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Peace journalism in marginally to moderately escalated conflicts: Conflict theoretical foundations, variables and reportage patterns

Kurzfassung: ‚Friedensjournalismus‘ wurde ursprünglich in Abgrenzung zu ‚Kriegspropaganda‘ konzipiert. Dies wird der Prozesshaftigkeit von eskalierenden Konflikten jedoch nicht gerecht. Vor allem in beginnenden, also in geringfügig bis moderat eskalierten Konflikten, sollte deeskalationsorientierter Journalismus auf den jeweiligen Stand der Eskalation eines Konflikts reagieren bzw. auf diesen angepasst werden. Dies erfordert ein sensibles Instrumentarium, das es ermöglicht, auch geringfügige Abweichungen vom Frieden zu erkennen, der hier mithilfe einer Reihe von ‚Friedensbedingungen‘ definiert ist. Im Zuge der Eskalation eines Konfliktes entstehen zunehmend bestimmte ‚blinde Flecken‘ in der Wahrnehmung der Konfliktsituation und in der Wahrnehmung der anderen Partei, des ‚Gegners‘. Deeskalationsorientierte Berichterstattung muss diese Lücken in der Wahrnehmung identifizieren und ihnen ein vollständiges Bild des Konflikts entgegensetzen.

Abstract: ‚Peace journalism‘ was originally conceived in contrast to ‚war propaganda‘. However, this does not do justice to the processuality of escalating conflicts. Above all in the beginning, thus in marginally to moderately escalated conflicts, de-escalation oriented journalism should react to the respective state of escalation of a conflict or respectively adapt to it. This necessitates a sensitive set of tools that makes it possible to recognize even minor deviations from peace, which here is defined with a range of ‚peace conditions‘. In the course of a conflict’s escalation, specific ‚blind spots‘ increasingly arise in the perception of the conflict constellation and in the perception of the other party, the ‚opponent‘. De-escalation oriented reportage must identify these gaps in perception and counter them with a complete picture of the conflict.

1. Introduction

What has journalist Deniz Yücel done? “Anyone who reads the justification of Turkish legal authorities for the arrest of German Turkey correspondent Deniz Yücel can in any case not believe one thing: that it involved anything other than a political trial. Yücel, it states, held an interview with the PKK chief, criticized the Turkish government, and cited a popular joke on the poisoned relationship of Kurds and Turks¹. In short: The journalist is accused of doing journalism.” (Ulrich, 2017). More precisely stated, Deniz Yücel is accused of doing a form of journalism we can call “peace journalism”. We do not know whether Deniz Yücel is familiar with peace journalism; nevertheless, to interview a representative of the opposing conflict party and thereby put forward the viewpoint of ‘others’ on a conflict, to criticize one’s own government and also repeat a joke that reveals a lot about the conflict between Turks and Kurds, these are characteristics of peace journalism.

‘Peace journalism’ is an interdisciplinary concept, it has roots in peace and conflict research, social psychology, media research and other disciplines, and not least in journalistic practice itself. Here we can recognize a shared cross-disciplinary motivation: the need to develop and practice a counter-concept to escalation-oriented reportage styles that – sometimes more, sometimes less markedly – can be regarded as ‘war propaganda’. From practical and also scientific engagement with war reportage, an alternative was developed to the reportage styles dominant in wartime.

The Peace Research Project Group at the University of Konstanz engaged particularly during the 1990s in analyzing newspaper texts and television reports on the 1990/91 Gulf War and the post-Yugoslavian civil wars. A set of tools was thereby developed that made it possible to grasp the most varied characteristics and stylistic techniques of war propaganda (Kempf, Reimann, & Luostarinen 1996). It was found that in many ways war propaganda can move from rather ‘indiscernible’ to ‘very obvious’ propaganda, from texts that even consider arguments from the opposite side – in order to immediately weaken and devalue them – to texts that demonize the opponent, in part with the simplest linguistic means, or that justify and glorify one’s own side and its military operations (cf. the two edited volumes on the project “Journalism and the New World Order”: Nohrstedt & Ottosen 2001, Kempf & Luostarinen 2002).

¹ See (Yücel, 2016): “In order to illustrate the attitude of the Turkish state, Kurds like to tell the following story: A Turk and a Kurd are sentenced to death. Before the execution the Kurd is asked, ‘What is your last wish?’ He considers briefly and then says: ‘I love my mother very much. Before I leave this world, I would like to see my mother once again.’ Then the Turk is allowed to state his last wish. Without hesitating he answers: ‘The Kurd should not see his mother.’”

De-escalation oriented reportage or respectively peace journalistic stylistic techniques, such as critique of military logic, incentives to identify with war victims on both sides or naming shared interests, were empirically hard to find and therefore initially more in the nature of theoretical constructs. The concept of 'peace journalism' was thus insofar 'academic' as it was almost never realized in actual war reportage on the Gulf War. Only in later studies of press reportage in and about post-war societies (Projektgruppe Friedensforschung Konstanz, 2005; Jaeger, 2009) could stylistic techniques of peace journalism, as postulated by Kempf et al. (1996), be uniformly supported with empirical studies (see Jäger, Bläsi, Kempf, & Möckel, 2004).

Today, a quarter century later, peace journalism has, for one thing, been taken up by journalists and further developed, and for another, scientific study of this concept has become differentiated. Peace journalism has developed from a counter-program to war propaganda into an independent process model that takes account of the most varied influencing factors (see Kempf, 2017).

Nevertheless, a scientific gap remains. The two opposite-poles of 'war propaganda' and 'peace journalism' are well defined and analyzed, one has a precise conception of what these reportage styles are and how we can recognize them. And yet, there is still little research on reportage 'in between', on reportage about marginally or moderately escalated conflicts, ones that have not yet taken a violent or military course.

Conflict research has found that conflicts can increasingly escalate with their own dynamic, and thereby several escalation steps can be distinguished that lead from cooperative problem solving to competition, to struggle and finally war (Creighton, 1991; Glasl, 1992). These escalation stages are characterized by the respective sort of conflict solution strategies employed by conflict parties, and also by increasing misperceptions on the part of conflict parties (Deutsch, 1973, Kempf, 2003). In wartime, it is thus hardly surprising that war propaganda is a dominant reportage style and that peace journalism is only a peripheral phenomenon. Specifically the demand formulated by Galtung (1998) and others that peace journalism should also work preventively to avoid violence and war, makes it necessary, consequently, to also devote greater and more systematic attention to reportage in marginally or only moderately escalated conflicts than was previously the case in peace journalism research.

"Peace Journalism is when editors and reporters are aware of their contribution to the social construction of reality and their responsibility to give peace a chance" (Kempf 2012, p. 2). The more escalated a conflict, however, the harder it is to "give peace a chance". This is due to the escalation dynamic of competitively conducted conflicts, through which it becomes increasingly difficult to "turn the screws back" – it is much harder to de-escalate a conflict than to escalate one. Also contributing to this are already mentioned misperceptions that arise on the side of conflict parties with increasing escalation: They make it ever more difficult to accept 'counteractive', i.e., de-escalation-oriented, reports and information, not only for those directly participating in conflict, but also for those participating indirectly as media recipients. For example: The more a conflict opponent is demonized, the harder it is to experience sympathy for victims on his side. Reports on opposition victims still only refer to an anonymous mass or mere statistics: if they are not defamed as fellow travelers, they are themselves found guilty when they become conflict victims (cf. Herman & Chomsky 1988, Kempf & Reimann 1994).

In early phases of conflicts, however, in marginally to moderately escalated conflicts, media recipients are still much more open for such information if they belong to the overall picture of a conflict. And the more open people on both sides are to reports and information on the opponent's rights, fears, sacrifices, or also willingness to make compromises, etc., the greater the acceptance will be for constructive conflict solution attempts, mediation efforts by third parties, de-escalation steps, etc. Early recognition of conflicts is therefore an important task (Galtung 1998) that peace journalism research has until now, however, insufficiently addressed. The present article is intended to correct this deficiency.

Starting from the concept of 'peace', we here develop a set of tools to satisfy Galtung's demand by creating a basis for not only scientific but also journalistic discussions of marginally to moderately escalated conflicts. This study is organized in two parts, analogous to an article on peace journalism and war propaganda that has in the meantime become 'classic', one by Kempf, Reimann, & Luostarinen (1996) : In the first part, a variable system for analysis of reportage on marginally to moderately escalated conflicts is developed grounded on conflict-theoretical foundations; in a planned second part, this variable system will be refined, empirically enriched and tested.

2. Conflict theoretical foundations

The starting point of this analysis is a definition of peace. For only if we know what we mean by 'peace' can we identify (marginal or moderate) deviations from it as 'marginally' or 'moderately escalated conflict'. This definition makes available tools with whose aid marginally escalated conflicts can be identified at an early stage and which are thus suitable to address conflict escalation early and counteract it – also and especially using journalistic means.

Fundamental for the definition of "peace" used in the following is the concept of 'conflict', which refers to the "clash of inherently incompatible action tendencies". Understood this way, conflict is not 'negative' per se, but rather a normal part of human co-existence: Individual persons, social groups as well as institutions, countries or groups of countries are constantly pursuing goals. These persons, groups or institutions additionally are in contact with other persons, groups or institutions, which again pursue their own goals. These goals can sometimes be the same as own ones, but mostly, however, 'others' seek to realize other goals, and often these other goals (or actions resulting from them) collide with own goals (or actions).

From this it follows: Conflicts are an inevitable aspect of human co-existence, conflicts are 'entirely normal' or respectively a constant in the life of individuals, groups, institutions and countries. "Interpersonal relationships are never static, but rather subject to constant changes, in which friction is unavoidable" (Kempf, 2000, p. 46). Should this be the case, if conflicts are unavoidable, then a definition of 'peace' cannot aim at a utopian state of conflict-free co-existence for all people, but must instead refer to particular ways of dealing with conflict. 'Peace' can therefore not be absence of conflict, but is instead characterized by a specific way of handling conflict. "There is no way to peace, peace is the way", concluded Mahatma Gandhi.

Basically there are two possible, contrary ways to handle conflict (Deutsch, 1973):

- conflict carried on as a *competitive process* which further escalates due to conflict parties' competitive stance;
- conflict management as a *cooperative process* in which conflict parties endeavor to avoid further escalation and seek a conflict solution through the path of negotiation.

If we want to understand peace as a way to handle conflict, it is wise to think of conflict management as a cooperative process. This is intuitively plausible, but it can also be ethically justified, drawing on the 'practical basic norm' according to Kamlah (Kamlah, 1973): "Consider that the others are needy people like yourself and act accordingly" (loc. cit., p. 95). One could also formulate it as follows: "Consider that others pursue goals (rights, interests) like you yourself and include this in your actions."

Accordingly, Kempf (1978, p. 80) defines peace as a "psychological" presupposition of cooperative conflict management and specifies two conditions for this:

«The first condition is that all those affected by a conflict should refrain from carrying out actions that serve the direct achievement of conflict-relevant purposes until the conclusion of a negotiation conducted according to reason and moral principles² and are ready to take into consideration the aims of all other affected groups (as well as aims of others who cannot themselves take part in negotiations) in planning their actions» (Kempf 1978, p. 80).

This first condition aims at preventing any further escalation of conflicts and thereby creating preconditions for cooperative conflict management: conflict parties should refrain from unilaterally bringing about accomplished facts – e.g., giving themselves advantages in subsequent conflict management – and in planning their actions they should (as much as possible) take into account interests of all other parties affected by the conflict – at least they should be willing to do this. Put differently: The precondition for peace is first that 'weapons fall silent', and thus a – maximally stable – truce should be arranged. This first partial condition for peace will be referred to here as *peaceableness* on the part of conflict parties.

Furthermore, there should be readiness to appreciate the needs of others, i.e., it is essential to feel empathy and sensitivity for interests of all others. Not only should there be no actions that could create accomplished facts, but also, in planning further actions account should be taken of possible conflicts with others' interests. Explicitly mentioned are furthermore interests of those «who cannot themselves participate in negotiation» (loc. cit.), which requires increased readiness and capacity for empathy.

The second condition is:

«that (a) no negotiator should have to fear any sanctions by other negotiators for presenting his goals (i.e. goals proposed by him, including goals he presents for others who cannot themselves participate in negotiations),

that (b) each negotiator will inform all other negotiators of his own goals and be prepared to consider goals of all other negotiators, and

that (c) every goal whose achievement is desired by a negotiator will be included in negotiations and no goals will be designated from the start as 'absolutely essential' or 'unworthy to be pursued'» (Kempf, 1978, p. 81).

² In the sense of Lorenzen & Schwemmer (1975).

This condition, consisting of several sub-conditions, makes actual conflict management – here called ‘negotiation’ – central and names preconditions for cooperative conflict management. First (see Part a) a maximally free negotiating atmosphere should be established, so that no one has to suffer negative consequences for stating his interests («presenting his goals»). In other words: *Freedom of expression* is a precondition for peace.

As well, presenting the interests of «others who themselves cannot participate in negotiation» must not be sanctioned. This is intended to insure that as much as possible conflict management will also include parties affected by conflict who – for whatever reasons – cannot present their interests personally. It also means reporting on interests of persons, groups, institutions affected by conflicts who themselves cannot directly participate in conflict management, which implies: Reportage on conflicts must also be as free as possible, and *freedom of press* is an important precondition for peace.

Central to actual conflict management is (see Part b) that it occurs in an atmosphere of *honesty*. Conflicts can only be resolved if conflict parties are prepared to present their interests openly to all others – concealing ‘actual’ interests, secret diplomacy, deception and power plays subject cooperative conflict management to undue stress. Here as well *openness* is expected from all conflict parties, in the sense of readiness to accommodate or at least take account of others’ interests.

Not least, cooperative conflict management – and thereby peace – can only succeed if ‘everything is put on the table’ and included in the conflict management process. Nothing should be ‘non-negotiable’, no statements of interests should be excluded from the negotiating process from the start as unjustified, exaggerated or irrelevant. As well, drawing ‘red lines’ is incompatible with conflict management³. The conflict management process should accordingly be as comprehensive as possible, all expressed interests should be included, and *completeness* should be strived for in the conflict management process.

In summary, we can say: ‘Peace’ is not a condition, but rather a specific form of conflict management, characterized by:

- Peaceableness
- Empathy
- Freedom of opinion and press
- Honesty and openness
- Completeness

Defined in this differentiated way, aided by the concept of ‘peace’ we can determine in everyday life, as well as in politics or international relations, whether a social or political relation is ‘peaceful’ or where and in what aspect of the relation something is ‘conflictual’. For the named conditions are sufficiently concrete so that even sporadic and minor violations (or respectively violations of particular sub-conditions) are identifiable. Such minor deviations from the form of conflict management referred to here as ‘peace’ will generally be referred to in this article as ‘*marginally escalated conflicts*’.

For example, unilateral actions by a conflict party aimed at creating one-sided advantages with regard to the conflict object can be called marginal escalation, as well as can plans or statements of intent for one-sided actions. Or, if a person or group affected by a conflict is excluded from the conflict management process, we can speak of ‘marginal escalation’, just as we can when ‘non-negotiable conditions’ or ‘red lines’ are specified for negotiations.

Reportage on and critique of such actions or utterances by conflict parties are important tasks of media in conflicts and thus will be discussed below. I maintain here that the named possible deviations from an ideal state of ‘peace’, for example sporadic or minor violations of one or several sub-conditions for ‘peace’, can be the first *unsystematic* events in the unfolding of conflict. These are initial signs of a conflict that could escalate in the future.

If these signs are ignored – especially also by media – and if conflict is subsequently viewed by conflict parties as a competitive process, conflict can become autonomous, increasingly characterized by conflict parties’ *systematic* misperceptions. These first arise because each conflict party perceives and evaluates its own *actions* (chiefly) from the perspective of its own underlying *intentions*, interests or positions. In contrast, the “opposing” party affected by actions, however, perceives these actions (chiefly) from the perspective of effects of action, and for conflict this means: it sees them as blocking their own actions and/or goals. On the level of *emotions*, feelings of being threatened are triggered, since others’ actions are perceived as being directed at and threatening one’s own interests, intentions or aims. In order to protect themselves and to protect own interests from presumed aggression by others, ‘defensive measures’ are now taken that – again based on perspective divergence – likewise come to be perceived by the other conflict party as aggression, etc. (cf. Fig. 1).

³ The only «red lines» named by the definition itself are one-sided «actions that serve the direct achievement of conflict-relevant goals».

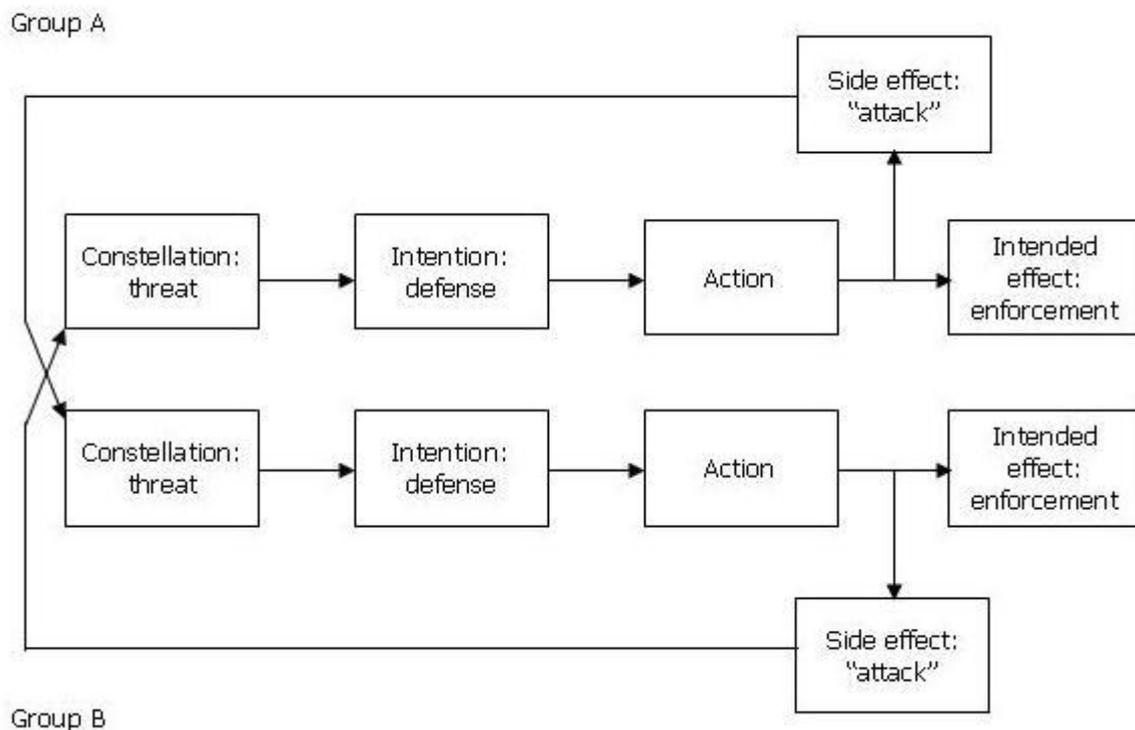


Figure 1: Conflicts become independent, autonomous processes (Kempf, Reimann, & Luostarinen, 1996, p. 3)

If conflict parties now attempt to impose their aims against the opponent's – presumed – aggression, "implementation of own goals against the external group [becomes] an autonomous group purpose that changes the group's internal structure, increases distance between groups, distorts intergroup communication and torpedoes receptiveness for mediation proposals» (Kempf, Reimann, & Luostarinen, 1996, p. 2). Conflict becomes an autonomous process and subsequently intensifies and begins an escalation spiral that goes together with heightened misperception of conflict by conflict parties. If these misperceptions in moderately escalated conflicts (on up to competition, which, e.g., Creighton 1991 describes as a kind of "athletic competition") are characterized by ever expanding 'blind spots', in the further course of conflict escalation, marked perceptual distortions arise, whereby conflict parties' conflict perceptions suddenly change into active contestation of others' rights and interests, idealization of own rights and condemnation of actions by opponents that interfere with own rights, along with simultaneous justification of own actions (cf. Kempf, Reimann, & Luostarinen, 1996, p. 7ff.).

So that conflict does not further intensify in this direction, peace journalism must be employed already in moderately escalated conflicts and thematize or respectively cast light on the above-named 'blind spots'. In order to do this, we must be clear about what is lacking and where. Consequently, we must first examine the 'complete picture', which contains everything as an overall *conflict constellation* (cf. Fig. 2). In every conflict there are – at least – two parties that have respective own rights and interests, and pursue their own intentions and goals, etc. And, as stated, both sides react to each other, act in response to each other's actions, and the respective actions interfere with the rights, intentions, etc. of the respective other, or are perceived as interfering with them. Thus, actions are mutually perceived as threatening, and the respective other feels threatened by one's own actions. Beyond this, there are, however, also common rights, intentions, etc., as well as common actions that are perceived as common benefits from the relationship and grounds for mutual trust.

The above described *divergence of perspectives* (cf. Fig. 3) then leads in a first escalation stage to blocking out the other party's conflict perception: their rights and intentions, feelings of being threatened, as well as own actions that interfere with rights and interests of the other party are considered less and less and are sometimes not taken into consideration at all. The other party's perspective thereby becomes the first blind spot of an until then complete conflict constellation.

Along with this, a further development begins: "The angle of view constricts to own rights, intentions, etc. and their endangerment by opposing actions, etc., which at the same time are perceived as threatening common rights, intentions, etc. and as a threat to common benefits" (Kempf, Reimann, & Luostarinen, 1996, p. 7). The common rights, common benefits from relations to each other, as well as therein grounded mutual trust are perceived as threatened and increasingly disappear from the field of view and are completely blocked out as the

conflict gains increasing autonomy. In this conflict escalation stage, a perspective on the rights and intentions of the other party, and as well also common 'accomplishments', have now become mere 'blind spots', and to the contrary parties care only about the (implementation of) own rights and intentions, as well as their endangerment by 'opposing' actions. This stage is called '*competition*' (cf. Fig. 4).

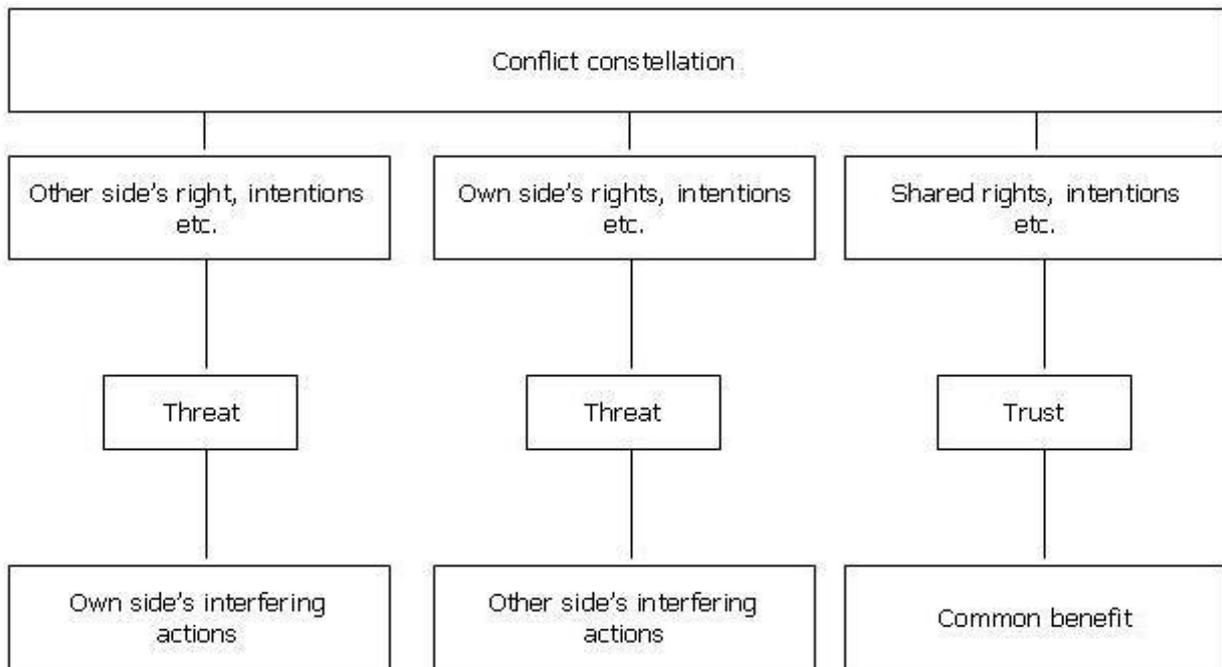


Figure 2: Conflict constellation (Kempf, Reimann, & Luostarinen, 1996, p. 5)

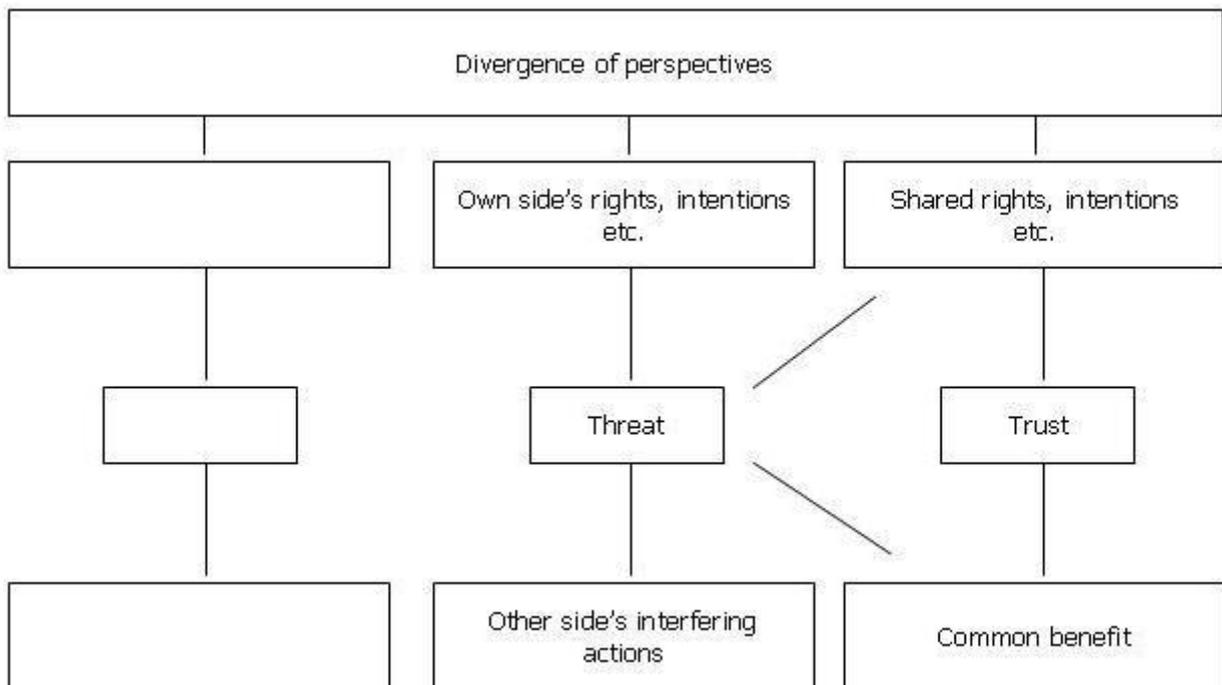


Figure 3: Perspective divergence (Kempf, Reimann, & Luostarinen, 1996, p. 6)

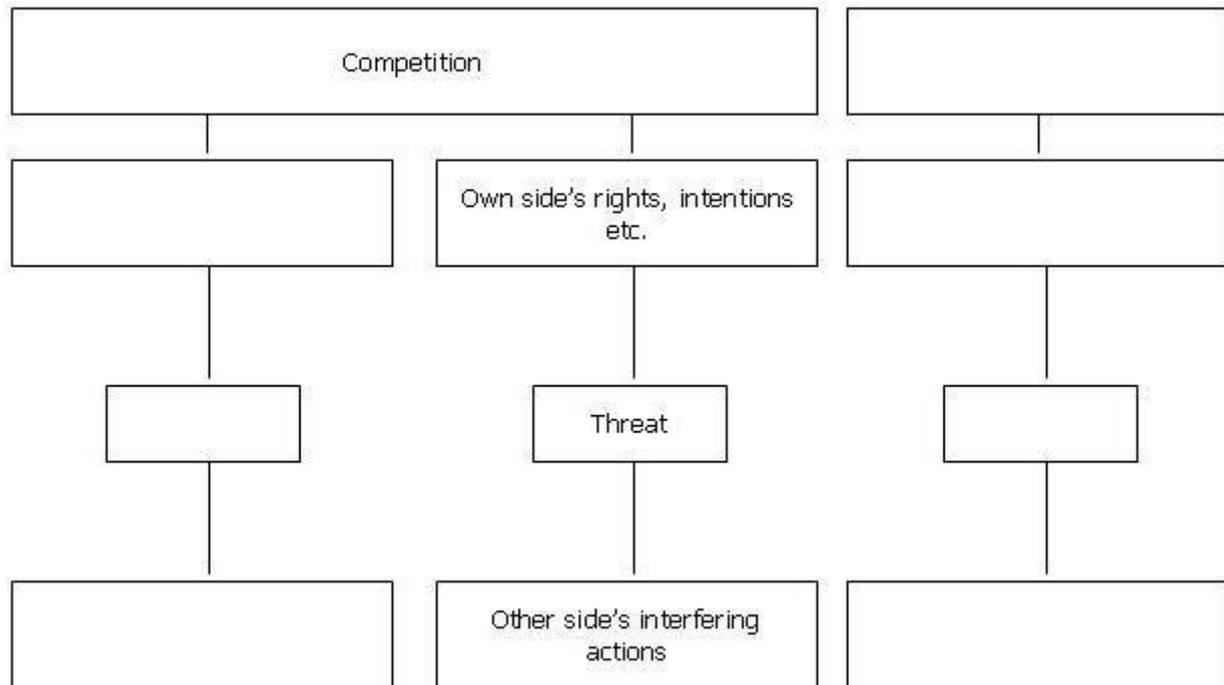


Figure 4: Competition (Kempf, Reimann, & Luostarinen, 1996, p. 6)

In the frame of this study, the two escalation stages of "perspective divergence" and "competition" are referred to as 'moderately escalated conflicts'. Already with them systematic misperceptions arise, conflict perception gradually constricts to mere perception of own interests, actions of the other party that could harm them, as well as connected own feelings of endangerment. Accordingly there occurs a certain alienation toward the other party. Nevertheless: The other conflict party has still not yet become an "enemy", the perception of the conflict is incomplete, but not yet distorted. With highly escalated conflicts that can be characterized as "struggle" or "war", to the contrary, conflict perception becomes increasingly distorted, and in reportage the choice of words also slides into demagoguery. Own rights are then no longer just named or emphasized, but are instead idealized, the opponent is no longer merely deprived of his rights, but is rather demonized, and struggle and war in themselves become the all-dominating leitmotif of reportage. With 'moderately escalated conflicts' it does not yet go that far, reportage is not yet a matter of 'war propaganda', but at first still 'only' of conflict reportage increasingly characterized by 'blind spots'. – This naturally makes identification harder, since it is always difficult to identify something that does not yet exist.

3. Role of media in marginally to moderately escalated conflicts

Given the definition of peace used here, it immediately becomes clear that media and their reportage on conflicts play an indispensable role in maintaining or respectively restoring peace: For media participate in bringing about all the specific peace conditions! And beyond this, they play an important role in the first, still moderate escalation stages, whether or not it is a matter of taking note of the conflict or respectively of systematic 'blind spots' that media may likewise be subject to – whereby they further 'fan the flames'.

The indispensable function of media in regard to the above discussed five conditions for freedom can be summarized as follows:

- *Peaceableness*: It is the media's job to inform the public, as well as others affected by a conflict, about, or respectively criticize, (planned) actions of conflict parties. Specifically actions that sacrifice the needs of others – especially as well actions suited to create 'accomplished facts' – cannot and should not be accepted unchallenged and affirmatively reported on by media. How this challenge is formulated is decisive for whether reportage of conflict heats it up or furthers cooperative conflict management;
- *Empathy*: It is the task of media to examine and in the given case criticize (planned) actions of all conflict parties in view of interests of all conflict participants and thereby also to obtain a hearing for those «who cannot themselves participate in negotiations», i.e. to report on persons, groups, institutions and their rights, goals or interests that have not been taken into account previously. Instead of

demonizing incriminated actions and/or acting person(s), media can and should ask for underlying and possible consensus-capable interests, starting from which a conflict solution can be worked out;

- *Freedom of opinion and press:* It is likewise above all the media that provide information on sanctions against freedom of thought and press – either as observer and reporter, or as being affected by censorship (attempts) themselves; they can also try to thematize their own «scissors in the head», to perceive and thematize self-censorship; and media report on interests of persons, groups, institutions affected by conflicts that cannot express themselves or are subjected to sanctions on freedom of thought, i.e., media can give neglected others a voice;
- *Honesty and openness:* Here above all it is media that (can and should) make known hidden, 'actual' interests, that can expose and (self-)critically examine tricks, power plays and 'secret diplomacy'; in addition, they should make heard the interests of all affected parties and ensure that «goals of all other negotiators [can become] known»;
- *Completeness:* Above all media have the task of ensuring that all previously unheard interests are taken into consideration, and become known by all participants and affected parties. In addition, they have the opportunity for critique in representing interests as 'unjustified', excessive, illegitimate, 'false', etc., and they can criticize representing interests as 'non-negotiable', 'red lines', etc.

Obviously, besides media, other institutions and groups participate in bringing about the described conditions for peace. For one thing, those directly participating in conflict speak with each other in the frame of negotiations; in democracy, for example, parliaments also perform an important control function in maintaining the named peace conditions; in the given case justice also plays a role. Nevertheless, without media and their critical reportage on conflict parties, their interests, goals and rights, as well as their actions, it is inconceivable that peace conditions will be brought about. Stated differently: Free and functioning reportage on conflicts is a basic condition for peace, and without media, peace is impossible.⁴

Thus it becomes possible to identify disturbances in the function of media as described by peace conditions and to recognize growing 'non-peace' – as early as possible – as well as to work – early – against further conflict escalation.

4. Escalation and de-escalation oriented conflict reportage in marginally to moderately escalated conflicts

At this point we introduce a major distinction: Conflict reportage that displays the same misperceptions that conflict parties are prone to in escalating conflicts is called «escalation oriented conflict reportage». Conflict reportage that instead addresses these misperceptions, fills in spreading «blind spots» and thereby again tries to complete conflict perception, is in contrast called «de-escalation oriented conflict reportage».

4.1 Escalation oriented reportage in marginally to moderately escalated conflicts

What then are characteristics of escalation oriented conflict reportage in marginally to moderately escalated conflicts? Starting from the above named peace conditions, clues to escalation-orientation can be inferred in marginally escalated conflicts⁵:

⁴ Conversely it is also the case: Peace is a precondition for unlimited and free conflict reportage, and only in peace is unrestricted peace journalism possible. For one thing, this is because especially in the absence of press freedom, peace journalism is hardly possible, since censorship measures include and intensify own misperceptions. For another thing, non-fulfillment of other peace conditions like 'empathy' and 'openness' leads to peace journalism being less and less accepted, or journalists themselves will also be subject to growing misperceptions and «censor themselves». Again all this should not be taken as justification to regard peace journalism as utopian or «impracticable» (cf. (Hanitzsch, 2007). Peace, as well as peace journalism in the sense described, are above all aim conceptions on the basis of which we can concretely and comprehensively determine 'what is still to be done'.

⁵ For reasons of linguistic simplicity, the variables and reporting patterns developed below are predominantly formulated for (only) two conflict parties: the "own side (party etc.)" and the "other / opposing side (party etc.), the opponent etc. ." Only occasionally it means at appropriate place also "all others" or similar. It should be remembered that there are almost always more than two conflicting parties in conflicts, i.e. only a certain part of a more complex conflict formation is considered here. Although the conflict is thereby reduced to a twofold constellation, it is still at liberty to analyze all other twofold constellations of a conflict accordingly. Furthermore, the wording "own page" is initially problematic in that conflicts are reported very often or even predominantly from an external perspective, so that conflict reporters are not assigned to a particular side or would reject to be. Nevertheless: If it is possible to prove (systematic) misperceptions and blind spots in reporting on a conflict, it can be said that the reporter takes over the perspective and thus also the misperceptions of a party - that he or she adopts these misperceptions. In this respect, the phrase "own side (party)" not only seems linguistically easier than alternative formulations, it also seems justified and appropriate.

- *Absence of peaceableness*: No or incomplete information on, lack of critique or trivialization of (planned or completed) actions intended to create 'accomplished facts';⁶
- *Lack of empathy*: No examination of planned or implemented actions affecting interests of others; no information on interests of not previously considered affected parties;⁷
- *Lack of freedom of opinion and press*: (obviously) Limited freedom of opinion and press, censorship, «scissors in the head», self-censorship;
- *Lack of honesty and openness*: Limited information on own interests, no (self-)critical questioning of own interests; lacking, limited or one-sided information on interests of all others;
- *Incompleteness*: No information on interest (groups) previously not yet heard or taken into consideration; lack of critique of representing interests (of others) as 'unjustified, excessive', etc.; lack of critique of representing (own) interests as 'non-negotiable', of 'red lines', etc.

Freedom of opinion and press holds a special place here. It is the nature of the matter that censorship can only be inferred indirectly from reportage. Nevertheless, we can expect that censorship or attempted censorship works in the direction suggested by the conflict-theoretical model: Above described systematic misperceptions are strengthened by censorship provisions, especially critique of own actions, representation of other side's interests, and representing their feelings of endangerment are even forbidden by their own side.

With further intensification to «moderately escalated conflict», i.e., a conflict on one of the two escalation stages «perspective divergence» or «competition», as described above, systematic 'blind spots' develop in conflict perception. Transferred to the media this means that reportage patterns arise characterized by systematic omission of specific aspects of conflict:

- In the «perspective divergence» phase we can expect that increasingly less or even nothing more will be reported on the other party's rights and intentions, their feelings of endangerment, as well as actions that interfere with these rights and interests.
- In the «competition» phase it can be expected that beyond this no more will be reported about mutual interests or goals, about mutual benefits from relationships, nor about previously existing mutual trust.

Put differently: Conflict reportage reveals more and more gaps. It is not necessarily characterized, however, by a targeted, propaganda-like design. Thus, in moderately escalated conflicts (at first) no 'demonization' of opponents' intentions can be expected, 'only' not-mentioning his intentions. Furthermore, there is (still) no active disputing that there are common interests, but 'only' 'no-longer-naming' these common interests, and we can (still) expect no idealization of own rights, but 'only' ignoring rights of others, etc.

In moderately escalated conflicts, reportage can thus also adopt a more 'neutral' tone, but depending on the escalation stage, it is characterized by omitting specific aspects of conflict. Only in later escalation phases (starting with the «struggle» phase, cf. Kempf, Reimann, & Luostarinen, 1996, p. 7ff.) does the tone shift, omitted aspects are replaced by one-sided, distorted, exaggerated reportage (e.g., emphasis on opponent's dangerous nature, idealization of own rights, etc.). This means that «escalation oriented conflict reportage» in moderately escalated conflicts is still far from battle cries or war propaganda – reportage remains objective but is, however, characterized by spreading 'blind spots', which is rather a more subtle process that at first is barely noticed by affected parties – media producers and consumers.

4.2. De-escalation oriented reportage in marginally to moderately escalated conflicts

De-escalation oriented reportage is in contrast characterized by efforts to maintain as much as possible the media functions implied by the 'peace conditions'. Concretely this means:

- *Peaceableness*: Information on, critique of or warnings against (planned) actions meant to bring about 'accomplished facts'; critique of trivializing the severity of similar own actions;
- *Empathy*: Questioning and criticizing own (planned) actions in view of others' interests; giving a hearing to interests of affected persons and groups that were previously ignored;
- *Freedom of opinion and press*: Inform others on actions to sanction or censor freedom of opinion and press; perceive and thematize own «scissors in the head», self-censorship;
- *Honesty and openness*: make public and (self-)critically question own interests (insofar as they are not publicly known); give a hearing to interests of all other affected parties;
- *Completeness*: Inform on interests not heard or taken into consideration; critique of representing (others') interests as 'unjustified', exaggerated, illegitimate, 'false'; critique of representing (own) interests as 'non-negotiable', of 'red lines', etc.

⁶ If to the contrary own actions of such types are idealized or glorified, then we should start there and examine whether conflict is already more than just marginally escalated.

⁷ If to the contrary interests of others are clearly devalued, or the opponent himself is devalued to the point of demonization, then we can – as above – assume that conflict is more than marginally escalated.

Not only marginally but also moderately escalated conflicts are characterized by typical blind spots. From this the effort arises to complete the unfinished picture of conflict by thematizing and filling developing gaps in conflict perception. In order to prevent their being filled by escalation prone misperceptions, de-escalation oriented conflict reportage in the phase of 'perspective divergence' is characterized by – conscious and targeted – reportage on:

- *Rights and intentions:* What are others' interests, rights, intentions, etc.?
- *Actions:* Which (own) actions obstruct these rights?
- *Emotions:* Do others feel threatened? By what do they feel threatened? To what extent do feelings of being threatened result from own actions?

De-escalation oriented conflict reportage in the 'competition' phase will likewise try to fill these gaps and report on rights of others, own actions that interfere with these rights, as well as on others' feelings of being threatened. Beyond this it is characterized by – conscious and targeted – reportage on:

- *Rights and intentions:* What common rights, intentions, goals exist?
- *Actions:* What are common benefits from a mutual relationship?
- *Emotions:* What threatens common trust? How can mutual trust be restored?

Escalation stage		Characteristics	De-escalation oriented Reportage
Peace		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peaceableness • Empathy • Freedom of opinion and press • Honesty and openness • Completeness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace journalism
Marginally escalated conflicts		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Random misperceptions • Unsystematic limitations of the above named characteristics • Developing 'blind spots' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Correcting' misperceptions • Illuminating 'blind spots' • Information on lacking aspects • Critique and self-critique
Moderately escalated conflicts	Perspective divergence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning systematic perceptual distortion • Lacking information on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • others' interests, • own actions threatening them, • as well as feelings arising from them of being threatened 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic covering neglected aspects • Targeted information on others' interests, own actions, feelings of being threatened • Targeted (self-)critique
	Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded systematic perceptual distortion • «Perspective divergence plus»: Beyond perspective divergence lacking information on <i>common</i> interests, benefits, trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematically covering neglected aspects • Targeted information on <i>common</i> interests, benefits, trust • Targeted (Self-)critique

Table 1: Overview of escalation stages, their characteristics and de-escalation oriented conflict reportage adapted to escalation stages

In order to fill these 'blind spots' consciously and purposefully with appropriate reportage, they must first be perceived (cf. Tab. 1). From peace journalists this demands heightened sensitivity to gaps in conflict perception: for one thing, sensitivity to (often gradually and imperceptibly!) developing gaps in reportage by (mainstream-)media on conflict; for another, sensitivity to (often gradually and imperceptibly!) developing own misperceptions, as well as those of persons directly or indirectly affected by conflict. In this sense, further discussions should be helpful: Theoretical foundations developed up to the present are operationalized, complete and differentiated perception of conflict is supported by a comprehensible variable system, as well as reportage patterns based on it. These should make it possible to purposefully ask the right questions at an early conflict stage.

5. Operationalization

5.1 Variables

The starting point of the variable system to be developed is the above described conflict constellation. This represents the complete representation of a conflict, that is it contains all relevant aspects, like rights and interests of both conflict parties, their actions as well as their emotions. As will be shown below, it thereby also covers – up to the «freedom of opinion and press» condition – the above discussed defining characteristics for peace and is therefore suitable as a starting point to determine escalation or respective de-escalation orientation, or respectively to define peace and non-peace.

The conflict constellation can be represented as a table, with the two axes «Conflict aspects» (rights, actions and emotions) and «Assignment to conflict parties» (to own party, to other parties, as well as assignment to both sides). A check in this table would mean that the relevant aspect is covered by reportage (cf. Tab. 2):

	1. Rights	2. Actions	3. Emotions
1. Own	✓	✓	✓
2. Other's	✓	✓	✓
3. Common	✓	✓	✓

Table 2: Conflict constellation in tabular presentation

Reportage aspects can be described as follows:

- *1.1 Own rights:* Own rights and interests in conflict are represented; they are also self-critically examined, insofar as they conflict with rights and interests of another party;
- *1.2 Rights of other party or parties:* reports are made on rights and interests of other conflict party or parties; these are also critically represented, insofar as they conflict with own rights and interests;
- *1.3 Common rights:* Common rights and interests are named; critically examined are threats to common rights, possible dangers for common rights, possible shifts and developing inequalities within common interest;
- *2.1 Own actions:* Own actions with regard to rights and interests of another party are represented; insofar as they conflict with rights and interests of another party, they are self-critically examined;
- *2.2 Actions of other party (parties):* Actions of other conflict party (parties) with regard to own rights and interests are represented; insofar as they conflict with own rights and interests, they are critically examined;
- *2.3 Common benefits:* Previously existing mutual benefits from relationships are named; critically examined are dangers to shared benefits by own actions or another party's actions, shifts or developing inequalities;
- *3.1 Own emotions:* Own feelings of being threatened are named, as objectively as possible, neither dramatized nor relativized; exaggerated threat scenarios as well as denials of own feelings of threat or other relativizations are self-critically examined;
- *3.2 Emotions of other party (parties):* Feelings of being threatened held by other conflict party (parties) are named, as objectively as possible, neither dramatized nor relativized; critically examined are exaggerated threat scenarios and also denials of these threat feelings or other relativizations;
- *3.3 Common emotions:* Previously existing mutual trust is pointed out; critically examined are spreading mistrust of the common relationship or doubts about existing mutual trust.

All aspects of reportage taken together accordingly constitute two stages of reportage: Naming as well as questioning and critique.

- a. *Naming:* Rights, actions, emotions of various sides are named, described, mentioned, and appear in reportage. In escalation stages marked by misperceptions, already existing 'blind spots' are dealt with simply by naming specific rights, actions or emotions.
- b. *Putting in question and criticizing:* We can only question and criticize a state of affairs with the aid of a suitable standard against which to measure it. The standards with which we can measure conflicts and individual states of affairs, modes of behavior or utterances in the course of conflicts are *size and type of deviation from peace*. For peace, the above described conditions hold, which are represented here by the conflict constellation. From this it follows: in conflicts, rights, interests, actions and emotions should (especially) never be set absolutely, but rather should always be set in relation to other parties and their rights, interests, actions and emotions. That means that every naming of a right or interest, every description of an action or emotion – for example by citing a press declaration on the rights of one's own side, through representation of other party's actions, through interviews with representatives of own or also the other side that feels threatened – should be accompanied by a measurement of respective consequences for relations to another conflict party, their rights, interests, actions and emotions.

Except for the aspect of media and press freedom, which cannot be covered using this scheme, because it involves a meta-aspect of reportage (see below), with the aid of these variables we can also describe media functions derived from 'peace conditions' (cf. Tab. 3):

Peace condition:	Function of media:	Included in reportage aspects:
Peaceableness	Inform or respectively criticize (planned) actions of conflict parties able to create 'accomplished facts'	2.1 Own actions: Own actions are represented with regard to rights and interests of other parties; insofar as they conflict with rights and interests of other parties, they are self-critically examined;
Empathy	Own (planned) actions are examined in regard to interests of others; previously not considered interests are given a hearing;	2.1 Own actions: Own actions with regard to rights and interests of other parties are represented; insofar as they conflict with rights and interests of other parties, they are self-critically examined; 1.2 Rights of other party or parties: Reports are made on rights and interests of another conflict party or parties; these are also critically represented insofar as they conflict with own rights and interests (or rights or respectively interests of third parties);
Honesty and openness	Own interests are made public (insofar as they are not known) and (self-)critically examined; interests of all other affected parties are given a hearing;	1.1 Own rights: Own rights and interests in a conflict are represented; they are also self-critically examined, insofar as they conflict with rights and interests of other parties in the conflict; 1.2 Rights of other party or parties: reports are made on rights and interests of another conflict party or parties; these are also critically represented insofar as they conflict with own rights and interests (or third parties' rights or respectively interests);
Completeness	Inform on interests previously not yet heard or considered; critique representation of interests as 'unjustified', exaggerated, illegitimate, 'false'; critique of interest representations as 'non-negotiable', 'red lines', etc.	1.1 Own rights: Own rights and interests in conflict are represented; they are also self-critically represented, insofar as they conflict with rights and interests of other conflict parties; 1.2 Reports are made on rights and interests of other conflict party or parties; these are also critically represented, insofar as they conflict with own rights and interests (or third parties' rights or respectively interests); 1.3 Common rights: Common rights and interests are named; critically examined are dangers to common rights, possible shifts and existing inequalities within common interest situation.

Table 3: Peace conditions, relevant function of media and realization in aspects of reportage

All analytical means are thus available to identify and describe de-escalation and escalation oriented reportage in marginally to moderately escalated conflicts, because: The above described conflict reportage aspects (1.1 to 3.3) are suitable not only for analyzing media functions grounded in peace conditions (except for freedom of opinion and press) but also for analyzing rising systematic misperceptions in moderately escalated conflicts.

5.2 Reportage patterns

Absence of conflict reportage aspects can be represented as a pattern with the aid of the above introduced table, where certain aspects are lacking in the conflict reportage matrix, while others are present. Of the many theoretically possible reportage patterns, certain ones correspond with the above-named peace conditions, as well as with phases described as systematic misperceptions, "perspective divergence" and "competition". These patterns are introduced below.

- *Reportage pattern 'lack of peaceableness'*: If (in one or several texts) all variables are covered, but own actions alone are not named or critically examined which conflict with rights or interests of another conflict party, we can call this lack of peaceableness, in the sense of 'peace conditions' (cf. Tab. 4).

	Rights	Actions	Emotions
Own	✓	- *	✓
Other's	✓	✓	✓
Common	✓	✓	✓

Table 4: Reportage pattern, lack of peaceableness' (*= lacking)

- *Reportage pattern 'lack of empathy'*: If all variables are covered, but alone own (planned) actions with effects on rights and interests of others are not examined, and reports are likewise not made on others' rights and interests, we can call this 'lack of empathy' in the sense of the 'peace conditions' (cf. Tab. 5)

	Rights	Actions	Emotions
Own	✓	-	✓
Other's	-	✓	✓
Common	✓	✓	✓

Table 5: Reportage pattern 'lack of empathy'

- *Reportage pattern 'lack of honesty'*: If all variables are covered, but own rights and interests in a conflict are not represented or are concealed, we can call this 'lack of honesty' (cf. Tab. 6).

	Rights	Actions	Emotions
Own	-	✓	✓
Other's	✓	✓	✓
Common	✓	✓	✓

Table 6: Reportage pattern 'lack of honesty'

- *Reportage pattern 'lack of openness'*: If all variables are covered, but rights and interests of other conflict party or parties are not (sufficiently) reported on, we can call this 'lack of openness'(cf. Tab. 7).

	Rights	Actions	Emotions
Own	✓	✓	✓
Other's	-	✓	✓
Common	✓	✓	✓

Table 7: Reportage pattern 'lack of openness'

- *Reportage pattern 'incompleteness'*: If all variables are covered, but own rights and interests in a conflict are not at all or only insufficiently represented or are veiled, in addition, rights and interests of the other conflict party or parties are not represented or are insufficiently reported on, and if common rights and interests are not named, we can call this 'incompleteness' (cf. Tab. 8).

	Rights	Actions	Emotions
Own	-	✓	✓
Other's	-	✓	✓
Common	-	✓	✓

Table 8: Reportage pattern 'incompleteness'

- *Reportage pattern 'Perspective divergence'*: If rights of other conflict party or parties are not named, own actions in conflict with these rights are likewise unexamined, and as well threat feelings of other party or parties are likewise blocked out or respectively not mentioned, we can call this 'perspective divergence' (cf. Tab. 9).

	Rights	Actions	Emotions
Own	✓	-	✓
Other's	-	✓	-
Common	✓	✓	✓

Table 9: Reportage pattern 'Perspective divergence'

- *Reportage pattern 'competition':* We can speak of 'competition' as a reportage pattern if together with the pattern of 'perspective divergence' nothing is reported on common rights and interests, common benefits and mutual trust (cf. Tab. 10).

	Rights	Actions	Emotions
Own	✓	-	✓
Other's	-	✓	-
Common	-	-	-

Table 10: Reportage pattern 'competition'

As a unit of analysis we can basically draw on every text about a conflict, and – since the method serves early recognition of developing conflicts – especially on texts on suspected or less intensive conflicts. In analysis, the type of text plays an especially important role: We can hardly expect that a short report in a daily newspaper news section will, for example, also illuminate emotions of conflict parties; by contrast, in the frame of a commentary or feature article, a detailed analysis or comprehensive overview of a developing conflict, such complete reportage is more possible – not least of all based on the extent of available text – and therefore also more to be expected.

Lack of one or more reportage aspects therefore does not automatically mean we should evaluate a text as «escalation oriented», but rather we must first consider the type of text or at least text length. If it is a matter of a very short article or respectively a short report, then it is meaningful to extend the analysis to further texts of the same medium, for example, by including all texts of a news medium on a specific conflict and in a specific time period in the analysis. Thus it is, e.g., possible that all short reports of a newspaper and a conflict taken together cover all the above described conflict reportage aspects and therefore only when taken together also produce a complete picture of a conflict or respectively a complete «conflict constellation». In their totality these texts mutually complement each other and can thus be understood as «de-escalation oriented reportage».

5.3 Freedom of opinion and press

As noted, freedom of opinion and press has a special place, it is a meta-aspect of reportage. Often the public does not at all or not officially learn anything of limitations on freedom of opinion and press, and these often cannot be inferred directly from reportage. To be sure, occasionally freedom of opinion and press are publicly restricted, thus in the example of Turkey, where at present journalists are arrested when they try to examine both sides of the Turkish-Kurdish conflict. In these cases knowledge of censorship measures must obviously be included in analyses of conflict reportage.

Much more often, however, censorship is practiced covertly, is veiled or takes the form of anticipatory self-censorship of media producers based on feared or actually threatened sanctions. In this case, censorship measures cannot be inferred, or only indirectly, from affected reportage. As the purpose of censorship is always to strengthen one's own position, censorship measures – open or concealed – always work in the direction of or respectively strengthen misperceptions that arise anyway due to conflict dynamics. Thus, we can expect censorship measures to call for emphasizing own rights and interests, keeping silent about or disputing rights of others, justifying own actions and demonizing others' actions, etc.

Stated differently: Censorship measures go hand in hand with the development of systematic misperceptions in conflicts. They ultimately produce the same effects, namely systematic absence of specific aspects in reportage. While misperceptions arising through conflict dynamics can also be called 'self-censorship', concealed or open censorship measures can be interpreted as 'forced misperception'. And the more 'systematically' specific aspects are emphasized or kept secret, the more we can suspect that (covert or open) censorship measures are also being taken.

Besides censorship there are many other, similarly located phenomena and strategies oriented toward strengthening one's own position: Sometimes conflicts 'are provoked' to distract from other (e.g. internal political)

conflicts, 'fake news' is spread to destabilize other conflict parties or foment internal dissension, systems of domination are above all built upon lies, etc. ... According to the model proposed here, all these cases should be dealt with by 'putting everything on the table', uncovering possible 'underlying', actually or respectively veiled interests and making them public, throwing light on blind spots.

Another question is how reporters should deal with them, how far they should or can go in uncovering issues. The proposed model also offers approaches to answering this question: As a (peace-)journalist one must be aware that uncovering interests and constructively filling blind spots does not occur in a 'vacuum', but rather is part of a societal discourse increasingly characterized by misperceptions and thereby resistance. As reporter I find myself – figuratively speaking – more and more confronted with the dilemma that to heal (a conflict) I must put my finger on the wound. Or, to use a different metaphor: Whoever has lived long in the dark cannot stand the light. A patent solution for this sort of dilemma does not exist, but much is already gained when one becomes aware of this.

6. Summary and prospects

The present article tries to do justice to Kempf's call for understanding peace journalism not as the mere opposite to war propaganda, but rather as a process where the type of reportage reacts to the respective state of conflict escalation or is respectively adjusted to it: "... if peace journalism aims to reduce the escalation prone bias of conventional journalism and give peace a chance, it must be conceptualized not simply as the opposite of war journalism. It should also be conceived as a *process* that gradually reduces the escalation prone bias of conventional conflict coverage." (Kempf, 2017). This means: "... the type of discourse in which a peace journalist may sensibly engage should be adapted to the present state of conflict" (loc. cit.). For the marginally to moderately escalated conflicts discussed here, this calls for a sensitive set of tools that make it possible to recognize even minor deviations from a state of peace, which is defined with the aid of a range of 'peace conditions' as de-escalation oriented ways of dealing with conflicts.

These deviations manifest themselves in marginally escalated conflicts as at first sporadic violations of one of the five peace conditions of peaceableness, empathy, freedom of opinion and press, honesty and openness, as well as completeness. With further intensification to moderately escalated conflict, systematic misperceptions then arise: In the 'perspective divergence' phase, there is no further consideration of other conflict party or parties' rights, own actions conflicting with these rights, or other parties' feelings of being threatened. In the 'competition' phase, beyond this there is no more recognition of mutually beneficial 'achievements' like common rights and interests, common benefits in relationships, or previously existing mutual trust. As conflict escalates, increasingly specific 'blind spots' thus arise in perceiving the conflict constellation and especially in perceiving the other party – the 'opponent' –, his rights and intentions, his actions and emotions.

De-escalation oriented reportage must identify these 'blind spots' and counter them with complete conflict perception. The identification of blind spots requires comparison with a standard that here is given in 'peace conditions' and the complete 'conflict constellation'. Only before this background can we determine what is lacking in the representation of a conflict. Especially to prevent further 'blind spots' and systematically developing perceptual distortions, it is essential that as early as possible we fill these 'blind spots' with good reportage, and purposefully report on aspects lacking in (mainstream-)reportage.

For the planned second part of this article, which is intended to enrich the present model, variables and reportage patterns with empirical material, we face the methodical problem of finding something that 'does not exist', 'blind spots' in reportage. Basically there are two promising directions to search in:

- Analysis of reportage on conflicts that usually or regularly do not go beyond 'marginal to moderate escalation', for example, reportage on tariff or wage negotiations between employer associations and unions; such conflicts take place in a so socially integrated and internal way that escalation beyond 'competition' seldom occurs; for various reasons, possible examples of de-escalation oriented reportage can be expected here (conflict is relatively 'transparent', there are two specific conflict parties, perceptions of both sides' rights is so-to-speak part of the ritualized 'game', etc.);
- Analysis of reportage in the early phase of conflicts which later escalate to 'struggles' or 'wars'; conceivable are here, e.g., reportage on conflict between Ukraine and Russia, before it escalated to war, reportage on the early phase of independence movements such as, e.g., that in Catalonia, or the early phase of 'Brexit'; to be expected here are examples of escalation orientation in the sense of 'blind spots'; possibly texts can be found that contain no reportage or only incomplete reportage on rights and interests of one side ('perspective divergence'), or where some actions are not illuminated under the aspect that they could present 'accomplished facts' ('lack of peaceableness'), thus, e.g., in reportage on the Ukraine-European Union Association Agreement, which would have confronted Russia with accomplished facts and affected its rights, interests and emotions.

Especially these last current and topical examples show that work on a model of de-escalation oriented journalism in marginally to moderately escalated conflicts can be highly rewarding, since it could be further developed into an early warning system before incipient conflicts actually break out.

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