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# The Role of Media in Conflict Management: A Secondary and Critical Analysis

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## **Abstract**

Looking back at the Syrian regime since 2011 till the ousting dated 8\12\2024, the concept of conflict management is empathized in Syrian media during those 13 years. Being a relatively new concept to media studies, the current research is bifold. First, the research encompasses a thorough literature review utilizing secondary analysis, empathizing the concept from multiple perspectives. Media including social media have been used as a pathway for conflict resolution by promoting dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation processes. These media narratives have been central in influencing public opinion within critical events. Yet, at the same time, the media proved to be equally capable of playing the role of promoters of strategic communication processes in post-conflict societies.

The second part of the paper utilizes critical analysis to dwell upon employing conflict management as a tool to enforce the past Syrian regime's agenda. Findings manifest four research perspectives of the concept in hand. Discussion speculates the indecisiveness of Syrian media's future same as the political circumstances.

**Keywords;** Conflict management, Syria, Secondary Analysis, reconciliation, propaganda

## Introduction

Media has always been in the vanguard, creating or shaping world opinion through policies adopted in conditions of conflict or crises throughout history. The media channels possess that unmatched power of telling a story to shape political discourse and construct reality in time of war and peace (Taylor, 1995). The role of the media in conflict resolution and management cannot be overstated in disseminating information and promoting peace building efforts. While the media can amplify conflict, it also has the potential to be a powerful tool for conflict resolution and management. It provides a platform for dialogue, promotes tolerance, and fosters understanding among different groups. This highlights the crucial role that the media can play in promoting peace, but more needs to be done to prioritize peace over war (Hassan, 2023).

Historically, the media's role in conflict resolution and management has gained prominence in the 20th century, particularly after World War II. During WWII, governments realized the use of media to mobilize support for and justify their actions (Bratic, 2006). Propaganda and PR campaigns played an important role in framing the government actions as essential for national security and ensuring the loyalty and compliance of the public (Le, 2016). However, this relationship shifted during the Vietnam War, as uncensored and graphic media coverage exposed the brutal realities of conflict. This revelation contributed to widespread public dissent and eroded trust in government narratives, fundamentally altering the dynamics of media relations (Porch, 2002).

Media in the 21st century remains an ever-evolving tool for political ends. This is particularly true in light of the reach of media on digital platforms. Moreover, media now enables fast and rapid communication of information-and misinformation-to mass audiences (Acampa, 2024). In modern times, all forces are increasingly dependent on platforms like X, Facebook, and YouTube for communicating strategic narratives, shaping public opinion, and combating misinformation campaigns (Mangat, 2018). However, such dependence also involves a host of ethical dilemmas, especially when such platforms become tools for spreading disinformation, or manipulating public perception via propaganda.

This paper critically discusses the dual role of media as an instrument of conflict and a force for conflict management and peacebuilding. The secondary analysis outlines complex issues regarding conflict management and its implications for governance, conflict resolution, and democratic accountability.

Syria represents a prominent case of utilizing media towards conflict management amongst other Arab countries as Somalia (Hassan, 2023) and multiple foreign countries. Post 2011 events, the country used media to maintain its power by controlling the flow of information and rally support for the legitimate ruler. Radical decisions were made to suppress the media itself (Rais, 2004) and curtail freedom of the press (Al-Mounes, 2024). While propaganda has always been part of the conflict management tools, it had always been a part of war as well (Stern, 2015); and Syria was going through both: a case of conflict resolution and a civil war where propaganda was an inevitable weapon.

### **Problem Statement**

Conflict management and resolution via media have always been presented as a dual-faceted interdisciplinary concept. Historical media narratives highlighted depending on media in turmoil stances to influence public opinion within critical events as the second world war, the Vietnam war, Iraqi war and wars of the present day especially hybrid wars.

Yet, at the same time, the media proved to be equally capable of playing the role of promoters of reconciliation, constructive dialogue, and strategic communication processes in post-conflict societies. The peace journalism projects and grassroots movements during the Arab Spring served as examples of how media can help heal such divisions in society and nourish democratic values.

The current research tends to unravel the concept “conflict management via media” in the international media literature in a time span of three decades, to stand on the positive and negative consequences of conflict management and resolution. The paper inspects the Syrian media state in a time span of 13 years post the Arab spring in an effort to clarify the role of media propaganda during the period from 2011-2024.

### **Research Objectives**

The current research tends to achieve two major objectives as follows:

- 1- Tracking academic research tackling the concept conflict management via media in a time span of three decades in multiple narratives to determine the positive and negative consequences of the concept.
- 2- Unravelling the context of the Syrian media conflict management post 2011 until the ousting in 2024.

### **Research Questions**

The current research tends to answer two major questions as follows:

- 1- How did academic research tackle the concept conflict management via media in a time span of three decades in multiple positive and negative narratives?
- 2- How did Syrian media utilize conflict management post 2011 until the ousting in 2024?

### **Research Methodology**

The current research resided to analyze the interdisciplinary concept conflict management and resolution via media in various international empirical research in a secondary analysis framework. In social and behavioral sciences, Cordray (2001) defined secondary analysis as: a quantitative and qualitative methodology that utilizes existing data in research. It involves analyzing data that has been collected by someone else, presenting unique logistical and ethical challenges despite sharing similarities with primary analysis.

Having analyzed the international literature depicting on the concept, the researcher utilized critical analysis in the second part of research to unveil the Syrian media status post 2011. Critical analysis is defined as: a method that exposes and challenges taken-for-granted power structures

and offers alternative perspectives to knowledge, theory-building, and social reality. Critical analysis continues to gain significant importance in academic research due to its interdisciplinary appeal and application in the study of culture, rhetoric, and qualitative research in general (Holland & Novak, 2017).

### **Sampling Procedures**

This study relies on a comprehensive literature review of a purposive sample of 70 empirical research papers published in renowned peer reviewed academic journals, dissertations and reports in the field of conflict management and resolution, media and state propaganda. The following steps were implemented to locate the study sample according to the criteria set in advance:

- The researcher resided to the upcoming online libraries and databases to locate the research literature published in English whether papers or dissertations on condition that the paper title or keywords include directly the words conflict management, conflict resolution, peace building, reconciliation and state propaganda: Springer, Sage Publications, JSTOR, Cambridge University, Oxford University, Elsevier, ProQuest, Science Direct, EKB, NGU libraries and AUC Libraries.

- After thorough consideration, the time interval of the sample studies was determined to be a relatively long interval extending on a time span of three decades (1995-2024).

- To the surprise of the researcher, these concepts were spread throughout various countries and regions to explain the international dynamics involved in the role of media in conflict management: USA, UK, Russia, Australia, Canada, Ukraine, Germany, India, Thailand, Israel, Pakistan, Myanmar, Philippines, Burma, Rwanda, South Africa, Liberia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Brazil, Columbia, Mexico, Somalia and Haiti among others.

### **Findings pertaining to the secondary analysis:**

The literature review encompasses a thematic analysis of a wide array of subtopics directly related to the historical review, social media platforms, positive contributions and negative aspects of conflict management; defined as the potential of media to prevent violence and promote peace by raising awareness, fostering community engagement, facilitating grassroots activism, promoting dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation processes (James, 2024); grouped into different research trends as follows:

#### **Research Trend 1: Managing conflicts via media: Historical Context and New Dynamics**

This trend refers to the purposeful alignment of communication platforms with government - related activities that shape the societal mindset about war and peace, governance, and national security materially, politically, and socially. Such alignment has acquired dimensions with the evolution of the nature of conflict and media over time (Bayer et al., 2023). This trend encompasses the following sub trends.

### **Material Conflict Management**

Material conflict management refers to the strategic use of media to support budgets and resource allocation by framing government spending as a matter of national security. Media narratives in the United States and the United Kingdom often emphasize vulnerabilities to maintain public pressure for increased government spending and limit the possibility of budget excess scrutiny (Lewis, 2008). This framing often suppresses alternative discourses on resource reallocation for social programs like healthcare and education.

This culture has lived well into the 21st century. Media coverage of modern-day conflicts, such as the Russian Ukrainian war, has reinforced the need for robust spending, depicting it as essential to national sovereignty and survival. Coverage often points to the vulnerability of states, while underlining material resilience and technological superiority (Lystvak et al., 2024). This trend pinpoints the media's role in legitimizing state priorities while marginalizing debates on diplomatic or humanitarian alternatives (Baloyi et al., 2023).

Corporations and media join hands in creating narratives where state projects are framed as a matter of national security (Jackson et al., 2020).

### **Political Conflict Management**

State-generated discourse that orients the perceptions of citizens towards the goals of the government are the indicators of the politics of conflict management. Such a process was very relevant in the "War on Terror," whereby U.S. media mirrored official government discourse by representing the intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan as indispensable responses against terrorism (Schulzke, 2011). Such framing portrays the state as the guardian of democracy.

Paul and Kim (2004) traced the historical development of the relationship between the press and conflicts, highlighting how the embedded press system emerged as a response to the challenges of reporting during conflicts, raising vital ethical questions concerning the independence of the press, and what role it ought to play in ensuring public accountability during conflicts.

Media reporting in the Russian Ukrainian conflict has similarly focused on sovereignty, resilience, and unification to enhance public support for government action (Lystvak et al., 2024). Such framing can lead to public disengagement from nuanced policy debates, fostering uncritical support for conflict solutions.

Porch (2002) speculated that this tension reflects larger ethical dilemmas in which the contrast between openness and propaganda grows increasingly questionable in modern conflicts. Furthermore, conflicts put journalists in delicate situations whereby reporting critical perspectives leads to censorship or even accusations of disloyalty.

According to Maltby (2012), this growing reliance on the media for framing conflicts has gradually shifted the landscape in which media narratives bear much significance in legitimizing state campaigns and public opinion. Such dynamics underscore the dual role of the media: as a tool for propaganda and as a potential platform for accountability, making conflict resolution harder.

### **Societal Conflict Management**

By “societal conflict management,” the researcher means the embedding of conflict values and ideologies into civil life, often facilitated by media representations (Jackson et al., 2020). Popular culture including films, television series, and video games, further reinforces conflict narratives. These portrayals shape societal attitudes, particularly among younger audiences, fostering a sense of admiration for conflicts (Taylor, 1995).

Brooten (2011) argued that in authoritarian contexts, media has served to propagate conflict narratives in Philippines same as Thailand ( Laungaramsri, 2016).

The two examples are illustrative of how the media can be a vehicle of propaganda and publicity and at the same time a tool of conflict resolution.

The digital age has even further broadened conflicts in society. Social media algorithms often make sensational or emotionally charged content viral, promoting conflict storylines while sidelining anti-conflict positions (Acampa, 2024). This dynamic enables governments to control public attitudes towards the acceptance of conflicts and to normalize its intrusions into civilian life.

### **Research Trend 2: War as a Frame for Crises and Conflicts: Media Responses to Covid-19 in different settings**

Throughout history, governments all over the world have used conflict rhetoric in framing crises as wars in order to mobilize their citizens and justify extraordinary measures. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many political leaders framed the pandemic as a “war” against an invisible enemy. Terms like “frontline workers”, “rallying the troops,” and “defeating the virus” became common in official speeches and media coverage (Accioly & Macedo, 2021).

This framing effectively mobilized resources and unified populations under a shared sense of urgency. However, this framing also normalized conflict measures that included heightened surveillance, restriction of civil liberties, and centralization of power. For instance, in the United States, the pandemic response was often framed as a war operation, with government officials invoking wartime metaphors to justify controversial policies.

Rhetoric on war tends to obscure the systemic causes of crises and conflicts, diverting attention from long-term solutions towards immediate resolutions. This may be undermined in the effort to bring about structural inequalities or government failures that contribute to exacerbating crises and reinforcing a cycle of conflict in problem-solving (Accioly & Macedo, 2021).

COVID-19 brought this trend into sharp focus as many countries implemented measures for the surveillance of citizens. For instance, in Israel, the Internal Security Agency utilized cell phone tracking of people suspected of breaking quarantine rules (Marciano & Yadlin, 2021). While these measures were justified as necessary for public health, they raised significant concerns about privacy, data security, and democratic accountability. This involved how media framed the discourses over surveillance, with outlets giving differing views on how, for instance, this move really helped in containing the pandemic, while others see possible excess use against civil liberties (Thankachan & Thomas, 2021). Media narratives often framed these actions as necessary for

national stability and their reporting was very uneven (Acácio, 2021), once again undermining conflict management and resolution.

### **Research Trend 3: Propaganda, Conflicts, Cyberspace, Hybrid Warfare and Disinformation**

The digital age has given birth to cyberspace as one of the most critical domains for conflict management and resolution, where information warfare is combined with propaganda and surveillance. From shaping public opinion through propaganda to disrupting adversaries' operations, governments and non-state actors increasingly exploit digital platforms to further strategic objectives (Forest, 2021).

Hybrid warfare strategies, which mix conventional conflict management tactics with cyber operations, have become a brand of modern conflicts. Russia's hybrid warfare is an illustration of this approach, where social media platforms, bots, and trolls are used to disseminate disinformation and destabilize adversaries (Acampa, 2024).

Social media has turned out to be an indispensable tool in the propaganda machinery, whereby governments reach target audiences across continents with unparalleled speed and accuracy. State-sanctioned narratives are diffused via platforms like YouTube, X, and Instagram, often in a manner hardly distinguishable from authentic UGC in coordinated propaganda campaigns (Zittrain, 2017).

From there, regimes have weaponized cyberspace to suppress dissent and control information instead of residing to conflict resolution (Laungaramsri, 2016).

Historical propaganda was a core method of conflict management through which public opinion was formed. In World War II, Nazi Germany widely used the media in propagating Aryan race supremacy, glorifying Nazi rule, and demonizing minorities. Systematic manipulation of public perception indeed produced one of the most horrifying conflicts the world has ever seen (Jowett and O'Donnell, 1999). In the Iraqi War, for example, the media narrative of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) served to build a case of international opinion to provide justification for U.S. intervention. Although those WMDs have since proved to be a fallacy, they continued to facilitate the media's role in building support for war in a process of uncritical reporting (Abraham, 2012). The Cold War era really amplified the role of propaganda in escalating conflicts. Both the United States and the Soviet Union used the media in portraying their adversaries as some sort of existential threat while framing their respective ideologies as superior. These not only polarized world opinion but also sidelined efforts at peaceful dialogue (Taylor, 1995).

### **Research Trend 4: Positive and Adverse effects of Conflict management via media**

This research trend has proven the notion of the dual faceted nature of the conflict management via media concept, emphasizing that the concept has both positive and adverse connotations. Adverse effects tackled by the literature resided in conflict escalation, digital disinformation and human rights violation, whereas the positive impacts resided in peace reporting, use of social media, promoting democratic values and providing humanitarian assistance. Details are as follows:



## **Adverse Effects**

### **Conflict Escalation as an adverse effect**

Information tends to explain complex conflicts with simple dual explanations, such as “good versus evil.” It also polarizes opinions on international conflicts and conceals all their nuances. Emotional framing, also referred to as the “CNN Effect,” has been used in leading governments into intervention based on highly sensationalized media coverage. Whittemore (1990) provides an example of how gruesome coverage raises awareness of humanitarian crises but leads to interventions without foresight or long-term plans.

The most touching example of hate radio occurred during the Rwandan Genocide in 1994, depicting a scenario of how media is capable of inciting violence. The Radio Télévision Libre, transmitted explicit hate speeches, directly inciting the Hutu militias to hunt down and kill members of the Tutsi tribes, culminating in almost one million people being massacred within six months. This particular example points out how media inflamed ethnic and political conflict into deadly scenarios (Metzl, 1997).

Yet, if media would often be blamed for conflict escalation, the Vietnam War simply presents another vivid example: while the uncensored scenes of war horrors eventually worked to erode public support for the U.S. government, the framing in the early years of that war as a struggle pitting democracy against communism provided a foundation for entrenching public support for escalation (Hallin, 1989).

Indeed, a considerable amount of literature has evidenced that media coverage plays an important role in the escalation of disputes, not vice versa. According to Miller and Bokemper (2016), framing and intensity of media coverage can increase public pressure on the governments to respond aggressively, thereby increasing the likelihood of escalation in a conflict. In fact, their study of disputes has indicated that sensationalized or adversarial coverage creates an environment that often puts diplomatic solutions backstage to demands for immediate action.

### **Digital Disinformation as an adverse effect**

The rise of social media has amplified the spread of false information, destabilized democratic institutions and fostered distrust among citizens. Platforms like Facebook and X have been exploited by bots, trolls, and coordinated disinformation campaigns to manipulate public opinion and create divisions within societies. During the 2016 U.S. presidential election, Russian operatives used social media to spread divisive content, eroding trust in democratic processes (Zeigler, 2018).

The role of disinformation has also been immense in recent conflicts. During the Russian Ukrainian War, both state and non-state actors used digital platforms to circulate propaganda, label adversaries as aggressors, and garner favor from the international community. These actions not only widened chasms but also clouded the actual situation on the ground, making the assessment of humanitarian consequences quite complex (Acampa, 2024).

### **Human Rights Violations as an adverse effect**

Media narratives often legitimize action in the direction of violations of civil liberties, such as surveillance, censorship, and restrictions on freedom of expression. During the COVID-19 era, for example, the governments of many countries launched extraordinary forms of surveillance, citing this as necessary for public health. As Marciano and Yadlin (2021) commented, this raised important debates about privacy and democratic erosion.

Pandemic responses led to widespread human rights violations across Latin America, with a disproportionate targeting of marginalized communities. Reports from Brazil about police violence against poor neighborhoods are just examples of how governance increases systemic inequalities. Examples include the risk involved in normalizing conflict narratives that gave more emphasis to security rather than human rights (Acácio, 2021).

### **Positive Impacts**

#### **Peace reporting as a positive impact**

Media can act as a catalyst for reconciliation by promoting understanding rather than division. The power of peace journalism is borne out by initiatives such as Studio Ijambo in Rwanda. This post-conflict radio station produced, through its programs after the Rwandan Genocide, discussions between Hutus and Tutsis and helped restore trust and social cohesion among people (Batic, 2006). Similarly, Radio UNTAC was instrumental in voter education and promotion of democratic participation in the post-conflict period of Cambodia (Puddephatt, 2006).

Media plays a very important role in peacebuilding processes, especially in post-conflict societies where trust and communication channels are usually fractured. Sundar (2010) discussed the role of media in promoting dialogue and reconciliation in post-conflict India. He identified how focused peace journalism efforts can help address deep-seated grievances and rebuild social cohesion. Media platforms would give a voice to the voiceless and create narratives of hope and unity that help in the healing of the divided communities. This is a positive way of underlining the transformative potential of media in contributing to peacebuilding objectives when used ethically and strategically.

Media has indeed proved to be an indispensable tool within transitional justice processes, especially in post-conflict societies where trust needs to be rebuilt. Thompson (2014) discussed the role of radio in Liberia's transitional justice initiatives and how radio programs were used to facilitate public dialogues on reconciliation and accountability.

These programmes gave space to the voices of excluded actors and contributed to a feeling of collective responsibility to rebuild the nation after decades of civil war. The case of Liberia underlines what media could achieve in terms of healing and justice, sharing a common aspiration with peace journalism projects elsewhere, including Studio Ijambo in Rwanda (Batic, 2006), among others in post-conflict Cambodia (Puddephatt, 2006).

Peace reporting is a form of balanced reporting of conflict that highlights opportunities for reconciliation rather than sensationalizing violence. These approaches have worked in post-conflict societies where trust in media can help in nation-building and democratic consolidation.

### **Media Agencies use of social media as a positive impact**

Media agencies promote transparency, sustain trust among the public, and reduce misinformation. The CAF Canada strategically used X to communicate narratives about various humanitarian operations; through this, the agency ensured its message was apolitical and transparent (Mangat, 2018).

Similarly, the ISPR unit of Pakistan also took part in fighting against the propaganda of extremists through social media during the Swat Valley conflict. ISPR countered the false information by telling powerful stories to millions of users and garnered support for anti-terrorism operations effectively (Khan & Pratt, 2020).

On the other hand, social media platforms provide real-time avenues for grassroots activism and political change. During the Arab Spring, for example, social media sites like Facebook and X became critical tools for organizing protests, amplifying marginalized voices, and challenging authoritarian regimes (Grayson & Davies, 2017). The decentralized nature of social media allowed activists to bypass state-controlled media and enabled unprecedented levels of citizen participation.

The use of social media in the peace process has created dialogues between parties in conflict in Colombia. Grassroots online campaigns opened up spaces for the expression of ideas and the closing of gaps among parties in conflict, which are indicative of the potential of digital platforms in being part of peacebuilding processes (Barón, 2018).

### **Democratic Values Promotion as a positive impact**

Exile media have constantly challenged authoritarian regimes through exposure and calls for accountability. In the case of Burma, independent exile media played a very critical role in documentation of atrocities while fostering democratic aspirations (Brooten, 2011), same as the exile Syrian media outlets (Issa, 2016). These efforts have shown that the media could be a watchdog in ensuring the accountability of power even in the repressive environment.

In South Africa, for instance, media played a crucial role in the post-apartheid era in facilitating reconciliation and rebuilding trust. Through the facilitation of public dialogue and the exposure of injustices, the media contributed to the transition of the nation to democracy (Teer-Tomaselli, 2001).

### **Humanitarian Assistance as a positive impact**

Media serves important purposes of rallying resources and providing timely information in humanitarian disasters. Coverage of a number of tragedies, including the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the 2010 Haiti earthquake, helped to turn international support into action. Media serves to harmonize these efforts on behalf of afflicted communities. Moreover, it enhances this sense of global responsibility via media coverage.

Equally, media exposure to the refugees and internally displaced persons in zones of conflict has compelled interventions by international organizations for their sustenance. The conflict coverage elicits the potential of media to be bridging gaps between global resources and the vulnerable populations (Adamson, 2024).

**Findings pertaining to the critical analysis:**

**Antecedents of Syrian conflict media and glorifying propaganda**

As early as December 9th, 2024, a day apart from the fallen Syrian regime, BBC's report on Syrian Media surfaced (BBC, 9/12/2024), emphasizing that under the past regime, the media in Syria was heavily controlled by the government in a prominent case of media censorship amongst various other countries in the world. One of the obvious facets was using the state - run media outlets as tools for propaganda to promote the regime's narrative. The Syrian case is certainly considered a significant example of unsuccessful conflict management, given the extensive involvement of the government in media control.

The regime used media to maintain its power by controlling the flow of information and suppressing opposition. This control extended to the internet and social media where the regime monitored and censored content. The media was also used to rally support for the regime given the sectarian context of the country (Al-Mounes, 2024). Radical decisions were made to suppress the media's role in conflict management, as what happened in 2004, when all unofficial political parties and cultural and media associations in Syria were banned by the regime (Rais, 2004).

Instead of conflict management and resolution, mass media were used to manipulate individuals, society, and the outer world (Chams Eddin, 2013: 20). Syria relied on trusted units and deployed the most loyal of the army to control the country, media included (Holliday, 2013).

Media outlets were functioning as instruments of propaganda not reconciliation, seeking to change people's opinions by undermining the contrary positions. At the same time, propaganda was designed to exploit emotions and be subjective. The second step would be utilizing aggressive tools such as extreme and aggressive language, according to the significance of the message (Chams Eddin, 2013: 26).

**Media post 2011**

Badran (2021) highlighted the fragmented media landscape in the aftermath of 2011, for the territorial fragmentation, in particular, has led to the dissolution of the tightly controlled information environment which existed before the conflict. While the regions that remained under the control of the central government reflected a continuation of the logics of the regime from pre-2011, the regions controlled by Kurdish forces and opposition- linked rebel forces developed radically different, albeit unstable, media environments.

Committee to protect Journalists CPJ (Stern, 2015) highlighted the same case, asserting that the intermingling of journalism and fighting is nothing new for Syria, where combatants view the media sphere as yet another battlefield in the civil war.

According to CPJ, the implications for the newsgathering process and the ability to understand the conflict are clear. The very same groups on all sides of the conflict that have worked tirelessly to censor the media, have in turn become some of the leading producers and exporters of information.

While propaganda has always been part of media, it had always been a part of war as well (Stern, 2015); and Syria was going through both; a civil war where propaganda was an inevitable

weapon of the regime. Unlike Maltby's narrative in 2012, such dynamics underscore the only role of the media: as a tool for propaganda not as a potential platform for accountability and conflict resolution.

### **The Change of the Regime and effects on Media**

Nevertheless, the ousting of the Syrian regime is cultivating an uncertain era for the Syrian media, once under the control of the regime. One of the unprecedented reports that posted overthrowing the regime was that of Al Mounes (December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024) reiterating that the media is no longer the old regime's mouthpiece.

According to Al- Mounes (2024), the Syrian media, which was once a tool of those in power, has taken a drastic turn. When a rebel alliance took Damascus on December 8, announcing Assad's overthrow after an 11-day offensive, confusion reigned and state news agency SANA, the government mouthpiece, went silent for more than 24 hours.

State television broadcasted old programmes instead of the fast-evolving events. Then a group of men in the news studio read a statement from the "Damascus Conquest operations room". They announced, "the liberation of the city of Damascus". For hours, the channel then broadcasted a full-screen message on a red background announcing the "victory of the revolution".

Till the moment, the Syrian media's future is undecided as the political circumstances; so, whether the media would depend on propaganda, continue the independent outlet system tackled by (Issa, 2016), or even be state-run, is too early to predict, taking into account the sectarian nature of the population.

### **Discussion**

Conflict management via media represents a complex development in which global governance, resolution, and peace significantly interlink. Defining conflict management as the practice of identifying and dealing with conflicts in a reasonable, fair and efficient manner (Haidarravy and Anshori, 2023) seems to be unsupported in the media landscape. Instead, throughout history, the media functioned both as a weapon of propaganda and equally as a platform for reconciliation by showing duality in that potential. This is where the rise of digital platforms extends the opportunities both for strategic communication and peacebuilding, but this very same development has further exacerbated major challenges such as disinformation, polarization, and eroded democratic norms.

Media including social media should be used as a pathway for conflict resolution by promoting dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation processes. These media narratives have been central in influencing public opinion within critical events. Yet, at the same time, the media should prove to be equally capable of playing the role of promoters of strategic communication processes in post-conflict societies.

The first part of this paper included a secondary analysis of 70 academic articles tackling conflict management and resolution via media from different perspectives among papers originating from more than 20 countries worldwide.

The secondary analysis showcased how governments exploit digital platforms in hybrid war and societal control as part of their effort to shape public opinion. The secondary analysis resulted as well into four comprehensive research trends encompassing all aspects pertaining to conflict management via media bearing both negative and positive consequences. The research has proven the notion of the dual faceted nature of conflict management.

Nevertheless, the review indicates how media's role in conflicts represents an ethical challenge, but also plays a prominent role in transparency, democratic accountability, and world peace as positive connotations, apart from propaganda and publicity for aggression. Therefore, this review identifies a need to balance negative impacts with ethical conflict media use.

The critical analysis underscored the only role of the Syrian media: as a tool for propaganda not as a potential platform for accountability and conflict management. Therefore, further research is required to identify the regimes that are experiencing transitional political and media phases as the Syrian regime; and reiterate the pathways of leveraging the democratic discourse and reconciliation away from propaganda.

Conflict management researchers as (Haidarravy and Anshori, 2023) among others proposed setting a conceptual framework that describes the relationship between antecedents and consequences of conflict management. However, this framework needs to be developed by referring to various previous research contexts and cases on conflict management. This matter needs to be carried out in the context of developing research constructs that are more diverse according to multiple cases not just one.

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