voices heard and to organize, the authors caution that this outpouring of information may not be truly representative of the population. It “still reflects a worldwide user population that skews wealthy, English-speaking and well-educated.”<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, venting, or the “freedom to scream,” online may deter some protesters from taking to the streets.<sup>48</sup>

One issue existing at the nexus of mainstream media and citizen media is the question of which sources to trust. Given the onslaught of fresh new messages from Iran, most of them anonymous, many mainstream media organizations did not wait to check sources. They “had little choice but to throw open their doors” to “the undifferentiated sources of information on the Web,” wrote Brian Stelter in *Journalism Rules Are Bent in News Coverage from Iran*.<sup>49</sup> The media reported on some of the unsubstantiated information that came flooding in, looking for confirmation from multiple sources often only hours later.<sup>50</sup> While this type of material can pose challenges for

---

43. John Lloyd, *We Can Be Heroes*, FIN. TIMES (London), Nov. 15–16, 2008, at 15.

44. *Id.*

45. John Palfrey, Bruce Etling & Robert Faris, *Reading Twitter in Tehran?*, WASH. POST, June 21, 2009, at B1.

46. *Id.*

47. *Id.*

48. *Id.*

49. Brian Stelter, *Journalism Rules Are Bent in News Coverage from Iran*, N.Y. TIMES, June 29, 2009, at B1.

50. *Id.*

reporters, editors, and news organizations, it is a benefit as well, as news tips and reports arrive right off the streets, which is especially valuable in places where reporters are denied access. For conflict resolution experts as well, these new tools could be an important means of connection.

#### VII. ASK THE LARGER QUESTION: WHY IS WAR ACCEPTABLE, ANYWAY?

Often the discussion of a war winds down when its outcome seems certain and an end date is in sight. Mainstream media and the attention of most people move on to the next crisis. What is lacking is a broader questioning of such matters as, what was the cost of war in terms of human suffering, depleted resources, and justice? Were the objectives in fighting worthy, and were those objectives met? What were alternative ways to have accomplished the same result—or a better result? What were the unintended consequences? Is either side better off? Are both sides? What is the likelihood that the outcome is sustainable?

Robert Mnookin has written, “At the close of hostilities, diplomats, not battlefield commanders, typically negotiate a cease-fire.”<sup>51</sup> If wars nearly always end in a negotiation, should we not value more highly the conflict management experts who might help us prevent the fighting?

Conflict management professionals and journalists alike could do a better job of communicating the devastation of war as it affects soldiers, civilians, communities, and whole societies.

One journalist wrote recently of his own experience with the untold cost of war on families. Noting recent gatherings in Normandy to commemorate the sixty-fifth anniversary of D-Day, Thomas Childers wrote:

Never mentioned in such ceremonies or in the vast media attention devoted to the “Greatest Generation” is another battle our fathers waged. That battle was not fought in the fields of Europe or the jungles of the South Pacific but in towns and cities all across America, sometimes in highly public spaces—hospitals and courtrooms—but more often in parlors, kitchens, and bedrooms. As many veterans and their families would discover, the last daunting challenge of the war, for those fortunate enough to survive it, was attempting to resume a life interrupted and forever changed by war.<sup>52</sup>

Childers cautioned us to remember:

---

51. Robert H. Mnookin, *Turn Disputes into Deals*, 7 *NEGOTIATION* 3, 5 (2004).

52. Thomas Childers, *The Inheritance: A Father's Day Meditation on the Invisible Costs of War—And Their Family Legacy*, *BOSTON GLOBE*, June 21, 2009, at C1.

There are times when war may be necessary. With all its horrors and grotesque crimes, the Second World War is a case in point. But if, as a last resort, we send soldiers into harm's way, we should be under no illusions about war's colossal human costs, remembering that even in the most brilliant triumphs there is heartbreak and that the suffering does not stop when the shooting does. It is a lesson that a new generation of fathers and sons and families, to their infinite sorrow, are relearning every day.<sup>53</sup>

Others have challenged the conventional thinking. Scott Shane wrote in his article *Torture Versus War*, "What is it about the terrible intimacy of torture that so disturbs and captivates the public? Why has torture been singled out for special condemnation in the law of war, when war brings death and suffering on a scale that dwarfs the torture chamber?"<sup>54</sup>

Madeleine Albright, former U.S. Secretary of State and co-chair of a task force on genocide prevention, remarked that genocide is unacceptable.<sup>55</sup> If genocide is unacceptable, are there not many cases when war should be unacceptable? In what cases should a country go to war? What is the meaning of patriotism? What does it mean to say that civilian losses are "disproportionate to the military gains"?"<sup>56</sup> What would be proportionate?

Conflict management professionals, who are often present at every stage of a conflict, including after the violence has ended when they try to help pick up the pieces, can perform an important service by showing how their work is done and how this work has been successful in preventing or mitigating violent conflict. They can also bear witness to what they observe when their efforts fail. Charles Dambach, President of the Alliance for Peacebuilding, commented that:

Conflict resolution professionals, working within government agencies and with civil society, have become remarkably skilled and effective at reducing the frequency and severity of violent conflict. The field has yet to learn how to tell its story and generate the support needed to scale up and have a

---

53. *Id.*

54. Scott Shane, *Torture Versus War*, N.Y. TIMES, Apr. 19, 2009, at WK1.

55. See Rupita Chakraborty, Madeleine Albright Calls for End to Genocide, *The Daily Colonial* (April 7, 2009), <http://dailycolonial.com/?p=1052>.

56. See Adam B. Ellick, *U.N. Chief in Afghanistan Calls for Review of American Special Operations Raids*, N.Y. TIMES, June 14, 2009, at A6 (quoting Kai Eide, a Norwegian diplomat).



greater impact.<sup>57</sup>

Efforts to better tell their story could include some or all of the following: meeting with editorial boards, developing relationships with key reporters, writing op-eds from a conflict management point of view, convening a panel of experts available to the media to comment on negotiations and conflict, having a greater presence online, and committing to more regularly publishing substantive post-conflict analysis.

With a broader understanding of conflict, journalists could also perform a significant public service, telling of successful conflict management efforts, averted violence, and mediations that helped resolve disputes. Journalists could work harder to explore opposing viewpoints, challenge the conventional wisdom, and avoid unhelpful shorthand terms such as “surge” and “mission accomplished.” With a deeper understanding of history, they could answer such questions as: What have other societies done to overcome repression? What makes a conflict intractable? Beyond stated positions, what are the underlying interests that are driving the conflict? What would make peace sustainable?

It is often said, no one writes about the war that didn’t happen. But someone should.

There are positive signs. In recent years, the U.S. military has shown a growing appreciation for conflict management skills. “Academic and military institutions used to study war to figure out how to win the next one,” noted Charles Dambach.<sup>58</sup> “Now, they are beginning to study war to learn how to prevent the next one.”<sup>59</sup> Recent reporting about Israel shows more in-depth discussion of the new diplomatic approach U.S. President Barack Obama is taking with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, showing the strengths and weaknesses of various negotiation positions.<sup>60</sup> “Discussion of the right of return, homeland, and settlements are being explored now in a more sophisticated way,” noted Robert Giles of the Nieman Foundation.<sup>61</sup>

### VIII. QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Current news coverage favors telling the story of conflict from the government’s perspective, using the military and “insiders” to highlight the

---

57. E-mail from Charles Dambach, President and CEO, Alliance for Peacebuilding, to Susan G. Hackley (July 13, 2009) (on file with author).

58. *Id.*

59. *Id.*

60. Ethan Bronner, *New Focus on Settlements*, N.Y. TIMES, June 6, 2009, at A1.

61. E-mail from Robert Giles, Curator, Nieman Foundation for Journalism, to Susan G. Hackley (July 14, 2009) (on file with author).

breaking news. What might happen if alternative views in managing conflict were elevated in importance relative to more conventional views?

There often seems to be a presumption that war is acceptable, reinforced by regular news reports of military plans, budgets, procurements, and weapons. What can counterbalance the strong pull toward military solutions to non-military problems?

Recognizing that significant political change has been brought about in the world by nonviolent means, shouldn't journalists commit to learning more about these remarkable historical examples of standing up to oppression and injustice?

If we acknowledge that journalists and conflict management professionals each play some role in a conflict by their very presence and often by their acts, what are the possible positive and negative effects? What are the unintended consequences?

What can the conflict management community do to establish their leaders as voices of authority that the press can rely on?

In conclusion, we hope that journalists and conflict management professionals can begin a deeper exploration of how they might, without harming the integrity of their mission and work in dealing with conflict, learn to trust and be of greater service to each other—and to the many who depend on them.