

Diaspora Journalism and Conflicts in Transnational Media Circuits

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In recent years, there has been a large corpus of studies that have explored the subject of diaspora as a key feature of our contemporary globalising world (see for example, Bauböck and Faist 2010; Quayson and Daswani 2013; Vertovec and Cohen 1999). Many of these studies have tended to focus on conceptual issues and processes about the phenomenon. However, Smith (2007) has observed that research attention on the specific role of diaspora in conflicts has been limited, arguing that such attention has become pressing given the capacity that some of these diasporic groups have for procuring both tangible and intangible resources that can be channelled to supporting armed conflict situations. With reference to conflicts on the African continent, Mohamoud (2006) has also observed that the link between the activities of African diasporas and the dynamics of conflicts in their homeland have often been overlooked in research and policy initiatives. In a similar vein, Bercovitch (2007) noted that the diasporic processes involved in identity maintenance and belonging, and how these processes impact on the structure of conflicts, have received scant research attention from scholars.

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One such resource is the journalistic capacity of diaspora persons or groups to circulate ideas, values and ideology in both the regular and emerging forms of news and information provisions that can have quite tangible outcomes in a theatre of conflict. The pursuance of universal human rights, social justice and citizenship rights through various forms of cultural expressions is a central objective of many diaspora communities and is often the very motive that leads to the formation of diaspora networks. A focus on diaspora journalistic practices particularly in the circuits of online networked communication is essential for understanding their role in social conflicts and for exploring the normative, empirical, and policy issues that diaspora intervention can offer.

For instance, social media and other networked communication types have become the key instruments by which diaspora communities establish and maintain a relationship with members across time and space. According to Monge and Contractor (2003), this network is built around material and symbolic flows that link people and objects both locally and globally without regard for traditional national, institutional, or organizational boundaries. Similarly, Ellis (2006) has explored the ways that diasporic relations operating as communication networks are strongly implicated in the proliferation of ethno-political conflicts that are energised by the rapidity and intensity afforded by networked communication.

This chapter aims to enunciate the concept of diaspora journalism as an emergent and distinguishable set of practices and activities that have significant implications for understanding the changing forms of journalism in general and the dynamics of conflict and peace-making specifically. The chapter will engage with the phenomenon of diaspora journalism as an overlooked but important channel of diaspora activism and platform for diasporic agency, particularly in the context of transnational socio-political participation in conflict situations. The chapter starts with an attempt to enunciate a conceptualisation of the term “diaspora journalism” and underpinning this emerging practice with the associated notions of diasporic consciousness and diasporic identity. The chapter then sets the journalistic practices of diaspora within the context of conflicts as one of the key elements of the global crises (Cottle 2009) that has been plaguing the world in recent years. Finally, the chapter draws on Bercovitch’s work on the structure of conflicts to highlight the value of this framework for assessing the role of diasporas in conflicts.

GLOBALISATION, CONFLICTS AND DIASPORA

A sobering fact of our contemporary world is that it is riven with conflicts. The stark message from a number of key reports about the state of our modern world is that it is becoming a less peaceful world. According to the Institute for Economics and Peace Global Peace Index (GPI) 2016, only 10 of the 195 countries in the world are free of conflict of one sort or the other. The GPI, which is now in its tenth edition, is provided by the think tank the Institute for Economics and Peace, the world's leading measure of national peacefulness, using 23 metrics. This latest annual survey of peace and conflicts around the world shows some remarkable highlights worth noting here. Overall, the tenth GPI report shows there is a growing disparity in the global levels of peacefulness between the most peaceful and least peaceful countries in the world. The report indicated that not only did the world become less peaceful in 2015 than it was in the previous year but also the drop in the peacefulness index was a reinforcement of an ongoing trend in the deterioration in world peacefulness over the past 10 years spurred on by growing terrorism and political instability around the globe. The Institute for Economics and Peace GPI report of 2015 noted that the economic impact of violence on the global economy amounted to \$13.6 trillion, equivalent to 13.3% of the gross world product, and that the economic impact of violence over the decade came to a staggering \$137 trillion. In the same period the numbers of refugees and displaced persons had increased sharply to around 60 million people between 2007 and 2016 (<http://www.visionofhumanity.org/#page/indexes/global-peace-index/2015>).

Also, the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) produced an annual survey of global conflicts titled the Armed Conflict Database in which the latest report for (2014) showed that there has been a dramatic rise in the casualties of war in the past few years. The report showed that the number of people who have died from wars rose from 56,000 in 2008 to 180,000 in 2014. Furthermore, it showed that over 50 million people became refugees in 2013, more than at any other time since World War II, and that there were 180,000 conflict fatalities in 2014, dropping slightly to 167,000 in 2015. The IISS report noted that most of the gruesome statistics emanate from civil or internecine wars that were often instigated as much by racial, ethnic, or religious hostilities as by ideological zeal. Moreover, the report observed

that most victims of such conflicts were usually civilians, with a figure that stands at around 75%, noting that such high civilian casualties in conflicts is a distinguishing feature of modern conflicts (<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/>). Whilst no one is suggesting that the activities of diasporans is largely responsible for this escalating violence and conflicts around the world this picture of the deplorable state of deteriorating peacefulness around the world offers a pertinent backdrop to the subject under exploration in this chapter and underlines the urgency and salience of devoting more effort to researching the journalism of diaspora.

As many of the chapters in this volume will show, Africa has been particularly over-represented in the stakes of conflict-ridden continents. Cilliers (2015) has observed that Africa and the Middle East have the unfortunate record of being the two global regions with the highest levels of armed conflict burden when measured against population size. For instance, Cilliers noted that in 1989 while Africa's population stood at 12% of total world population it had 39% of the world's armed-conflict occurrences. These statistics rose steeply such that by 2014, Africa had 16% of the world's population and a staggering 52% of the armed-conflict burden. These two regions also have a high level of 'non-state conflict', a phenomenon that refers to (armed) conflicts that transpire between various armed groups, such as clans, ethnicities, communities, rather than conflict against a government. Africa has the highest number of non-state conflicts and associated fatalities than any other region, according to a UCDP report (Uppsala Conflict Data Program 2014). Furthermore, drawing on data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), Cilliers identified the nine countries that had the highest number of fatalities in Africa in 2014 as Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia, Sudan, Central African Republic, Libya, Egypt, Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The diverse causes that lead to conflicts raise the possibilities of diaspora involvement in many of these conflicts both as peacemakers and as warmongers. Moreover, the increased mediated communication environment of contemporary society that enables both individuals and groups with a cause to utilise various forms of communication media to voice their concerns and propagate their cause makes a research focus on the journalistic practices of diasporas in conflict situations a timely intervention.

DIASPORA JOURNALISM, AND THE REIMAGINING AND TRANSFORMATION OF SPACES OF IDENTITY AND BORDERS

As the pace of globalisation continues to gather momentum to embrace every facet of contemporary social life, significant transformations are happening, facilitated by the deployment of information and communication technologies, which challenge long-held notions about the sanctity of our identities, national boundaries and memberships of various collective entities as markers of social and cultural distinctiveness. Much has been written about the processes of globalisation and the role of communication media in the restructuring of the social and cultural spaces in which individuals, groups, and communities of people are encountering these transformations, as well as how the very meanings of who we are and which space(s) we ‘belong’ to are being renegotiated in the unrelenting onslaught of the global nebula (see, for instance, Bailey et al. 2007: 1.7; Flew 2007; Hamelink 2015: 5; Thussu 2010: 369–452). An important element in this transformation of place and space is the rise in global migration and displacement of large numbers of people and the associated phenomenon of diaspora formations.

Diasporic networks are important channels of transborder and transnational flows of communication and cultural practices that play a crucial but understudied role in the ongoing transformation of contemporary national and cultural space. Whereas some attention has now begun to be paid to the media of diaspora in recent years, not enough has been focussed specifically on the journalistic practice(s) that take place within and amongst diaspora communities, which play a key role in the ways that diaspora groups are building communities, negotiating their identities, and intervening in the socio-political processes of their host and home countries (see, for example, Bailey et al. 2007; Karim 2003; Sinclair and Cunningham 2001). Journalism practices of diaspora communities tend to be lumped together with, and subsumed under, the general category of alternative media/journalism. Alternative media, however, is itself a problematic term not least because of the lack of precision about the meaning of the concept in relation to the very broad kinds of practices that it is often used to signify.

We contend here that the term ‘diaspora journalism’ is worth recognising as a distinctive category of communication and human relations within the realities of contemporary transnational and transcultural global relations. While not seeking to essentialise this kind of journalism

practice, we argue that uncoupling diaspora journalism from the broad category of the term ‘alternative journalism’, on the one hand, and the term ‘diaspora media’, on the other, is necessary in order to gain a better analytical insight into this phenomenon, and the ways that it connects with wider transnational social and cultural issues of our time. We contend further that diaspora journalism is an important lens through which one can view and understand key processes of contemporary society, such as conflicts, deterritorialised national politics, remote citizenship, the dynamics of re-territorialised identity constructions, as well as the ways in which the nature of journalism itself is changing.

WHY DIASPORA JOURNALISM?

Some attempts have been made in recent years to document the role of communication media in diaspora formations and the broad range of their applications by people within diaspora communities (Notable examples in this enterprise include Brinkerhoff 2009; Georgio 2006; Karim 2003; Naficy 1993, 2009; Sinclair and Cunningham 2001, 2004; and Thussu 2007). There is a broad consensus amongst commentators that communication media and media technologies play a central role in the processes of diasporic formations and the attendant processes of identity reproduction and cultural reinvention among various diaspora communities. There is equally a broad consensus that what is often referred to as ‘the media of diaspora’ covers a quite diverse range of practices, organizational structures, production strategies and durability of operation.

The ‘media of diaspora’ has been the umbrella term favoured by scholars and commentators when exploring the interconnections between mediated communication and diaspora activities, taking in one stroke the practices of production, dissemination and consumption, as well as the different modes, genre and channels of communication that diaspora media engagements encompass. These studies have yielded much useful and interesting insights on an understudied area of contemporary global communication, but few have attempted to recognise or articulate specifically the concept of ‘diaspora journalism’. By diaspora journalism we refer specifically to the collective, organised, sometimes individual, sporadic practices, of diasporic subjects to purposively engage in activities of news and information gathering and dissemination as a tool for self-expression and for engaging in the socio-political

and cultural interests of self, and of community, in the contexts of their homeland and host country.

Diaspora journalism is driven by a diasporic consciousness that is underpinned by an awareness of the supranational and liminal positionality of the self and the community. This conceptualisation of diaspora journalism underscores a proactive and participatory feature of contemporary diasporic sensibility, one that invites a critical inspection of the more politically active and deliberative aspects of diaspora self-expression, identity construction and cultural affiliations that relate specifically to the production and circulation of news, information, ideas and value judgments about diasporic experiences and preferences in host country and homeland.

An exploration of the media activities of diasporans that encroach into or overlap the provenance of what is commonly understood as the core practices of traditional, mainstream, journalism profession is a pertinent and urgent matter with regards to understanding the role of diasporas in conflicts. This is the case for at least two reasons. The first is that although scholarly attention to the subject of diaspora media has been getting some traction over the past few years, there is still a tendency to engage with this subject on the terms of mainstream journalism discourse vis-à-vis matters of professionalism, ethics, core values and organisational structure. However, much evidence of diaspora engagement with journalistic practices indicate that many of these terms are of secondary or little concern for diasporans who mostly are taking the opportunities afforded by the new media ecology to enact their human rights and/or citizenship desires and aspirations to initiate or partake in communication activities that encroach upon the purview of traditional journalism, usurping the public service claims and role exclusivity upon which its professional status are established and justified.

Usurpation might not even be a right choice of word here if we take this back to more fundamental questions about what journalism is and who a journalist is, in light of the major transformations currently impacting the profession/industry and shifting the boundaries of recognition. As such, our understanding of the idea of diaspora journalism needs to be more catholic and less bounded by the familiar artefact and paraphernalia of mainstream journalism if we are not to elide the many practices that may serve the tangible and influential role of information transmission and channels of influence in the processes and dynamics of conflict and peace-making around the world.

Secondly, whereas it is the case that more established diaspora formations do have media set-ups that replicate the organizational and professional semblance of their mainstream counterparts, by far the majority of diaspora media activities fall outside of this category and belong in the more informal sector. This, however, does not make these diaspora journalistic practices that occupy the interstices of the communication landscape any less potent in their role as channels of information and socio-political influence with regards to conflict and peace-making processes.

As such, and following Georgiou's (2013: 86) orientation in exploring diaspora media, this chapter takes the position that considerations about diaspora journalism ought to be set within the broader context of everyday life, which includes not only instances of the more organised forms of journalism but also, crucially, the nascent ventures in social and interpersonal communication technologies and practices that include the Internet and mobile communications systems. Exploring diaspora journalism in the context of diasporic everyday life affords an understanding of their journalistic and communication practices as a continuum that maps over their daily routine rather than as discrete spaces of separate activities between the public and private domains.

Such continuities of spaces, technologies and activities begets a mode of communication that is less constrained by the strictures of a more formalised practice that traditional journalism represents, but that is more productive in terms of the sheer volume of informational exchanges that are generated and the participation and responses that are elicited by communities of interactants. Such mode of communication has important implications for the potential channels of influence in the context of social conflict.

For the more organised forms of diaspora journalism, Schudson's observation is pertinent (2001: 153, cited in Deuze 2005: 444). He has described the occupational ideology of journalism as 'cultural knowledge that constitutes "news judgement", rooted deeply in the communicators' consciousness'. Exploring the journalism of diaspora is useful for understanding the specificity of the cultural knowledge relating to the positionality of diaspora subjects and how this may have evolved an underlying occupational ideology that shape its meaning-making activities. However, any exploration of diaspora journalism needs to widen the scope of analysis beyond the more formalised and organised outfits and venture into the broader fields of identity- and rights-driven activism

that nurture much of the substance of diaspora journalism today. Until recently, studies of journalism have been organised around the local, national and international levels of analysis. Globalisation calls for a different approach because the “global” level of journalism interpenetrates, spans and connects these other levels in important ways.

As Rees (2008: 241) has noted, a deterritorialised journalism transcends national boundaries, and yet the “nation” has continued to be the fundamental conceptual category in the social sciences for defining and making comparative analysis of journalism systems. Wiley (2004) has advised that it makes more sense to treat the nation not as a fixed taken-for-granted physical space but as a logic, one among many that help to organise social space and global flows. Such an understanding of the boundlessness of the nation is writ large in diaspora consciousness and in the ways that they seek to engage with matters of their identity and citizenship rights, and how these are continually enacted through journalistic practices that have important implications for their mediation in conflicts.

DIASPORA JOURNALISM AND DETERRITORIALISED POLITICS

The now widely recognised spatial flows that have become an underlying feature of globalisation are known to have reshaped virtually every aspect of contemporary social experience, including financial and cultural interactions and transactions. These spatial flows have enabled the development of what Appadurai (1998) has termed *ethnoscapes*, which describes the vast migration of persons across geographically dispersed territories. Tetey (2009), has noted how these spatial flows and mobilities have also opened up possibilities for migrants to engage with their places of origin. This brings about a simultaneous synchronicity by which diasporas are able to both bring the imagined communities of ‘home’ to their new locales at the same time as they project themselves onto the realities of the places they have left behind. As such, the emergence of increasingly extensive diaspora communities has facilitated strong connections with, not dissociation from, their places of origin. Information communication technologies (ICTs) have played a central role in facilitating these connections.

The journalistic practices of diasporans in this process of the simultaneous synchronising of political, social and economic actions of ‘home’ and ‘host’ countries are crucial for understanding the role of diaspora

in conflicts. In this regard, Tetey has pointed out the emergence of a new media ecology that runs in tandem with the new physical ecology marked by worldwide migrations over international borders, and the formation of diaspora groups. He describes the convergence of these dual processes as the 'diaspora of the internet.' This refers to the organization of social groups outside their countries of origin as communities of action that are enabled by the boundlessness of the new technological architecture of the Internet.

The diaspora of the Internet to which Tetey refers in his research are engaged in active participation in the use of the websites, Internet TV, radio broadcasts, chat rooms, and other interactive venues that are dedicated to providing news and discussions about developments in various African countries. Such venues tend to be the main source of information and political engagement for those in the diaspora and afford the opportunities for them to keep up with events, issues and conditions in their home countries whilst also providing avenues for civic interaction. Tetey offers a critical analysis of the complexities of national imaginings and political engagement that characterise expressions of transitional citizenship among African immigrants in the diaspora who have access to, and participate actively in, the transnational spaces of the Internet.

The emphasis on the active members of diasporic communities and their engagements in the production, dissemination and consumption of news and information is particularly germane here, as it illustrates the specific journalistic activities of diasporans within the broad category of diaspora media. Tetey's study set out to explore the extent to which Africans in diasporic locales actively utilize their agency, as transnational citizens, within the mediascapes made possible by the Internet, to engage in political discourses about their home countries, pursue long-distance nationalism, and attempt to shape politics and public policy in their home countries. The study interrogates the ways that the intersecting dynamics of diasporic locations and experiences and the socio-political landscapes of 'home' foster expressions of political agency within these online communities.

It also shows how these dynamics lead to solidarities as well as contestations about various forms of political articulation, mobilization and participation across the deterritorialised spaces that diasporic Africans occupy. This, then, is one illustration of how political agency is enacted through the journalistic practices of diasporans that draws attention to the potentials of diaspora journalism in the emergence of global public

spheres (Cunningham and Sinclair 2000) and their impact on conflicts around the world. Political engagements on the Internet by diasporic communities take place around at least two concerns—the process of identification and belonging—often entailing contestations that emerge from disagreements over issues that often originate from the home country but that have been transposed into the new physical locales as well as the deterritorialised spaces of the Internet.

Secondly, there are also political engagements that emerge from the liminality that characterizes the location of diasporic communities as hybridized individuals and groups. These interstices that diasporans occupy tend to harbour a clash of values, attitudes, perspectives and allegiances that might pit them against their host countries and or their homelands. Tetey calls for a need to problematize the liminality of diasporic engagement with politics and identity in order to be able to analyze the relationships between home and diaspora and to adequately understand the nature of politics in the interstitial spaces created by the intersection of home, diaspora and the Internet. Directing scholarly attention to the specific practices of diaspora journalism is a productive way to gain insight on the ways that diaspora activities may serve as conduits for social integration or for exclusionary and destabilizing political engagement.

THE SOCIAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL CONTEXTS OF DIASPORA JOURNALISM

Karim (2003) has observed that diaspora groups are often at the leading edge of technology adoption and innovative uses of media of communication due to the kind of challenges they face in reaching their audiences. Similarly, Cohen (1997) pointed out that transnational networks of media and communication are helping to sustain diaspora formations and to enhance a sense of diaspora consciousness.

A feature of many of the new media technologies of communication and social interactions today is their disruptive capacity to overcome many of the hierarchical structures of centralised industrial media. Diasporas have become savvy at utilising a wide range of web 2.0 tools, online services and mobile telephony. These allow for relatively easy connections and interactions for members of diaspora communities who are based in distant locations from each other. This ability to exchange

messages with individuals at the far corners of the planet and to have access to community information almost instantaneously, Karim pointed, changes the dynamics of diaspora, allowing for both qualitatively and quantitatively enhanced linkages. He describes how communities of people who are dispersed but connected via the internet cultivate a cosmopolitan democracy that addresses broader issues in human rights.

Whilst this may have appeal to universal values about the human condition, it also often engenders a cleavage and tension between diasporic communities and their host country or homeland, as the case may be. Opinions remain divided on the social implications of information communication technologies with respect to global movements of people and with diaspora formations in particular. Are the new media technologies responsible for undermining a sense of community by robbing people of participatory public spaces, or are they the sites where more diversified relations of solidarity can be made?

In broad terms, two competing discourses can be discerned over the effects and transformations brought about by new media and by extension the uses to which diasporans put them particularly with regards to information sharing and journalistic practices. The two competing discourses are the utopian and dystopian schools of thought, and although elsewhere Georgiou (2013, p. 81) has argued for the need to move on and get past the utopian/dystopian debates that always carried the overtones of technological determinism, we would contend that this framing remains useful at least as an entry point into explorations of diasporic media activities and potential or proven impact in the context of discussions about their role in conflicts.

The transformational impact of new information and communication technologies on people and their social interactions particularly in terms of the re-constituting of community, identity construction and maintenance, and on the communication infrastructure and associated practices that facilitate all these processes has engaged the attention of scholars for some time now. Tracing the trajectory of these discourses, Konito (2011) noted that the earliest enquiries focussed on the potential of online interactions to enable virtual communities that simulate physical communities. In time, scholars began to observe evolving patterns of social interactions and community building that utilise both online and offline interactions spanning several social networks to establish social ties and contacts, find information and access, as well as offer help on a range of everyday life needs.

The term ‘networked individualism’ (Castells 2001) was coined to describe an emergent pattern of online sociability in which individuals would belong and participate in several networks even though members of such networks may be strangers, unknown to each other. In a later revision of this concept Castells et al. (2006, pp. 143–144) suggested that ‘networked sociability’ would be a more appropriate term for describing this evolving online interaction given its potential for enabling the formation of community through the peer-group support that networks offer. Furthermore, observations about networking practices and the benefits that individuals and society derived from it has engendered debates about the concept of social capital (Bourdieu 1986). In this emerging context of network interactions and community formations, Larsen and Urry (2008, p. 93) used the term ‘Network Capital’ to describe the potential of networks to generate and sustain meaningful social relations amongst distal individuals that can provide emotional, financial and practical benefits for members.

These patterns of network associations and the practices they entail represent the context in which a significant part of diaspora interactions and their media practices take place, which bears a lot of implications for understanding and assessing the role of diasporans in conflicts across the world. Brinkerhoff (2009, p. 44) has noted the many affordances of information technologies for diasporans, including the formation of virtual and physical communities offering solidarity and material benefits, a means of, or platform for, navigating the intricacies of identity construction, as well as enabling a host of other purposive objectives. The nub of Brinkerhoff’s exploration here is an emphasis on the variety of virtual communities that ICTs facilitate and how diaspora individuals and communities have embraced these forums for a variety of reasons and needs.

There is a recognition amongst scholars, and evidence from a variety of studies, that diaspora can and do contribute to conflicts in their homeland either positively and negatively. Faist (2002) has observed in his study of the subject that organized diaspora pose a potential threat to international security. Similarly, studies by Bryman et al. (2001), Shain (1999), and King and Melvin (1999/2000) variously have exposed the involvement of organized diasporas in instigating political upheavals in their home countries. Anderson (1999) has noted the interventions of organized diasporas in conflict situations that included organizing crowd funding to sustain ongoing warfare, and public campaigns in support of a particular cause. The remote location of diaspora communities from

theatres of war and conflict in their homelands affords them some good measure of safety and protection from the direct impact of war and conflict that enables them to develop a fervour for continued hostility even when their kit and kin back in the homeland may be willing to enter into negotiation or reconciliation.

Key among all these interventions is the ability of diasporans to utilise the resources of ICTs and networked communication to promote their own agenda through various journalistic practices. On the other hand, Brinkerhoff (2009, p. 6) has outlined the numerous ways that diaspora communities can provide constructive contributions to conflict situation through efforts and activities that include shaping policies with liberal values orientation, integration and conflict prevention, as well as a raft of socio-economic development initiatives, which can all be made possible by the Internet. Given the resilient bond that diasporans have for their homeland and the enabling capacities of the internet and other ICTs, diaspora communities are readily intervening in the transformational processes in their homeland.

Bercovitch (2007) has provided a conceptual framework for understanding the relationship between diasporas and conflict that focusses on the potential impact of diaspora's absence or presence in conflict structure and conflict behaviour. He foregrounded his analysis with an orientation that recognizes diasporas as important political actors within contemporary socio-political transnational spaces with demonstrable impact on the broad political landscape and, particularly, on conflict. Equally instructive is his observation that conflicts are seldom a contest between two states or communities but rather often involve the intervention of various other actors such as regional and international organizations, diasporas and other organized communities who all bring their vested interests and objectives to bear on the conflict process. In this regard, Bercovitch contended that diaspora involvement in conflicts can sometimes result in solutions to them while at other times they serve to sustain conflict. Bercovitch locates his analysis of diaspora involvement in conflicts in the dynamics of globalisation and its associated processes, noting that globalisation is a key factor in facilitating both diaspora formations and the potential influences that they have on host countries and on homeland.

Bercovitch's framework recognizes conflicts as dynamic processes that have six key transitional phases (conflict emergence, conflict continuation, conflict escalation, conflict termination, de-escalation and

post-conflict restructuring), complemented by four arenas (political, military, economic and socio-cultural) that provide opportunities for diasporas to intervene. Space does not allow for an expatiation of these phases here, but we would contend that this combination of transitional phases and arenas of intervention provide a comprehensive structure of conflicts that is useful for understanding or analysing the role of diasporas in conflicts and specifically how journalistic practices of diaspora communities and individuals are deployed, and to what objectives.

CONCLUSION

There is a growing interest amongst scholars to recognise diasporas as important political agents and key participants in conflicts, and to understand their role in this connection. These concerns also rest on the understanding that many contemporary conflicts no longer emanate mainly from the interactions of sovereign states but from other key international entities of which diaspora is an important source. A crucial part of understanding the role of diasporas in conflicts is to focus on diaspora media and their uses of communication facilities to pursue their agendas in this context. This chapter has focussed attention on recognising the specific category of diaspora journalism as one of the key dimensions of diaspora formations and their ability to intervene in international politics in general and in conflicts relating to their countries of origin in particular. We contend that diaspora journalism should be understood both as the more formal forms of news activities that replicate the structure, practices and professional ethos of mainstream journalism as well as the less formalised but no less potent journalistic practices of individual or collective diasporans across the world.

We also contend that the new media and networked communication environment offer a number of opportunities for diaspora groups to engage with issues and agendas that pertain to their efforts at identity negotiation, rights claiming and quality of life pursuance that emerge from their twin constituencies in their host country and in their homeland. Research into diaspora journalism and their links with conflicts is much enriched when attention is paid to the structure of conflict and the constituent transitional phases that require specific kinds of interventions by diasporas. Analysis of diaspora journalism's role in conflicts ought to be sensitive to the underlying objectives that drive and energise the activities of specific diaspora networks or individuals as part of a meaningful

way to understanding the socio-political and cultural substance of diaspora engagement with their social reference point(s), whether this be the host country or a homeland.

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