

Unveiling the Nexus of conflict, communication and media

As I begin this foreword that I wrote for the ‘media, communication and conflict’ contents we have chosen for the 2023 December special issue of ConnectST Journal, I note that digitalization, which arises from the association of media with digital technology and becomes increasingly dangerous, is alarming and disruptive to world peace within the framework of manipulative news and misinformation spread.

Especially in uncertain, tense and risky periods, which we can call ‘chaos,’ especially if there is a war situation, media manipulations, news distortions such as agent provocation, propaganda, disinformation, fake news, misinformation, reconstructed and manipulated news and ways of producing news within the framework of conflicts of interest. The increase in all types of media is known to all of us. However, it is the product of the human mind that people get confused in the ‘information pollution’ in media environments. The manipulations created by media tools that cannot keep up with the pace, especially social media platforms, clearly reveal the comprehensive impact of the media as the 5th power on geopolitical landscapes and conflicts related.

The rapid dissemination of reconstructed information or fake news provided by the internet and social media platforms such as *Instagram*, *X* (previously *Twitter*), *Facebook*, and *YouTube*, provide a multimedia environment. Significantly, it gives an obstructive nature to the ‘right to get information and access accurate information’ in a ‘global context.’

It is known to everyone that the emergence of social media has added new dimensions to the manipulation games of the media, allowing the instant global spread of fake, manipulated news or images, information and ideologies.

In this special issue of our journal, the studies addressed as ‘communication, media and conflict’ tried to academically reveal the communication and media problems on these issues within the framework of their causes, and ideological and geographical impact factors. Additionally, there are pure facts that are merely observed from afar, without even trying to be a mediator or conciliator, to intervene in line with geopolitical, ideological, historical or racial interests, or to provide an environment to eliminate conflict. In war situations that occur under the shadow of conflicts of interest, we have mentioned, innocent civilians, and even worse, babies, children and young people lose their lives! Civilians also lose their lives under the bombed buildings such as hospitals and schools that should not have been targeted at all; For a ‘universal superior power,’ these inhumane and immoral actions are ignored by both the perpetrators and other spectator countries. Unfortunately, no leader says ‘stop!’ to these injustices in these environments of multiple conflicts of interest, as in the examples we see many times in the Russia-Ukraine, Palestine-Israel, and Azerbaijan-Armenia wars!

In addition to these physical realities, conflict environments naturally lead to social media environments being considered as the production centres of ‘news manipulation, fake news, reconstructed realities and misinformation, disinformation’ due to their strategic secrecy and essentiality.

As we navigate this complex terrain, it becomes inevitable to grasp the broader impacts of media manipulations on the conduct and outcomes of wars. It is a fact that the blurred lines between truth and lies, reality and perception, pose serious challenges not only to the accuracy of reporting but also to the foundations of democratic societies. The consequences, unfortunately, continue to negatively affect not only innocent civilians but also diplomatic relations, international interventions and peace expectations going beyond the conflict areas.

As we move forward in this field, it seems essential to approach the issue with critical thinking. It is also remarkable to remind ourselves of the ethical responsibilities that media practitioners, representatives, politicians, and citizens should carry. Through these analyses, the main target of us here is that media communicators should create ‘a well-informed media literate’ and ‘media-competent public’ equipped with the knowledge to distinguish the manipulations constructed in the media environments, especially in times of conflict.

“An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind.” Mahatma Gandhi

With the hope of having war-free days and happy children in 2024 all around the world.

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