Gem from the Global South

Elena Vartanova, Anna Gladkova* and Denis Dunas

On representation of conflict in modern academic discourse

https://doi.org/10.1515/omgc-2022-0063

Abstract: This article discusses media researchers’ understanding of the term “conflict,” what types of experience objects social scientists include in this category, and the possibility of categorization and theoretical understanding of these objects in the context of modern media research in Russia and abroad. Also discussed are the theoretical issues of the interaction between media and conflict, theory-based methodology of conflict research, and the types and key subjects of conflict, which have become the subjects of empirical research on scientific papers published in major media academic journals at home and abroad. In discussing the study’s empirical results, the necessity of cultivating ethical and moral values in the media, according to Habermas’s communicative behavior theory where he opposes the anti-values of conflict, was raised.

Keywords: conflict; ethics; media; meta-analysis; morality; subject of conflict

1 Introduction

One leading sociologist who studies the phenomenon of social conflict, Dahrendorf, pointed out that inequality is the root cause of social conflict (Darendorf 2002), but in the initial stage of conflict, society may not be aware of this. In addition, open and fierce struggle does not necessarily mean the existence of conflict.
Social conflicts arise from the social structure itself and the contradictions arising from the asymmetric distribution of power and resources. Therefore, although conflicts are not always reflected or displayed in public awareness, conflicts are inherent in any social system, because power exists, and power cannot be equally distributed in society. Since power itself is a “universal means of communication” (Луман 2001), research on the role of media, platforms and means of communication in social conflicts can reveal the hidden aspects of this phenomenon.

The nature of the interaction between media and conflict is complex and diverse because media can be not only the adversary of conflict, but also the initiator, facilitator, mediator, organizer and escalation environment of conflict (Budka and Brauchler 2020). Reporting (and developing) conflicts determined by the media, on the one hand, contributes to social development and the establishment of a new consensus model, on the other hand, may also cause serious consequences to society (Лабуш и Пую 2019).

On the one hand, media are the agents who shape the image of specific social conflicts in the public consciousness (Смирнова и Шкондин 2021). On the other hand, there is no doubt that by representing conflict, they are also changing conflict (Вартанова 2021), often intensifying (Hart et al. 2020) or reducing (Barbera 2014) social polarization at multiple levels. According to conflict theory, the intensification of social polarization is a key risk factor, which increases the possibility of real conflict among social groups and intensifies conflicts, including professional journalism practices and journalists’ working methods in conflict environments, as well as their challenges and risks (Jamil 2021; Jamil and Sohal 2021).

In general, the traditional approach to dealing with the interaction between media and conflict is largely based on the media’s view of the impact on the development of international armed conflict, which has led to a mixed war of information and psychology in the digital age. In the modern media environment, the complexity of the nature of conflict and the multi-level interaction between media and conflict (Bodrunova et al. 2019) are obvious, which in turn makes this topic of practical significance and leads to its handling within the framework of this article.

2 Conflict and media: theoretical approaches

The theoretical study of conflict in social sciences is based on the original hypothesis of authors such as Marx, Simmel, and Dahrendorf, who believe that conflict is an integral part of social development. Social dynamics are achieved by resolving conflicts, which ensure social evolution. Therefore, mass communication
theory developed from sociology, based on its relevant empirical functionalist paradigm, regarding conflict as a phenomenon with uneven consequences.

On the one hand, media researchers recognize the remarkable contribution of conflict to social development: Because ideal social cohesion and solidarity are impossible, the concept that media cannot represent the mass audience does not exist in reality (Curran 1996: 128–129).

On the other hand, attitudes are spreading among researchers that conflicts undermine social stability, social order and harmony. Moreover, this conflict contradicts the original concept of media as a platform for discussing different views in a public space (Хабермас 2006). Conflict belittles one of the key values of contemporary media studies, namely the value of consensus, which implies that the media not only help to reach consensus on complex and controversial issues, but also establish a communication model aimed at seeking compromise and tolerating different views. In other words, open social communication among society’s members occur, making conflicts lose any reason and relevance (Manning 2001: 28).

The development of social media can lead only to the complexity of the system and nature of communication (Отечественная теория медиа 2019: 110). The diversification of media structures, the increase in the number of content producers and distributors, the dispersion of audiences, the diversity of media consumption practices and the social impact of media—it is difficult to list all the consequences of social media becoming a new environment of public life (Варганова 2014). Media have become influential tools that can shape the public opinion and identity of narrow and even closed communities, which is the result of different values, ethics and even ideological views of these communities (Кин 2020). These phenomena should be regarded as the results of social, cultural and intergenerational dynamics, which are intensified by the technological complexity of the media environment, leading to conflicts in the values of different audience groups (Dunas and Vartanov 2020; Vartanova and Gladkova 2020).

Research on the interaction between media and conflict has mainly focused on three aspects. First, media report conflicts to the society (and their audiences) during the mediation process by implementing a socially oriented normative approach. This key function of institutionally organized media remains important because the creation of global, national, and local agendas remains important, especially in the context of social uncertainty and the prevalence of COVID-19 (Vartanova and Gladkova 2020). Media reported various conflicts: political, military, environmental, corporate and others (Калюга 2015; Гольбранк 2019; Новгородова 2019). However, despite the innovation and transformation of the journalism industry, the principle of following ethics and professional codes is still the constant theoretical assumption in media conflictology (Прохоров 2011).
Second, media, whether traditional media or social media, are playing an increasingly independent role in the context of the growing process of media-tization, becoming formal participants, co-designers, co-organizers, and even instigators of conflicts, and becoming the environment for their existence. This characteristic of modern media communication is itself a conflict space. It not only makes media an information tool, but also makes media a full subject of conflict, which can strengthen or weaken the development of conflict (Байчик 2020; Кинаш 2017; Смирнова and Шкондин 2021; Couldry and Hepp 2017; Hjarvard 2013; Ndinojou et al. 2020).

Third, modern media have become an independent environment for generating conflicts that were initially absent or were present latently in the social environment, but as a result of changing media consumption/media activities, the audience has gained new forms of expression, status and subjectivity (Вартанова et al. 2021; Тышецкая 2021; Dunas and Vartanov 2020). This is related to the attributes of social media that form environmental and spatial characteristics in the virtual space according to the type of social system. Therefore, the virtual space generates self-referential entities, among which we emphasize the conflicts generated in the virtual mediatized environment, extrapolated at the same time into the physical space of the real society.

Revealing the relationship between media and conflict gives us reason to talk about the multi-level and multifaceted important aspects of conflict. The conflict in modern society is not only a war or armed confrontation reported by news media, but also a conflict between opposing social groups and individuals, their interests and values, which find very different understandings in the communication system of modern society (Вартанова 2021; Ugwuoke and Erubami 2021).

3 Research method

Based on our scholarly literature review, three research questions were posited, and the authors tried to answer these questions through empirical research.

**RQ1.** What types of conflicts have become the subject of study by the authors of articles in leading domestic and foreign academic publications in the field of media research?

**RQ2.** What theoretical and methodological approach (social or media-oriented) is the study of conflict based on?

**RQ3.** In this article’s analysis, which conflict subjects are key?
Meta-analysis was selected as the method of empirical research, during which the main groups of Russian and foreign academic journals are identified. The authors identified articles to analyze the interaction between conflict and media, and studied the titles, annotations and keywords.

The first group of journals includes the top five Russian publications according to the Science Index rating of the Russian Science Citation Index (in the thematic group, “Mass Communication, Journalism, Mass Media,” during 2015–2020). The list consists of the following journals: Mediascope, Tomsk State University Journal of Philology, Theoretical and Practical Issues of Journalism, Communication Studies, and Scholarly Communication Review. The sample set consisted of 1,753 articles.

The second group includes the top five foreign academic publications (according to the Scimago Journal & Country Rank indicator in the “Communication” section at the time of the empirical part of the research). This list includes Political Communication, Journal of Advertising, Journal of Communication, Big Data and Society, and Applied Linguistics. The sample set is 1,565 articles. Thus, a total of 3,318 articles were viewed in leading Russian and other journals.

The two rankings of Science Index of Russian Science Index and Scimago Journal & Country Rank are comparable, because they are respectively the most authoritative ranking measurers of scientific journals in modern scientific measurement systems in Russia and abroad. The study period and search area remain unchanged.

4 Conflict topics in domestic academic media discourse

Major Russian academic journals rarely discuss conflict topics (0.6% of the total sample), but focus on other subjects from different perspectives. Of the 10 articles in the representative sample, only three are related to armed political conflicts, and the remaining seven are related to ethnic politics, religion, environmental conflicts, contemporary global conflicts, student communication conflicts, conflict in communication situations as well as conflicts between civil society and the media (in Table 1, each article is numbered for reference).

The theoretical basis for studying all these types of conflicts is a socially oriented approach, which assumes that media participate in mediation when representing conflicts. The socially oriented approach starts from the premise that the macro process predetermines the mass communication process, that is, the more general process—politics, economy, anthropology, technology, culture, etc.
Table 1: Conflict topics reported by major Russian magazines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Publication information</th>
<th>Theoretical methods pointed out by the author</th>
<th>Empirical object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Казаков А. А.</td>
<td>Attributive agendas and frames of “Russian newspaper” and “Novaya Gazeta” in the context of methods of influencing audience (taking the conflict report in southeast Ukraine as an example) /Mediascope. In 2015, edition 2.</td>
<td>Agenda setting theory, framing</td>
<td>Novaya Gazeta (Russian newspaper)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Гольбрайх В. Б.</td>
<td>Ecological Conflict in Russian Television: The Discourse Possibility of Protest Movement //Mediascope. 2015, edition 3.</td>
<td>Social constructionism, Conflict sociology</td>
<td>Channel One Russia, NTV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Publication information</td>
<td>Theoretical methods pointed out by the author</td>
<td>Empirical object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Иванцова Е. В.</td>
<td>Speech Act of Dialect Language Personality in Conflict//Tomsk State University, Journal of Philology. 2020. No. 66. P26–44.</td>
<td>Conflictology and cognitive discourse approaches to the study of language personality in communication</td>
<td>The author archives materials, personal discourse of Siberian peasant woman, and collection methods into the speaker's language existence. The decrypted audio record has a total of about 10,000 pages of printed text.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Focused attention is paid to all areas, institutions and social functioning processes that can influence media.

Taking the materials of *Russia Daily and Novaya Gazeta* (No. 1) as an example, this paper studies the armed conflict in southeast Ukraine. Agenda setting theory and framing are selected as the main theoretical concepts. The media became the main body of the conflict, forming various controversial media reports (Казаков 2015). In this case, it has been found that media communication practices encourage rather than resolve conflicts. As the subject of the conflict, the power and the audience are still the main focus of consideration, because upholding the legitimacy of the conflict and adhering to their own positions are the main goals of the warring parties.

According to the news reports of Channel 1 and NTV, the protest movement “dramatized the situation” and successfully attracted TV channels’ attention to the conflict surrounding the road project (No. 2). The resonance of the federal authorities has enhanced the “speaking ability” of the Khimki forest defenders (Гольбраих 2015). In this article, the main body of the conflict is the authorities and civil society, but the representativeness of their relationship is not subject to the logic of cooperation and interaction, which may conform to the normative model.

Based on the analysis of Crimean media (No. 3), the conclusion is drawn that religion is politicized and focused on religious folk festivals. Noting the influence of the state and political subjects on news activities, the author believes that this has had an impact on the formation of the media agenda (Хруль 2017). Media space seems to be an area facing a conflict agenda determined by political actors. There is no consensus between the government and citizens.

The conclusions drawn from foreign (European and American) mass media reports on contemporary conflicts (No. 4) can be extrapolated to conflict mediation practices of all types and levels. Media reports do not conform to the concept of “peace journalism” (Galtung 2002): they emphasize violence, aggression, hostility, all events related to the enemy’s political and military actions, the threat of war spread, and inciting aggression in society. The media become the subject of conflict and the subject of “war news,” since their role behavior has a significant impact on the development of conflict situations (Якова 2018).

The report of *the New York Times* on two military operations in the Persian Gulf (1991 and 2003) provided a fairly balanced and convincing picture of events (No. 5). The newspaper seeks a relative balance, publishing neutral, positive and negative reports. According to the objective moral principle, high-quality reports of conflicts in American newspapers deprive the media of subjectivity (Новгородова 2020).
Academically, an interesting topic to study is violations of speech act norms that cause conflict in students’ communication (No. 6). This paper studies 186 conflict plots in the spontaneous oral narratives of college students in Tomsk, material recorded by the author on a tape recorder. The researchers found that in the daily discourse of participants of the same status, abnormal speech acts related to nonobservance of moral norms and politeness principles become conflicting. In the case analyzed, the main body of the conflict is the students themselves as the parties to the conflict, and the conflict escalations can be considered as non-compliance with the students’ ethics (Иванцова and Черных 2016).

Our example No. 7 is linguistic cognition and conceptual analysis of the intersection of literature (in this case, novels) and artistic discourse (Eureka Street by R.M. Wilson, Reading in the Dark by S. Dean, International Hotel by G. Patterson), and 245 editorial articles in the Opinion column in the Irish Times in 1996. The study found that the “Northern Ireland conflict” can be reflected in the author’s consciousness, reflecting personal values, so as to change the conflict ideas according to the author’s personal world outlook. In this case, the concept studied represents the universal psychological education reflecting the common national values (Костарева and Стринюк 2017). The subject of the conflict is the author of art and media texts.

Based on the materials of Siberian Rural Women’s Characteristic Discourse Archives (No. 8), this journal article studies language personality in communication according to conflict theory and cognitive discourse methods. This article records interpersonal conflicts in the family field. The most common is behavioral conflict (or conflict with behavioral components), which indicates that moral norms are dominated by personal motives. The subject of the conflict is the participant of communication, and the moral principle proves its relevance and key role again (Иванцова 2020).

The linguistic approach to the study of discourse space and the analysis of the structure and function of urban discourse have been applied to the review of more than 1,000 texts of the regional media in Omsk (No. 9). This paper argues that the realization of community conflict in urban discourse is related to the differentiation of urban views and cognitive concepts. In a bipolar environment, civil society has encountered difficulties in constructively solving the problems of modern cities. The main body of the conflict is different activist communities, as well as specific media representing different views (Оводова and Жигунов 2018).

After analyzing the speeches of American diplomats Nikki Haley, Jonathan Cohen and Rex Tillerson (No. 10), it is found that accusations, as a special type of media in American diplomatic discourse, may show international conflicts. On the one hand, it has updated the existing contradictions between countries, and on the other hand, it has updated the negative image of some countries and
their superiority to other countries. The accusation text has served as a tool of information and psychological warfare in the American diplomatic discourse (Горбачева and Дубенец 2019). Diplomats are the subject of the conflict.

Therefore, the analysis of the conflict subjectivity in domestic academic media shows that the key role of conflict escalation may belong to different participants: media, authorities, civil society or communities, and specific individuals. We must pay attention to the diversity of various theoretical methods, and not allow any one of the leading concepts to be omitted. This may indicate that a theoretical approach to conflict themes has not yet been developed in domestic media research.

Moral principles are the most important factor in the development of conflicts: the longer they last, the lower the possibility of conflict development. This applies not only to the media (the higher the quality of publications, the more neutral and peaceful the conflict agenda), but also to the specific communication practices of authors.

4.1 The theme of conflict in foreign academic media discourse

Among the highly ranked English-language academic journals, conflict topics were investigated 12 times in five years, accounting for 0.8% of the total sample. Publications that describe international armed confrontation as a conflict dominate (indicated in eight publications). Other types of conflicts include internal political conflicts, communication conflicts between immigrants and refugees, and identity conflicts in cross-cultural communication. The theoretical methodology of foreign research is usually based on media-oriented methodology, because many studies examined the impact of conflict media and their impacts on the audience, and regard communication practice as the media of conflict reproduction, taking into account the impact on young people’s ideological beliefs and Facebook friendship, news reports, etc. (See Table 2. The number of articles in the table is indicated in brackets below.).

Representatives of the media-oriented approach based their research on the argument that news media are relatively autonomous in the social structure. The news media are not only an intermediary between reality and individuals, but also an independent field—meaning, politics, economy, etc. This field has influence, but also can affect real life: social system, people. Therefore, news media can be seen as the source of social change. This kind of research focuses on news media content and the technical way of its transmission. The media-oriented approach not only recognizes that each specific media/media can disseminate
Table 2: Conflict topics reported by major foreign journals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Publication information</th>
<th>Theoretical methods pointed out by the author</th>
<th>Empirical object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nathan P. Kalmoe</td>
<td>Mixed Emotions: Beyond Fear and Hatred in International Conflict, by Andrew A. G. Ross, Political Communication. 2015</td>
<td>Concept of “emotional infection”</td>
<td>American media published reports on the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the terrorist attacks in Madrid in 2004, and the armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Shira Dvir Gvirsman, L. Rowell, Huesmann, Eric F. Dubow, Simha, F. Landau, Paul Boxer, Khalil Shikaki</td>
<td>The Longitudinal Effects of Chronic Mediated Exposure to political Violence on Ideological Beliefs About Political Conflicts Among Youths, Political Communication. 2016</td>
<td>Spiral rotation concept</td>
<td>Interview with Palestinian and Israeli residents (in each case, the interview was conducted separately with the child and his parent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Matthew A. Baum, Yuri M. Zhukov</td>
<td>Media Ownership and News Coverage of International Conflict, Political Communication. 2019</td>
<td>Framework concept</td>
<td>591,532 articles on US military operations in Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kosovo were published in 2,505 newspapers in 116 countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Publication information</td>
<td>Theoretical methods pointed out by the author</td>
<td>Empirical object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Nicholas A. John, Shira Dvir-Gvirsman</td>
<td>“I Don’t Like You Any More”: Facebook Unfriending by Israeli-Gaza Conflict of 2014, Journal of Communication. 2015</td>
<td>Echometer concept</td>
<td>Survey of 1013 Facebook users in Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Christian Baden, Keren Tenenboim-Weiblatt</td>
<td>Convergent News? A Longitudinal Study of Similarity and Dissimilarity in the Domestic and Global Coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Journal of Communication. 2017</td>
<td>Concept of media convergence</td>
<td>More than 200,000 articles, over the past 10 years, in 13 major Israeli, Palestinian, and international media on the Israeli Palestinian conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yun tai, King-wa Fu</td>
<td>Specificity, Conflict, and Focal Point: A Systematic Investigation into Social Media Censorship in China, Journal of Communication. 2020</td>
<td>Framework concept</td>
<td>Publication on WeChat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Cynthia J. White</td>
<td>Agency and Emotion in Narrative Accounts of Emergent Conflict in an L2 Classroom, Applied Linguistics. 2018</td>
<td>Social agent theory</td>
<td>Conflicts between foreign language classes for immigrants and refugees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
socio-cultural ideas, meanings and values, but also independently shapes culture through media content units.

When analyzing the materials of foreign media (SkyNews, Daily Mail, The Telegraph, CNN, BBC News, CBS News, The Guardian, Los Angeles Times, Channel 4, etc.), it is concluded that the focus has shifted from some subjects (power, politicians, generals) of the military conflict to other actors (journalists, terrorists, enemy leaders, ordinary people involved in the event). In theory, foreign media are no longer the “government mouthpiece” for reporting military conflicts, but more independent participants, which has been confirmed (Neumann 2015).

When analyzing the American media reports on the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Madrid terrorist attack in 2004 and the armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the article determines the social origin of emotion and describes the nature of emotion circulation (No. 2). The audience experiences similar emotions by touching objects that cause emotions and the emotions of people around them. The main site of the conflict is the media audience, who experienced some negative emotions and “infected” others from the environment, thus participating in the development of the conflict (Kalmoe 2015).

The high dependence of children and adolescents on the media has affected their views on political conflict, made their judgments clearer, and may increase their support for military action. This is the conclusion from interviews of Palestinian and Israeli residents (No. 3). In this case, the main site of the conflict also is the media audience, but the key factor for the escalation of the conflict is the characteristics and intensity of the audience’s media consumption (Gvirsman et al. 2016).

Based on the analysis of materials collected from an online survey completed by 1,653 American adults, it was found that when participants have a high level of personal aggressiveness, the use of offensive metaphors in political discussions will lead to tighter positions (No. 4). The survey revealed the potential power of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Publication information</th>
<th>Theoretical methods pointed out by the author</th>
<th>Empirical object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 2: (continued)
radical public opinion, the nature of polarization, and the importance of individual differences as factors affecting the development of conflict (Kalmoe et al. 2018).

The study was based on 591,532 articles on US military operations in Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan and Kosovo published by 2,505 newspapers from 116 countries (No. 5). The results show that media owned by a single owner can report foreign policy events in a uniform way. Market competition pressure may mitigate this impact and encourage individual publications to diversify their content (Baum and Zhukov 2019).

Research on 280,000 publications on Lexis and LexisNexis Academic archives raise the issue of the subjectivity of academia as an expert group in conflict publications (No. 6). Interviews with experts are often included in news publications, but they are often required to publish political comments unrelated to scientific research (Merkley 2020).

In the survey of 1,013 Israelis who used Facebook during the Palestinian conflict in 2014, the most common case is that users delete people who have “weak relationships” with them from their friends (No. 7). This conclusion is integrated into the current discussion on exclusion culture and echo chambers (John and Dvir Gvirsman 2015). The media audience is again the site of the conflict.

Studying more than 200,000 reports of 13 major Israeli, Palestinian and international media over the past decade on the Israeli Palestinian conflict showed a continuous trend, namely “news convergence” and unified interpretation of major conflict events (No. 8). Media became the site of the conflict, providing the audience with the “color” news they expected (Baden and Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2017).

Research on the behavior of Chilean social media audiences found that the moral framework helped to spread news among social media users, while the conflict framework and negative attention to issues such as economic impact reduced the spread of news media articles (No. 9). It reveals the gap between the framework of journalists’ and audiences’ preferences. The negative news framework has been identified as the subject of the conflict (Valenzuela et al. 2017).

A study on post publication review in China, taking WeChat as an example, confirmed that the narrowness of articles increases the possibility of being censored by government censors (No. 10). International trade articles containing conflict reports and even supporting political ideology are also prohibited by censors. The sites of conflict are clear statement and belief, and concentrated opinions of audience representatives (Tai and Fu 2020).

In the case study of foreign language classroom conflict between immigrants and refugees, there is a link between students’ emotional attitudes, independence and participation in foreign language learning (No. 11). The main body of the conflict is students, and the driving force for the escalation of the conflict is the lack of autonomy and participation in the education process (White 2018).
An analysis of interviews of U.S. interns in Japan reveals their desire to abide by polite and formal communication norms in Japan. However, this led to the opposite in that they began to emphasize that they did not belong to Japanese society (No. 12). In the cross-cultural communication studied, the site of conflict is the individual of different cultures, and the development factor of conflict is the desire to copy another socio-cultural environmental norm (Moody 2018).

Research shows that international armed political conflict is a key event on the news and academic agenda, but not the only one. The subjects of conflict found in foreign academic discourse are multi-level: media themselves, audiences, media relatives, and political power still play a key role. One factor in conflict escalation is morally incorrect views, which are presented in the form of categorical and dogmatic judgments, opinions and statements. In the theoretical methods of conflict research, the concept of framing is obviously in a leading position.

The analysis of academic discourse on the subject of conflict at home and abroad reveals the fundamental importance of ethics as a key determinant of the development of conflict. These determinants apply to conflicts of any level and type, from international conflicts and armed conflicts to interpersonal conflicts and family conflicts. Ignorance of morality and ethics leads to increased conflict. Therefore, in the context of social reality mediatization, a balanced understanding of the topic of conflict by the research community is of great importance.

5 Discussion and conclusion

Media in social conflicts are multifaceted. Obviously, the theoretical views of the media are dominant, not only as independent observers and interpreters of conflicts, but also as partners in the conflict process. The logic of the development of humanistic knowledge in the academy aims to emphasize the mediation role of media in conflict resolution and the role of media in conflict degradation.

In the modern social conflict, media play various roles: informer, accomplice, and producer of social conflict. Media are not only tools for conflict diffusion, but also space for conflict existence and environment for conflict generation. At the same time, digital media communication transcends the boundaries of institutionalized, professional and industrialized social communication fields, enabling participants to take advantage of the organizational and mobilization potential of the Internet and new technology digital platforms to directly participate in conflict communication (Eskjaer et al. 2015). As social media and digital platforms occupy a dominant position in the citizens’ media consumption structure, and their inherent ability to build reality in media communication technology, they have become the focus of academic interest precisely from the perspective of conflict development.
Media communication has become a medium for conflict generation and existence, involving multiple actors (see Tables 1 and 2). These subjects are: 1) institutions and media involved in setting the mass information agenda, whether they act for the interests of the nation state or other political and economic elites; and 2) social media. Conflict is represented by its audience (citizens affected by the conflict or people witnessing the conflict, and observers, witnesses who are not directly involved in the conflict but know about it conflict).

Through the analysis of domestic and foreign academic discussions on conflict, it is found that the media communication interaction of conflict subjects involves the participation of different conflict subjects, but often not talking about constructive interaction.

In all the analyzed articles, the media communication model is far from ideal, because it lacks the ethical and moral understanding of the communication purpose shared by all participants in the communication process, including in conflict situations. Studies often describe a key conflict actor and its goals, but do not take into account the integrity and complexity of the conflict, nor the positions (and roles) of all actors interacting in the conflict. The academic discourse on conflict studies seems to be uneven, especially in Russian media studies. On the one hand, the influence of the political and sociological methods that neutrally regard conflict as reality is obvious; on the other hand, philosophy and media research methods are obvious. They consider conflict from the perspective of morality and ethics, and from the perspective of value. In this case, conflict is anti-value, and the opposite is to achieve peace, harmony and well-being.

Most of the articles in the analyzed sample do not have moral and ethical components but view conflict from the perspective of information value rather than from the perspective of peace value (moral and ethical issues are described only in the four articles analyzed, see No. 1, 6, 8 in Table 1 and No. 9 in Table 2). Research shows that conflict is rarely criticized. This is because academia usually regards it as a natural manifestation of social life, which conforms to the theoretical method of social conflict and is also the professional standard of journalism, because conflict determines the information value of media content.

At the same time, the theory and methodology of conflict need to formulate a new norm, which is compatible with the interdisciplinary approach to consider the nature of conflict, reporting norms and media impact. In the case of conflict, the goal should be to resolve and end the conflict and eliminate contradictions conducive to human life, peace and well-being. Habermas emphasized that the goal setting of any communication mode must be based on morality (Хабермас 2006). He proposed a primitive model of communication process, whose effect is based on certain communication behavior of moral consciousness. The purpose of
communication as a social action is for participants to reach an agreement on achieving common goals under specific circumstances.

Communicative behavior allows a fundamental reconsideration of social communication. Habermas concluded that it is necessary to implement communicative actions at the level of social strategic management to give the status of social state and social ideology. Giving up other communication models and turning to communication action models will help create new forms of social governance, not only for the communication flow, but also for the whole society.

This philosophical position is consistent with the normative model of journalism (Прохоров 2011), in which the observance of not only professional, but also ethical standards is the basic principle of the profession. We believe that the conflict in the normative theory of journalism is not value, but anti-value, which hinders the balanced operation of society and the whole social system.

Therefore, it can be concluded that, on the basis of theoretical and empirical analysis of academic discourse, it reveals that it actually lacks the understanding of conflict as a counter value. Researchers focus on a type of communication, which does not pay attention to understanding the position of another communicator, but emphasizes the position of the communicator, as well as a type of communication that does not pay attention to the humanistic effects of the universal human scale. The determined conflict subjects are different in level and type; the concept of media as the subject (the sub-subjects are media owners, journalists, audiences and media consumption) and political power as the subject (the sub-subjects are politicians, diplomats and citizens) dominate.

In the academic field of media research, further thinking about the direction of conflict should be considered as focusing on ethics and morality, which is the key driving factor for the degradation of conflict. It is shown at all levels and is meaningful for any type and theme. This method needs to be theorized and conceptualized.

Research funding: This work was supported by the Russian Science Foundation (project number 22-18-00225).

References

In Russian

В а г г а 2021. К вопросу о субъектности конфликта в медиакоммуникационной среде [On the Subjectivity of Conflict in the Media Communication Environment]. Медиа́льманах. 3(104).
Иванцова, Е. В. & З. В. Черных 2016. Нарушение норм речевого поведения как причина конфликтов в студенческой коммуникации [Violation of linguistic norms is the cause of students’ communication conflicts]. Вестн. Томск. гос. ун-та. Филология. 5 (43). 31–45.
Кин, Дж. 2020. Демократия и декаданс медиа [Democracy and the decline of the media]. М.: ИД ГУ ВШЭ.


In English


