Covering Contemporary Conflict: Visions for the European Approach to Peace

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# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE: ‘NEW WARS’: UNDERSTANDING CONTEMPORARY CONFLICT</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Global Trends in War and Conflict</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Goals and Methods of Contemporary Conflict</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Actors of the Conflict Cycle</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 War Economy</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO: NEW WARS, NEW PATHWAYS TO PEACE?</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Concepts for Peace in Context</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Liberal Peace &amp; The United Nations</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Human Security &amp; The European Union</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER THREE: COVERING CONTEMPORARY CONFLICT:</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Reporting ‘New Wars’: Trends and Challenges</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Peace Journalism</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Humanitarian Journalism</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Human Rights Journalism</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR: MEDIA POTENTIAL FOR THE EUROPEAN APPROACH TO PEACE</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

Recent years have seen a remarkable distortion in the cause-and-effect chain of wars and conflicts. Scenes of violence and instability are characterized by a high level of spatial and structural fragmentation. Influenced by an intricate set of factors from the political, economic and social realm, war has eroded centralized models of state authority while increasingly impacting the sphere of civilians. In response to these types of ‘new wars’ (Mary Kaldor), policy-makers and analysts have gradually moved away from classic models of top-down peace-making and towards comprehensive strategies that include principles of law enforcement and human rights, empowerment of the local civil society, and support for alternative forms of legitimate political authority. In this context, the news media’s approach to cover contemporary wars must be reconsidered. Current coverage tends to revolve around traditional and binary conceptions of war, instead of conveying the complex reality on the ground. To diversify the journalistic gaze, renewed political concepts such as the Human Security model can serve as an inspirational blueprint for how to reform media practices in a more pluralistic and proactive manner. Likewise, security actors like the European Union could benefit from comprehensive war reporting and should foster better flows of communication from and within the conflict cycle. For this, transnational collaborations between NGOs, monitoring agencies, legal experts, journalists and civil society not merely form a necessity, but a vital opportunity.

Keywords:
War, Conflict, Peacebuilding, Media, Human Security, European Union, Local Ownership, Capacity Building, Comprehensive Approach
Introduction

Recent years have seen a remarkable distortion in the cause-and-effect chain of wars and conflicts. Situated in the arena of globalization, they are subject to an extreme disintegration of the spatial and structural boundaries that once defined them. In a world more interconnected than ever before, today’s wars are liquefying the paradigms of victory and defeat, soldier and civilian, good and bad. At the same time, wars hold the power to restrain the processes of globalization. Unearthing the most barbaric forms of violence, they force entire populations to live in a state of primitive misery and naked survival. As a result, “wars epitomize a new kind of global/local divide between those members of a global class who can speak English, have access to the Internet and satellite television, who use dollars or euros or credit cards, and who can travel freely, and those who are excluded from global processes, who live off what they can sell or barter or what they receive in humanitarian aid, whose movement is restricted by roadblocks, visas and the cost of travel, and who are prey to sieges, forced displacement, famines, landmines” (Kaldor, 2012, p. 5).

The clash between integration and segregation stretches into mediated representations of war as well: images of human suffering appear next to holiday photos in our Facebook feed. On Youtube, we can endlessly replay a 2,40-minutes video showing the destruction of a 4,000-year old historical temple, uploaded by the Islamic State. And the Twitter-account of 9-year old Bana Alabed from Aleppo counts almost as many followers as the death estimates after seven years of civil war. These seemingly disjointed analogies illustrate how disproportionate mediated landscapes have become. Even the most complex structures of war are consumed by the minutiae. By now, news audiences are used to the ephemerality of social media and online platforms, on which information either goes ‘viral’, or dies in an instant. Bargaining with the fluctuant attention span of their readers, media-makers increasingly seek ways to trim, compress and digitalize story formats accordingly.

In this context, it might seem ludicrous to open up a debate about the benefits of steady, long-sighted and comprehensive journalistic coverage of recent war scenarios. Nevertheless, there is degree of urgency to do so: Since the arrival of millions of refugees from the Middle East and Africa in Europe, policy-makers have renewed
attempts to classify the ‘root causes’ of migration, such as violence, poverty or political prosecution. Across the European Union, migrants are examined based upon schemes of gravity. For instance, those who escaped airstrikes are more likely to be granted asylum than those displaced by economic insecurities. However, efforts to regulate migration by means of categorization stand in direct contrast to the collapsing sovereignty of interpretation inherent in today’s conflict scenarios. Poverty, violence and political prosecution are no longer separate causes but together form an entangled set of drivers. To accept patterns of simplification, therefore, bears more than the plain risk of ignorance.

This dissertation sets out to link recent conceptualizations of contemporary wars with aspects of communication and representation through the media. Based upon the general observation that the parameters of war and conflict have substantially changed, it is argued that media-makers and journalists must equally rethink their role within this process and develop a proactive and dynamic approach for their coverage. In doing so, practical strategies promoted by policy-makers and analysts shall be integrated, as they themselves should be subject to public debate and offer valuable incentives for a renewed journalistic agenda.

Chapter 1 illuminates the various factors constituting contemporary warfare. Mary Kaldor’s holistic conception of ‘new wars’ is used as the theoretical cornerstone to ponder on the following questions: what are the driving forces behind ongoing conflict? What characterizes the violence we witness? Who is involved in the conflict cycle and what is their role? And to what extent can ongoing instability be linked to economic considerations? By zooming into various scenes of conflict across the globe, the first chapter illustrates the complexity of ‘new wars.’

Chapter 2 builds on the scenarios presented in chapter 1 to assess how relevant actors are currently handling these matters. It sketches a global shift in the understanding of conflict, reflected in certain developments and policies within the institutional spectrum of the United Nations and the European Union. Particularly the EU foreign policy puts forth several thought-provoking attempts, seemingly more equipped to face a changing security environment.
Chapter 3 brings in the role of the media: in ‘new wars’, aspects of security, access, information verification, balance, and authenticity pose challenges to traditional journalistic practices and have already impacted coverage to some extent. These trends make clear that standard event-driven journalism, in part, fails to convey the new reality. The theoretical frameworks of Peace Journalism, Humanitarian Journalism, and Human Rights Journalism offer a starting point to reopen the debate since together they can compile a more multifaceted journalistic agenda.

Chapter 4 explores opportunities for such an agenda, using examples of the EU strategy, specifically the Union’s funding of journalistic, monitoring and research agencies on the ground. The idea that the EU can foster better flows of communication is intriguing, therefore some suggestions are laid out for how to approach this more holistically.
Chapter 1
‘New Wars’: Understanding Contemporary Conflict

1.1 Global Trends in War and Conflict

Grasping the nature of global conflict today requires a kaleidoscopic eye. War has always cut through the political, social, economic and psychological realm of nations and communities, however nowadays, these do not merely represent the areas affected by warfare, but all form a possible source of war—creating or –enabling factors. An imbalanced economy might weaken a government’s political legitimacy; an unstable government could fail to counter divisions; divisions might turn into violence; violence will have people fleeing, and displacement would contribute to even greater economic imbalances. Most conflicts today, therefore, appear rather as a vicious circle than a cathartic sequel.

This multiplicity of factors is not only found in expert analysis and commentary but is equally reflected in statistic attempts to measure peace and conflict today. The Institute for Economics and Peace, which annually embarks on the complex endeavour to measure peace based upon all sorts of data, states that “most analysis of peace in the 20th and early 21st century has focused almost exclusively on war and conflict. However, trends in direct conflict alone cannot convey the bigger picture, which includes internal societal unrest, political instability, and the level of resources needed to prevent violence” (Global Peace Index, 2018, p. 32). In doing so, the researchers composed their data based upon twenty-three qualitative and quantitative indicators, that recognize not only aspects such as the development of armies, conflict-related deaths, and terrorist attacks but also the functionality of governments, criminality rates, corruption and even ‘Acceptance of the Rights of Others.’ That said, their main finding—the level of global peacefulness deteriorated continuously over the past four years; last year by 0.27 per cent, a total of 2.38 over the past ten years (Global Peace Index, 2018, p. 2)—by no means depicts an increasingly conflict-ridden planet as the product of a linear development (See Figure 1).

Instead, those numbers stem from contradictory processes: 92 countries worldwide are witnessing deteriorations in their level of peacefulness; meanwhile, 72 countries have
seen improvements. Zooming in, these contrasts persist: four of the five largest improvements occurred in Sub-Saharan Africa, a region known for its chronic instability. As a whole, the region indeed witnessed a general deterioration in its overall peacefulness. However, amid these shaky surroundings, the Gambia scored last year’s biggest success by improving political stability and relations with neighbouring countries after the election of president Adama Barrow in April 2017. At the same time, Europe—the world’s most peaceful region—saw one of the five largest falls in peacefulness: Spain significantly lowered the overall score after political unrest over the secession of Catalonia and a deadly terrorist attack in Barcelona. While the Gambia’s overall score remains far below the one of Spain, these two examples illustrate the various levels considered relevant for measuring and understanding peace.

Equally contrasting poles surface when looking at the GPI’s data on militarization, one of the more classic indicators for war and peace developments. Despite public perceptions to the contrary, the researchers note, military spending and the size of the armed forces in many countries have been reduced: In 119 countries, the number of armed services personnel has fallen. And 102 countries now invest less money per GDP into military expenditures. Yet at the same time, it is the world’s most peaceful
countries that export the largest amount of arms with Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the Netherlands ranging among the top ten next to well-known military empires like France, the US, Russia and China. Thus, stable peace at home does not rule out the involvement in war-related activities elsewhere. In fact, “more than one third of armed conflicts are civil wars with international powers involved” (Global Peace Index, 2018, p. 33).

Most significantly is the changing relationship between those trained to fight wars and those eventually enduring its consequences. The number of soldiers killed on the battlefield in the past 25 years constitutes merely three per cent of all battle deaths counted over the span of the last century. Instead, civilians now account for 90 per cent of all war casualties (Milibrand, 2019). And for the first time in modern history, nearly one per cent of the global population is displaced (Global Peace Index, 2018). Conflict, violence, and instability, it follows, can increasingly be viewed as a phenomenon less related to a nation’s military activities. And while civilians have always suffered under the consequences of war, they now have become its main subject.

At the forefront of analysing the shifting phenomena of contemporary conflict is Mary Kaldor, Professor of Global Governance and Director of the Conflict and Civil Society Research Unit at the London School of Economics. Her pioneer concept of ‘new wars’ has substantially shaped the discourse of conflict, its resolution, and prevention; while remodelling prominent concepts of ‘hybrid wars’, ‘degenerate warfare’ or ‘low-intensity conflicts’. Though still working with the term ‘war’, Kaldor largely addresses a ‘new type of organized violence’ (2012, p. 1), that altogether includes remnants of traditional warfare, crime and violations of human rights. ‘New wars’ describe conflicts that essentially are marked by a high level of fragmentation and the breakdown of most systems, rules and patterns that once constituted the parameters of warfare. Effectively, “the distinction between what is private and what is public, state and non-state, informal and formal, what is done for economic and what for political motives, cannot easily be applied” (2012, p. 2).

Bearing the above in mind, in the following chapter I will extract a skeleton of Kaldor’s analysis to substantiate and occasionally contrast her evaluation with recent examples from global conflict spheres. For means of structure and clarity, I will
organize the examples around selected categories that can be carved out from Kaldor’s multiple works: the goals and strategies of ‘new wars’, actors of the conflict cycle and the economic means that enable or prolong instability. However, as it will become apparent, even these categories are strongly interlinked and so are the tiniest details often too holistic to be pinned down to a single category.

1.2 Goals and Methods of Contemporary Conflict

One is quick to assume a change in the motivational forces behind contemporary conflicts when contrasting them with the two World Wars, or even earlier battles in history: back then, conquer territory and lands in order to build states and empires was the central ideology that motivated leaders to bundle all resources and send off their men to the frontlines. Consequently, soldiers were equipped with the mantra of patriotism; a deep identification with the homeland and cultural heritage was meant to serve as sufficient purpose to defend and fight for national interests. Today, according to Kaldor, geopolitical goals have largely been replaced by the driving forces of identity politics (2012, p. 7), referring to cases where violent means are said or thought to be necessary to defend religious or ethnic existences and/or related political rights. In a way, this notion goes hand in hand with the fact that civil and intra-state wars have come to dominate over ‘classic’ state-to-state warfare, indicating that tensions among different fractions of a population or with their nation’s government occur more frequently than military endeavours over territory and borders.

Adding to that, one should differentiate between those who merely mobilize for war and those who eventually raise the weapon. For the former, narratives of identity politics that appeal to a particular societal group and their shared sense of disadvantage can serve as a powerful source of political legitimation. Geopolitical goals might therefore simply be wrapped into narratives of identity to generate popular support for offense and hide self-beneficiary motivations. In contrast, the societal group in question might truly identify with the claims presented and might have directly or indirectly experienced cases in which their identity has been under attack or repressed in any kind of way. Thus, dissolving violent motivations among those actually fighting for a cause close to their living reality requires a much more sensitive approach. On a different note, taking up arms can also be the result of financial necessity or
sociocultural custom (as will be explored in section 1.4). Equally, ideological drivers such as patriotism should not entirely be dismissed—a deep-felt connection to one’s homeland can lead to violent discontent over how a current leader is shaping the country’s future (for example Syria, Libya), or can deepen disputes over how it and by whom it should be governed (for example Venezuela, Ukraine).

Inherent in identity politics is the aspect of particularism, which is key to Kaldor’s argument. In a fragile, undemocratic political climate—for instance, in a country where religious clientelism defines political participation—non-inclusive leadership is likely to contribute to ‘us’ and ‘them’ perceptions among the population. This by no means is a new phenomenon: before the age of colonization, “most societies had only a loose sense of ethnic identity,” and it was “the Europeans with their passion for classification” (Chinkin & Kaldor, 2017, p. 84), who manifested ethnic categorization, such as the Hutu-Tutsi distinction in Rwanda under the Belgian administration, or the Malian Tuareg tribe, classified as such by French colonizers. Once colonial ties were lifted and “post-independence hopes faded, many politicians began to appeal to particularistic tendencies. (...) In some countries such as Sudan, Nigeria or Zaire what have been called ‘predatory’ regimes developed in which access to power and personal wealth depended on religion or tribe” (Chinkin & Kaldor, 2017, p. 84-85). This not only happened in Africa but also in the Middle East, where “in many cases, the artificial, European-created state never managed to obtain the loyalty of residents of the territory. Iraq, Libya, and Syria are all artificial states in the process of decomposing violently into smaller, more homogeneous entities organized along ethnonational lines” (Lind, 2015). The end of the Cold War only fuelled some of these tendencies even further when foreign assistance was replaced by pressure for democratization and many leaders began applying forms of identity politics in a desperate grip on power.

For example, divisions between the factions opposing each other in the ongoing South Sudanese civil war can be traced back to the British rule during the 19th century. Some groups of the Dinka tribe made their accommodation with the British, while other groups such as the Nuer strongly opposed the foreign leaders. As a result, tensions between the two factions rose. Today, with the colonial rule long over, it is precisely this tribal division that current leaders re-conceptualize to justify violence. Dinka
President Salva Kiir and former minister Riek Machar both actively fuel a hateful climate through “inflammatory, polarizing and ethically demeaning rhetoric” (Almquist Knopf, 2016, p. 5-8). Though a sense of “us” and “them” between the tribes might have been around for much longer, its incorporation into the leaders’ warfare strategy has transformed previous divisions into actual, existential fears of the ‘other.’

Most importantly, this shows how identities are ‘locked’ over the course of conflict. As Kaldor and Chinkin note, war has the potential to solidify previously less relevant societal differences: “Identity is fluid and changing; most human beings have multiple identities. War is an important mechanism through which identities are constructed and fixed” (2017, p. 8-9).

The methods and patterns of violence adopted in such conflicts might form one of the most crucial features of ‘new wars.’ According to Kaldor, armed actors today borrow from traditional guerrilla techniques, best illustrated by Mao Tse Dung’s famous notion of ‘like a fish in the sea’: revolutionary warfare usually operates in distance from central administration structures and in a dispersed, highly mobile and impulsive fashion. But in contrast to revolutionary aims of winning the ‘hearts and minds’ of the population to gain power, most armed groups run for the opposite: “poison the sea of the fish,” as Kaldor puts it (2012, p. 102-103). In doing so, violence against civilians has become the primary tool to establish political control, ranging from systematic murder, ethnic cleansing, executions, torture, sexual violence, suicide bombings, landmines, as well as economic (famines, sieges) and psychological warfare (for example, the destruction of cultural heritage). On top of that, groups may aim for high visibility of these atrocities using social media and mass communication to spread fears and involve as many people as possible to “establish a shared complicity, to sanction violence against the hated ‘other’ and to deepen divisions” (Kaldor, 2012, p. 104; Chinkin and Kaldor, 2017, p. 14). One aspect is crucial for later considerations: these atrocities are all severe human rights and international law violations, which have always been a part of wars but used to be considered ‘illegitimate side-effects’. Today, they have evolved into essential instruments of the warfare strategy (Chinkin and Kaldor, 201, p. 15).
1.3 Actors of the Conflict Cycle

This section assembles and discusses various actors involved in contemporary armed conflict, categorized broadly the way Kaldor does (2012, p. 96-102). However, based on her general depiction of conflict as an all-encompassing phenomenon, I extend these considerations by not only debating the various parties actively fighting in a conflict but also include unarmed actors, such as aid workers and civilians. This will also lay the foundation for later debates about civilian-led peacebuilding (see chapter 3).

1.3.1 Those With Arms: State and Sub-State Fighting Units

Involved in battle-related activities, according to Kaldor and Chinkin, are “remnants or bits of the regular armed forces, paramilitary groups, warlords, jihadists, terrorists, mercenaries, private security contractors and criminal groups” (2017, p. 11), both from the local sphere and recruited elsewhere. The strong presence and increasing influence of these various fighting units in many wars today epitomizes a decentralization of armed power, or how Kaldor calls it, a nation state’s loss over its monopoly of legitimate organized violence. (2012, p.5.) Often, various factors contribute to this process. One being the spread of criminality or corruption, which weakens the central economy and therefore decreases the state’s ability to uphold a functional military apparatus. Without state revenue and a system of taxation, governments fail to acquire modern equipment, training facilities and the resources needed to pay their soldier’s salaries. In the wake of crippling prestige and legitimacy, a state fails to “mobilize popular support in order to raise money and men” (Kaldor, 2012, p. 6).

On the global stage, the ability of a state to use unilateral force in the modern age has been greatly weakened due to a ‘global military integration’ (Kaldor, 2012, p. 6), visible in military and political alliances (such as NATO), international trade regulations, arms control agreements and international law designed to criminalize acts of aggression. However, by outsourcing the use of force to sub- or non-state actors, many states have managed to bypass these regulations, which further contributes to the financial, geographical and physical fragmentation of armed actors.
In the Middle East and North Africa Region (MENA), where almost all countries are to one degree or another involved in armed conflict and where four of the world’s ten least peaceful countries are situated (Global Peace Index, 2018, p. 4), the state of affairs of the armed forces illustrates some of these tendencies. A result of colonial dependencies and political fragility throughout history, many MENA states have never accomplished to fully professionalize their defence apparatus by separating military leadership from the political executive. Additionally, a division persists between regular troops and a special force tasked with protecting the government, as well as asymmetric subdivisions into “elite units and ‘cannon-fodder’” (Biscop & Sassel, 2017, p. 3). The fragmentation together with insufficient training of officers and corps has entailed weak performances in actual combat situations. Especially in Yemen, Syria, Libya, and Iraq, the weak or fractured central authorities have therefore diverted responsibilities to sub-state security actors, overturning “long-held norms of sovereignty and civil-military relations” (Wehrey, 2018). The weakness of the armed forces in most MENA countries is also visible in their strong dependence on foreign assistance and material supply. Despite a growing trend of striving towards more independence through domestic production sites, many states have not yet reached a level of quality and quantity comparable to established suppliers. Coherently, the MENA region’s demand for ammunition is growing: arms imports increased by 130 per cent in the Middle East and by 9 per cent in North Africa since 2010 (Biscop & Sassel, 2017, p.3).

The wars of recent years have further destabilized military structures. In Iraq, the government had to rebuild its armed forces entirely from scratch after the 2003 U.S. invasion. When the so-called Islamic State (ISIS) took control over significant areas, the already relatively small Iraqi army almost collapsed under the loss of 146,000 troops. Their performance was so weak, that the autonomous Kurdish Peschmerga was considered a more reliable partner and so received far more U.S. funds (Biscop & Sassel, 2017, p. 21).

Libya remains the tragic prime example of a collapsing centralized state authority and with it the loss of control over the armed forces. Since the revolution, the weak internationally recognized government has had no control over the national army, which instead largely followed opposing General Haftar. Strikingly, in the Libyan
case, the command over the armed forces provided almost no advantage in the power relations on the ground. As of April 2019, a vast amount of powerful militias stands eye-to-eye with the armed forces, occupying and governing much of the country, including the capital (Lacher and al-Idrissi, 2018).

Caught up in a similar stalemate, Yemen’s weak state military has been largely unsuccessful to win back any territory controlled by armed groups. Beyond that, Yemen presents a case where even strong international support for their fractured national army was not enough to counter the opposing Houthi rebels: In the attempt to aid President Abd Rabbh Mansour Hadi, Saudi Arabia does not solely rely on backing up pro-Hadi forces by air support, but recruits Yemeni civilians from refugee camps to join the fighting. For the June 2018 offensive on the crucial port city of Hodeida, locals without military training, but with knowledge of the streets, suburbs, airport, and roads seemed to have been considered just as valuable as regular soldiers and were paid high salaries by the Emirate (Middle East Eye, 2018). On top of that, the Saudis are thought to have flown in approximately 14,000 Sudanese militiamen to fight in tandem with local forces, many of them either fighters or desperate first- and second-generation survivors of the conflict in Darfur—some as young as 14 years old (Kirkpatrick, 2018). Riyadh commanded these forces mainly by remote control through headsets and GPS systems, having them trained and uniformed only two weeks ahead of combat. The fact that one of the richest and most developed countries in the region patches together legitimate and illegitimate, professional and amateur, retired and under-aged fighters for its military coalition not only raises multiple ethical questions but confirms the decay of organized military force as the primary component of war in the most drastic way.

1.3.2 Those With Arms: Paramilitary Groups & Organized Militias

According to Kaldor, paramilitary groups are the most common actor in conflict today, both origin and result of the fragmented military sphere. Paramilitaries can be under the command of a nation state’s government, yet they do not officially belong to the armed forces. Often, they are “established by governments in order to distance themselves from the more extreme manifestations of violence” (Kaldor, 2012, p. 97). As such, they might have emerged from a particular political party or group and are organized around an individual leader. Therefore, ties to a government institution are
not always easy to trace back. In some instances, it might only be training and equipment supply that upholds initial links.

For instance, this can be witnessed in the array of Palestinian armed factions actively involved in supporting President Bashar al-Assad’s military campaign in Syria. The country has long been home to large amounts of Palestinian refugees, who mostly enjoy the same economic and civil rights like the Syrian population. However, regarding defence, the government retained a separate arrangement: the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) was once set up as the military wing of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) during an Arab League summit in 1964, but ended up never being controlled by a single country. Instead, various host governments, such as Syria, took over their command. Brigades in Egypt, Jordan and Syria were staffed with Palestinian refugees, which to them provided an alternative to performing their military service in the host country’s army (Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2002). At the same time, the host governments were able to tailor the paramilitary’s function to their political strategies and deploy troops covertly. For example, during the 1970 Jordanian civil war, hastily repainted Syrian tanks under command of the PLA were sent into Jordan to support Palestinian guerrilla forces (Wikipedia, 2018). Next to the PLA, other Palestinian paramilitaries are involved in different regions: the As-Sai’iqa (a Palestinian Ba’athist political and military faction equally created and controlled by the Syrian government) rose to Assad’s support during his 2018 offensive on Southern Damascus, while the influential Liwa al-Quds (a group identifying as Sunni Palestinian) mainly operates in the Aleppo Governorate. Just like the Syrian government has operationalized and integrated diaspora paramilitary groups into their military strategy, neighbouring countries like Iran or Lebanon have sent their own paramilitary groups fighting alongside Assad, though often for different reasons.

The multi-levelled identities and vague operational modes of paramilitary organizations contribute to fighting units being in a constant state of flux, strongly influenced by the onset or end of a conflict in the wider region. In reality, they often are hard to distinguish from non-state armed groups, who, in theory, pursue their goals entirely disconnected from any type of political body involved in the war but might receive indirect support from states elsewhere (Hofmann, 2016, p. 396). To put it differently, this may be everyone with access to a weapon, who, inspired or threatened
by ongoing violence in his country or community took up arms and joined any loose association to fight against the government, other ethnic groups, terrorists or extremists. For others, joining a militia might have been the only remedy against job insecurity and poverty. For instance, in many Middle Eastern countries “service in a militia has acquired a day-to-day normalcy” providing a “source of meaning” (Wehrey, 2018) especially in areas where the youth has little educational or financial opportunities to pursue another path.

1.3.3 Those Without Arms: Aid Workers & Non-Governmental Organizations
Sprouting in the 1990s and multiplying over the course of the 21st century, non-governmental organizations have emerged as a crucial actor in almost every global conflict scenario. As neither part of the fighting, nor directly linked to any political body on the scene, NGOs can be understood as a linking element between warring parties, national and international political actors, local institutions and the affected civil society (internally displaced persons and refugees, jeopardized minorities and communities deprived of any livelihood due to the conflict).

Most prominently stand large-scale international NGOs that provide emergency and relief services, often in extension to the work of UN agencies. Not all of them operate exclusively in conflict-ridden zones but fight poverty on a larger scale—though 59 per cent of the 753 million people suffering under extreme poverty do live in environments impacted by conflict (Global Humanitarian Assistance Report, 2018). Correspondingly, the largest recipients of aid in 2017 were war-torn Syria, Yemen, and Iraq. Over the last decade, the aid sector has grown into a multi-million dollar industry—both demand and supply have produced record figures: In 2017, a total of $27.3 billion US dollar was poured into humanitarian assistance, compared to $18.4 billion US dollar in 2013 (Global Humanitarian Assistance Report, 2018) and merely $5.9 billion US dollar in 2000 (Frangonikolopoulos, 2010, p. 52). Yet, according to the UN Secretary-General, as much as $11 billion US dollar is still lacking to meet the actual needs of today’s fragile populations (Guterres, 2017).

Large imbalances persist between the capacities of dominant international NGOs (most of which are based in either the U.S. or Europe) and smaller, locally based organizations. In 2017, four billion US dollar—around 20 per cent of all government
funding for humanitarian assistance—was transferred directly to NGOs (the majority of 60 per cent travels through multilateral organizations, such as the UN). Of this sum, international NGOs received 94 per cent, while local NGOs received just 0.4 per cent straight from the donors (Global Humanitarian Assistance Report, 2019). Critics have widely addressed these grave asymmetries within the humanitarian industry, not only diagnosing a Western-centric bias in the global aid agenda but also linking it to inefficiencies and failures in crisis management. Almost in unison, it is argued that investing in and strengthening localized partnerships and initiatives would both reduce cost and contribute to sustainable long-term solutions (Barnett & Walker, 2015), as will be explored in the following sections.

The emergency responses by NGOs in situations of sudden need and existential struggle are indisputably of vital importance. Especially with wars increasingly occurring in the environment of disintegrated or failed nation states, NGOs often substitute for the basic services a government can no longer uphold. In one way, the position of some NGOs in the conflict cycle as bottom-up, non-state and ad hoc installed networks could be compared to the position of non-state armed groups: adjacent to the traditional state apparatus, they expand the list of aperiodic influencers, both adapting and contributing to the ever-changing conflict landscape.

As wars have gotten more complex in nature, the NGO sector has equally expanded its operational areas beyond the distribution of food and medicine. Next to large aid providers such as Médicines Sans Frontières, CARE, Worldvision, Oxfam or Save the Children, various other disciplines have emerged: players like Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch (HRW) have committed themselves to the monitoring of rights and civilian conditions, while associations like the Center for Preventive Action, Saferworld or Search for Common Ground focus on conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes. Other organizations have even more specialized goals, such as Geneva Call (working against the use of anti-personnel landmines) or the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, who have invoked new legal frameworks to tackle crimes against children more effectively (Hofmann, 2006, p. 403).

In respect to notions of ‘new wars’ and the following considerations on pathways towards peace, particularly NGOs that monitor, document and communicate
(opportunities for) peace processes should be highlighted. Kaldor notes that NGOs play a key role in reconstructing any kind of legitimacy on the ground (2012, p. 124). For instance, they can pave the way for judicial prosecution of war crimes, which helps local populations to overcome the scars of division and develop trust in their country’s political future. Admittedly, in the past, these processes were in part successful due to the high-profile status of NGOs such as Human Rights Watch. A famous example is the case of HRW researcher Fred Abrahams testifying against Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic in the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in 2002. HRW had begun to collect evidence on the scene already during the early stages of the war. They not only published the material and raised awareness through the media but allegedly mailed it to Milosevic himself, later stating that his awareness of the atrocities committed by his troops makes him convictable under international humanitarian law (HRW, 2017).

The case stresses the role of NGOs as advanced witnesses to war: Forming crucial melting points of information, they disseminate first-hand accounts of the war into all directions of the conflict cycle—an aspect highly relevant for later considerations.

1.3.3 Those Without Arms: Civilians

The fact that ‘new wars’ pose an existential threat to civilian life is repeatedly addressed in political and public discourse. Especially the record numbers of displaced persons and refugees have made this particular societal group of ‘victims’ subject of much debate in recent years. Slightly less attention is paid to those, who do not flee the scene but continue their struggle for life within the conflict zone. Two particular groups should be emphasized here: women and children. Because warfare still is much more of a male industry and increasingly draws in young men from the civilian sphere, women in war countries are left with few resources to maintain families and households. Additionally, they increasingly have become the target of sexual abuse in areas where violence has torn down structures of law and order. For example, decades of fighting in the Democratic Republic of Congo produced drastic figures: 200,000 women have been raped throughout the last ten years—not merely a ‘side effect’, but a horrendous method used in the conflict (Peace Direct, 2017).
Finally, without a doubt, war is most brutal for children. According to a February 2019 report, one in five children currently lives in a conflict zone, facing more threats than at any time in the last 20 years (Save the Children, 2019). In the past five years alone, at least 870,000 children under the age of five have died from the impact of conflict, possibly far more. These deaths can be the result of various crimes, of which the UN identifies six in particular: killing and maiming of children, recruitment and use of children as soldiers, sexual violence, abduction, attacks on schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access (UN as cited in: Save the Children, 2019). Extremist groups such as Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin region have increasingly exploited children as suicide bombers, with 203 verified cases in Nigeria and Cameroon in 2017 alone. Officially, the use of child soldiers persists in 14 war-ridden countries, but the list grows once the recruitment of children by non-state armed actors is also included. Some of these countries, like India, Thailand or Colombia, have nearly vanished from global conflict radars (Child Soldiers International, 2019). Since not officially perceived to be ‘in state of war’, these regions are subject to fewer regulations, for instance on arms trade.

As the youngest of all generations, the impact of these atrocities in the form of lasting psychological traumas will prevail for many years to come, even if all wars were to end today.

1.4 War Economy

Part of every war scenario is the partial or complete collapse of the regular economy, whether as an initial factor for the outburst of conflict or as a consequence of intense and ongoing fighting. As a result, alternative economic means flourish that combine a mixture of redistribution of assets, crime and an irregular influx of foreign money (Kaldor, 2012, 107-109). One could attempt to differentiate between some aspects of the war economy: those that emerge to sustain the fighting itself (such as the flows of arms or fuel), and those that surface as rather legal, everyday-life coping strategies for the regular population. However, this distinction fails in situations where, for example, armed groups would sell highly taxed basic goods to civilians to finance the purchase of weapons. In most cases, sustaining warfare is directly linked to the non-war-related activities of civilian life.
The economic relationship between civilians and war activities can also be regarded from the other angle: not only does conflict impact the daily life of civilians, but, increasingly, civilian aspects influence the way the warfare is constituted. Recruiting civilians for the battlefield (as outlined in Section 1.3) has economic implementations, as well. In Yemen, where Saudi Arabia recruited civilians from refugee camps to return to battle sites like Hodeida, the financial aspect was crucial: salaries for fighters in most cases by far exceeded what any regular citizen could earn in war or even in peacetime. One civilian fighter recruited by the Saudis stated in an interview with the *Middle East Eye* that he was paid about $1,065 US dollar a month, transferred in the Saudi currency Riyal, a more stable currency than the Yemeni Rial. Previously, the fighter earned $120 US dollar with courier work, while the average labourer in Hodeida makes about $60 US dollar a month (*Middle East Eye*, 2018). While this already creates vast imbalances in salary flows within Yemen, these processes reach beyond areas of battle, visible in the case of foreign Sudanese militiamen flown into Yemen. For these men, the Saudis had a different system of payment: A 14-year freshman from Darfur would be offered a total of $10,000 US dollar for joining Saudi-led forces 1,200 kilometres away, which broke down to an equivalent of $480 dollars a month. More experienced fighters, for instance from the infamous Sudanese *Janjaweed* militia, would earn around $530 US dollar, including additional money for every month in combat. Compared to regular loans in Sudan, a doctor would have to work overtime and at multiple jobs to reach this salary. Therefore, financial prospects of this scale were of sufficient motivation for fighters as well as their families to send even their youngest sons to the frontlines (*Kirkpatrick*, 2018). Unfortunately, there is no way to assess whether the Riyadh government examined the economic spheres of both Yemen and Sudan and thereafter calculated adequate sums that would surpass local opportunities. That the salaries are kept well below those of their own soldiers at least seems likely—while these sources cannot be verified, various internet pages claim that a Royal Saudi Air Force officer earns an average of $4,000-$5,500 US dollar a month.

The evolution of alternative economic means in areas of fighting presents another complex issue. Already in past conflicts, armed groups have contained their resources through violent asset-taking such as robbery, looting, hostage-taking, the instalment of checkpoints across their territory or full blockages (*Kaldor*, 2012, p. 108). While these
techniques have persisted and still shape the reality of ‘new wars’ across the globe, the case of the Islamic State (ISIS) in particular presents a few interesting advances, partly due to the fact that ISIS—different than predecessor Al-Qaeda or extremist groups elsewhere—actually pursued the goal of forming a state based on their identity-driven ideology. To achieve that, ISIS understood the value of a functional economy.

For a while, ISIS was thought to primarily flourish upon hijacked oil production. According to their own figures, the jihadi group at high times produced more than 50,000 barrels, earning around $40-50 million US dollar per month in early 2015 (Reed, 2016). Only after their partial defeat and retreat from former strongholds, analysts discovered the remnants of a much more intricate system of finance. A team of New York Times (NYT) journalists, who obtained a large portion of ISIS documents, found that “one of the keys to their success was their diversified revenue stream. The group drew its income from so many strands of the economy that airstrikes alone were not enough to cripple it” (Callimachi, 2018). The documents, composed of ledgers, receipt books, and monthly budget lists, revealed how ISIS had “monetized every inch of territory they conquered, taxing every bushel of wheat, every liter of sheep’s milk and every watermelon sold at markets they controlled” (Callimachi, 2018). As a result, commerce and agriculture were far more profitable than oil.

Additionally, ISIS had established an ability to govern by taking over existing state structures. Printed letterheads obtained by the NYT showed that the jihadists had renamed at least 14 administrative institutions; keeping only present male Sunni workers and re-schooling them according to their ideology. Workers, for instance, received a manual that detailed how to officially confiscate property that had previously been seized from non-Sunni families. The aim was to bring land and real estate back onto the market, after that Sunni citizens could apply for the purchase. Therefore, the notion of ‘violent redistribution of assets’ falsely invites to think of the war economy as a bloody, chaotic and lawless endeavour—instead, as the case of ISIS suggests, it might resemble regular economic structure all too well.

Despite the far-reaching consequences of such cases of criminal activity for the population, Bojicic-Dzelilovic and Turkmani from the London School of Economics have noted that this should not lead to “oversimplified explanations”: they critique that
scholars have emphasized the criminal aspect of war economies, where “violent entrepreneurs who pursue military combat alongside self-enrichment” cause the most harm to civilian interests. In contrast, like Bojicic-Dzelilovic and Turkmani argue, positioning the public as the mere victim of the economy does not convey the whole truth. The reality shows fluid and variable constellations of economic actors, alliances, and activities, therefore involvement of and effects on residents can widely differ (2018).

Their case study on specific opposition-held regions in Syria illustrates these nuances: The region of Eastern Ghouta suffered under intense shelling during the occupation of rebel groups, therefore key economic activities went underground: rebels smuggled basic goods through self-build tunnels, which drove prices up to 55 times higher compared to those in Damascus just 15 kilometres away. However, some people met these challenges by employing innovative forms of economic activity, such as renting privately-owned electricity generators or using organic waste as an alternative for fuel (Bojicic-Dzelilovic & Turkmani, 2018, p. 5).

Only 112 kilometres down south, civilians in Dara’a were presented with another reality. A transit city at the border to Jordan, illicit trade with arms, fuel, and antiques across the border flourished, as well as the forgery of travel documents. Additionally, humanitarian aid money was manipulated by various actors, which also determined food prices for the population. Meanwhile, collaborations between the regime forces and the Free Syrian Army (who operated in Dara’a at that time) instigated a growing need for money exchange offices, which provided a new business opportunity for some residents. Similarly, the international humanitarian presence stimulated business in car sales and rentals.

While in both cases, large portions of the population had to face shortages in basic goods, these two examples show that already in a single country the war economy can vary significantly, and so do civilian coping mechanisms. What remains to be considered is the future of these newly emerged, alternative undertakings: will these be temporary installations until the war is over? And will coping strategies manifested in alternative business activities in the war economy hinder the return to a ‘peace economy’?
To conclude, ‘new war’ scenarios first and foremost present a complicated and intricate set of challenges and unstable factors. At the same time, the fact that very little seems to be engraved in stone but rather appears to be in constant flux cracks open possibilities for change as well. War itself no longer follows rules of engagement and its impact has invaded civilian space to great lengths. While often considered a rather passive actor or a mere victim, civil society responds and adapts to situations of conflict and so shapes its course in numerous ways. This also means that a much larger set of actors can and will become part of the solution. To create links between what formerly were considered different spheres of action—economy, politics, culture, et cetera—requires first a more comprehensive understanding, and second, adequate education and communication of and between all parties involved. For this, aid workers, analysts, local and international journalists will become indispensable as they hold the potential to act as vehicles between elite and ordinary, minority and majority, armed and unarmed players.
Chapter 2
New Wars, New Pathways to Peace?

The following chapter discusses definitions and approaches to peace, from the more established, prominent ones, to rather recent conceptual alternatives. The central observation is that a gradual shift in discourse and practice has been taking place, somewhat in line with the shifts in the nature of war and conflict itself. Selected insights into the operational modes of crucial institutions like the United Nations and particularly the European Union reflect this development on different levels. But just like root problems have become more complex and fragmented, the response of actors like the EU is equally scattered and hard to pin down. The overwhelming number of frameworks, projects, and tools are difficult to be aligned and juxtaposed with the situation on the ground. However, as it will be argued, this intricacy can offer new incentives for media coverage of contemporary conflict.

2.1 Concepts for Peace in Context

In the face of ‘new wars’, what would peace look like? As we have redefined our understanding of what constitutes war today, we should briefly consider what constitutes peace according to this new reality. Historically, peace was expected to follow after one party declared victory over another, or when both opponents had settled for a peace accord. Given the complicated situations outlined in the previous chapter, today these events may be considered a partial success, yet they do not represent ‘peace’ in its entity. Despite that, we do find remnants of these narratives in the discourses of contemporary conflict today: in Syria, a ‘defeat’ over ISIS and an ‘end of the war’ is said to be close. In South Sudan, a ‘peace deal’ was signed in September 2018, while ‘peace talks’ had just been relaunched to solve the crisis in Yemen. And across 14 countries, UN ‘peacekeepers’ monitor the implementation of agreements, deals, and cease-fires.

In these contexts, the term ‘peace’ is confined to a tiny fragment of what generally is understood to be a wholly peaceful life, as it only indicates the standstill of fighting activities: the death, capture or capitulation of armed extremists; a signature on paper by selected powerful individuals; guns traveling from the front lines back into storage.
arsenals. The *Institute for Economics and Peace* has put these different levels into the following distinction: Negative Peace indicates “an absence of violence or the fear of violence.” Positive Peace, in turn, represents “the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies” (Positive Peace Report, 2018) According to this definition, if ISIS surrenders in Syria, an accord is signed by the Houthis in Yemen or a UN peacekeeping mission ends, these countries will then have accomplished mainly a state of Negative Peace.

Another misconception inherent in the traditional notion of peace is the idea of two distinct time phases, either ‘wartime’ or ‘peacetime’, where certain events are thought to mark the beginning and end of each period. In the reality of ‘new wars’, these time frames have blurred, since the impact of forced displacement, psychological warfare or ethnic cleansing reach far beyond the momentum of signing a peace treaty, not to mention long years of reconstruction as well as social and economic rehabilitation. It is in these fragile periods that violence and crime are likely to go unchecked: In South Sudan, reports of abductions, ambush, rape, property looting and killing of civilians were on record highs only four months after the signing of the peace agreement (Mednick, 2019). In Syria, many returning refugees face prosecution or detention and have disappeared into the country’s notorious prison system (Vohra, 2019). And while a UN-brokered ceasefire deal in Yemen’s port city Hodeida was put in place, airstrikes several hundred kilometres up north forced 37,000 people to flee (The New Humanitarian, 2019).

Despite these realities, the perception of two distinct time phases is enshrined in essential global mechanisms and institutions, best witnessed in the status quo of international law on conflict: the categorizations of *jus ad bellum* (Right to War), *jus in-bello* (Law of War) and *jus post-bellum* (Law Systems after War) set the framework of different sets of rules applied to each entity. Cornerstone regulations like the Geneva or the Hague conventions only apply during the *in bello* state of war (between states) and do not include domestic, non-state armed violence. Yet what if war-crime-like atrocities are committed during periods of Negative Peace? Sexual violence, for instance, is addressed differently by global institutions depending on during which ‘period’ it occurs: what is ‘wartime rape’ in one phase, will be ‘domestic violence’ in the next, though the crimes remain the same. Not only the description changes but so
does the global question of responsibility and availability of legal instruments to counter and prosecute such crimes (Chinkin & Kaldor, 2017, p. 347).

While justice is just one crucial pillar of the ‘attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies’, it could be argued that traditional perceptions of peace and their manifestation in global systems make actual peace difficult to emerge. If peace is understood to be accomplished by a treaty between warring parties, the international community will perceive ‘post-war’ (non-state) violence differently. A sense of urgency will fade among international actors if the legal contexts and political agendas define responsibilities based upon outdated categorizations.

What is to be done to achieve Positive Peace? Based on the set of intertwined realities presented in chapter 1, the plan for peace would have to include an immense list of duties. Jotting down ‘only’ the tasks that would match earlier examples, their density becomes visible in an instant:

- counter abusive notions of race, nationalism, identity, memory, and traditions that instigate violence by facilitating dialogue and reconciliation among diverted communities, villages, cities and in cyberspace
- identify, arrest and lawfully prosecute those who committed violent crimes; de-radicalize and re-integrate those tempted to, which includes supporting and possibly financing investigations, the training of lawyers, social workers and the provision of transitional facilities
- detect and disarm illegitimate bearers of arms, excavate and dismantle irregular or black-market transfers of weapons, including those of possibly powerful states and corporations. Ensure armament under regulated conditions, including (ethic) education to prevent abuse
- provide food, medication, and shelter to those most vulnerable, at the same time seize the economy for sustainable and dignified alternatives to the profitable options born by the war economy
- ensure meaningful and active political participation by all groups of society to prevent marginalization and discontent
- win back administrative infrastructure previously occupied by illegitimate armed groups, provide health care, education, public services, telecommunications and access to independent information
- identify and treat social and individual traumas, especially those viciously engrained in the youngest survivors of conflict
Clearly, these tasks are impossible to be accomplished by a single actor alone. Consequently, there virtually is no approach that unites every aspect of this groundwork and fully guarantees effective long-term implementation. However, there are indeed some visible shifts and trends among those who are practicing, supporting or simply thinking peace, which can, to varying degrees, be related to conceptions of ‘new wars.’ Roughly outlined, these are:

![Trends: Approaches to Peace](image)

*Figure 2: Global Trends in Peacebuilding*

The shift in concepts for peace can be witnessed both within the institutional and the academic sphere. To illustrate this, I will hereafter debate two conceptual frameworks
that currently resonate the most with previous notions of ‘new wars’ and examine them in relation to their associated, most prominent political practitioner:

1. The *Liberal Peace model* represents the most well-known established doctrine to date, largely embodied in the UN Peacekeeping cosmos. Here, some developments reveal a partial rethinking concerning the transforming demands on the ground. At the same time, the UN’s failures and shortcomings to cope with ‘new war’ scenarios have been debated extensively, which is why I will merely address the aspects relevant to the second approach.

2. The *Human Security model* can be seen as a refined version of the Liberal Peace doctrine. Though its conceptual roots can also be traced back to claims, documents and representatives within the UN sphere, I will only present its latest appearance in close relation to the European Union, a rather recent actor in the global security arena. After outlining conceptual suggestions that relate to the trends described earlier, I will discuss prominent and less prominent corresponding instruments and projects the EU has at its disposal.¹

### 2.2 Liberal Peace & The United Nations

The essence of Liberal Peace is associated with the promotion of democracy, the establishment, reform or support for the rule of law to safeguards basic civil rights, judicial accountability for war crimes, security sector reform (SSR) and economic reconstruction based upon ideas of the free market. Therefore, it is the primary model most nation-states, international organizations and financial institutions prefer, as many of them have been built on equal terms (Chinkin & Kaldor, 2017, p. 374). Most notably, three similar yet different terms orbit around the Liberal Peace model:

1. Peace-making (usually referring to the process of finding peace agreements)
2. Peacekeeping (usually referring to the act of monitoring the peace agreement)
3. Peacebuilding (supporting the process of “post-war” institutional recovery)

¹ In fact, it was Mary Kaldor and a group of associated researchers, who have tailored a concept of Human Security
As indicated in the previous argumentation, the former two are less equipped for the realities of ‘new wars.’ In contrast, the concept of Peacebuilding offers at least in theory a more holistic, long-term incentive, as it moves away from unidimensional parameters and encompasses the overall condition of the state in its capabilities to guarantee a safe and democratic environment for its citizen. Peacekeeping, however, remains most prominent, as it is the label (and original format) for the UN missions in conflict zones (Chinkin & Kaldor, 2017, p. 376-381).

The UN reserves the primary role over interpretations of conflict scenarios, international intervention, use of force, and equally, pathways to peace. Its strategic patterns and their evolution over time can, therefore, be an indicator of the global perspective on how to handle these matters. With over 78,000 soldiers and 25,000 civilian personnel deployed in over 14 countries, the UN missions also represent the second-largest military force deployed abroad, after the United States (Autesserre, 2019). With the end of the Cold War and the East-West tensions that had blocked much of the UN’s decision-making, a new optimism emerged, and 15 Peacekeeping missions were launched between 1991 and 1993. However, the UN soon was criticized for not delivering its promise in the face of continuous violence happening in front of the eyes of UN peacekeepers: “Salvadorans nicknamed the UN mission in their country ‘Vacaciones Unidas’ (United Vacations), Cypriots spoke of ‘beach keepers,’ and Bosnians mocked the ‘Smurfs’” (Autesserre, 2019). This led to a serious rethink of the UN’s role, embodied in two of the most defining documents in the organization’s history: The 2000 Brahimi report and the 2005 adoption of the “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine—the first official acknowledgement that the “so-called international community is morally obligated to help people living in states that are unable or unwilling to protect their citizens from serious violations of human rights” (Autesserre, 2019). Ground-breaking to these documents was the legitimization of the use of force to counter acts of aggression against civilians, and the new practice of hiring expert personnel from a range of backgrounds, such as economics, gender studies, justice and communication (Autesserre, 2019).

In the context of ‘new wars’, it is particularly these last steps that, at least in theory, seem to add the competency to address instability and violence more comprehensively.
The self-assigned tasks of the UN became a lot more multifaceted as a direct response to the complexity on the ground. However, there are essential challenges posed by the status quo of the UN itself, making it difficult to ever fully implement all these various levels of action.

First, these are the organization’s shrinking resources: With just $7 billion US dollar, the budget of UN Peacekeeping equals less than 0.5 per cent of global military spending (Autesserre, 2019). Another major, yet unavoidable problem is the UN’s consequent cooperation with host governments as a precondition to any mission. This can lead to the impression among opposing parties that the UN is ‘aiding the enemy’, especially when Peacekeepers counter aggression on behalf of the government. Gilder (2018) notes that the “importance of who the UN chooses to work with cannot be underestimated,” as it bears the risk to marginalize communities they are meant to protect. Same accounts for humanitarian aid, which the UN equally channels through the host state’s government—a “pointless” (Avishai, 2018) endeavour in the case of Syria, where Assad is largely responsible for the need of aid in the first place.

Last but not least, since many Western member states are reluctant to send troops, it is often the developing countries that contribute soldiers to the missions. As of April 2019, the top three contributors were Ethiopia, Bangladesh, and Rwanda (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2019). As a consequence, often poorly trained soldiers are forced to deal with highly sensitive security situations, usually not even speaking the language of the country they operate in. In the worst case, deployed troops have exploited these scenarios—in the past 12 years, the UN has received nearly 1,000 allegations of criminal acts and sexual abuse by Peacekeepers themselves (Autesserre, 2019).

Because of these flaws, many external analysts, as well as internal officials, have called for the UN to put emphasis on local conflict resolution and reconciliation through customizing their strategy to each individual conflict context. This includes working with the local population instead of gathering information mainly from the countries’ elites. But so far, there seems to be little change on the horizon.
2.3 Human Security & The European Union

Human Security can be defined as a “rights-based approach to peace (...) that is both top-down and bottom-up, both international and local, and that requires extensive political, economic, legal and security tools” (Chinkin & Kaldor, 2017, p. 480). Because of this all-encompassing nature of the proposal, critics have diagnosed a conceptual overstretch—being applied to everything and thus nothing. Its diverse spectrum of recommendations is the product of a five-year research project by the Human Security Study Group, which consisted of 25 scholars from various disciplines and academic fields. Its first version had a notable impact on the EU’s Global Strategy and the term appears directly and indirectly across a number of EU reports, reviews, and practical frameworks.

For this dissertation, the following interpretations and outlines taken from the Human Security report to the EU are of particular relevance, as they not only extend, adjust or slightly shift the focus of the Liberal Peace approach but set the reference points for later considerations (Human Security Study Group, 2016, p. 10-15; Chinkin & Kaldor, 2017, p. 525-526).

1. Political Scope
“Key to human security is the establishment of legitimate political authority that can provide the basis for a rule of law and respect for human rights.” The notion of ‘political authority’ hereby does not necessarily equals state or governmental power, but can also address, for instance, local municipalities, governorates or supranational institutions.

2. Security
Methods for security include but are not limited to military means and might find themselves to be more similar to policing and law enforcement. For this, those in charge must equally look to areas of relative stability, where, for instance, local initiatives have established a certain degree of security or peaceful co-existence. To evaluate and learn from these ‘pockets of peace’ is crucial.

3. Civil Society
Engagement with the local population and civil society is indispensable. Civilians not only have to be consulted but included in decision-making processes. In that matter, civil society is “understood not as NGOs but as a combination of local leaders, activists, grassroots community groups, women and youth groups, prominent citizens such as teachers and doctors who are concerned with the public interest as opposed to private or sectarian interest.”
4. Economy
In the wake of a crippling state-dominated economy, neo-liberal reforms such as privatization or liberalization can accelerate already present, illegitimate mechanisms of the war economy. Therefore, the Human Security approach focuses on tackling systems of corruption, predation, sectarianism, and impunity first before introducing any incentives that could be vulnerable to abuse.

5. Justice
The justice element “represents a very important departure from the Liberal Peace model”: While top-down Liberal Peace prioritizes the inclusion of warring parties to find a political settlement to the conflict, Human Security aims to marginalize those responsible for the violence. Framing them as subjects to law instead of crucial figures for peace, the emphasis is put on fair trials and potential prosecution. This way, it shall be avoided that former armed actors with a criminal record are granted a seat in future decision-making processes through power-sharing agreements.

That this concept was presented to the European Union is no coincidence. A unique model of global governance, the EU possesses different qualities and capabilities than other actors. The EU is often considered to be the only effectively supranational governmental institution, characterized by far-reaching accomplishments regarding integration, decision-making processes, law-making, and executive power, especially when compared to similar models such as the African Union. Needless to say, it therefore strongly differs from the UN as well, which despite all its power remains an organization and hence has few direct, political or legal instruments at play to address the various levels of the conflict cycle. Equally, the concept of the nation-state and its sovereignty defines the UN’s rules of engagement. In contrast, the EU’s very identity blurs the distinctions between domestic and external, the ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of the state—a feature much more relatable to the current globalist environment posing as the stage for transnational ‘new wars’ to rise.

As a matter of course, the EU is also a regional institution and its geographical position is defining much of its political direction and agenda of involvement outside of its borders. Concerning the previously mentioned zones of instability, the EU’s proximity to conflict herds such as the MENA region has long increased its responsibility to act. Undoubtedly, the refugee influx of 2015 and the death toll in the Mediterranean Sea were key drivers, but the EU’s engagement in the region dates far back, let alone because of several member state’s colonial ties with many Middle Eastern and African countries. The inauguration of former Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Federica
Mogherini as the Union’s external actions chief and vice president of the Commission in 2014 also fed into to the EU pro-actively considering its stance in the global security arena: “We can choose to do nothing and be a spectator of the crises unfolding around us, or we can use the crises as an opportunity for change,” Mogherini said not long after taking office (Europe at Sea, 2017). Her 2015 ‘Global Strategy’—although picking up earlier positions and narratives of the EU’s external efforts—reassures the importance of these goals with particular vigour. Following its publication, the Council adopted three ambitious objectives: respond to external conflicts and crises; build the capacities of partners; and protect the Union and its citizens (Yearbook of European Security, 2018, p. 135).

Next to the EU’s consistency in high-level diplomacy efforts and the imposition of sanctions, the Union operates a mash-up of what could be labelled “classic” and “alternative” peace efforts. Most tangibly, this is epitomized by the Union’s external missions under the ‘Common Security and Defence Policy’ (CSDP), the only direct engagement of EU personnel on the ground abroad. Most of these civilian-military missions are constructed around principles of Human Security (monitoring and educating about human rights, local ownership, capacity building, security by law enforcement), but also contain elements of “classic” UN Peacekeeping procedures. They share the UN’s inherent deficit of only being deployed upon a host country’s invitation and consequently enter a fragile zone through the gateway of a country’s elite. At the same time, even those missions framed as ‘military missions’ have moved away from the idea of classic military intervention and do not—unlike those of the UN—substitute for responsibilities of the host government. In all cases (except EULEX Kosovo) the missions are ‘non-executive’, which means they only advise, assist and train local counterparts. This also entails that EU missions are only deployed in countries or areas of relative stability and not in direct zones of combat. That the term ‘military’ is therefore misleading has been repeatedly emphasized by Michail Kostarakos, Chairman of the European Union Military Committee (2015-2018)—“the EU is not doing ‘defence’, what it is doing will always be ‘security,’” Kostarakos said during a conference in Athens last year. This is especially underlined by the fact that the EU will never have a stable fund of financial resources for military-related activities due to restrictions laid out in its treaties. Therefore, just like the UN, the EU
depends on voluntary contributions from its members (to which the recent Permanent Structure Cooperation (PESCO) agreement will only add little alleviation).

While the EU has been busy to cover up its lack of ‘hard power’ in recent years, the possible advantages of these limitations have received little debate, as much as current efforts have only been scarcely reviewed. For example, only a few studies can be found that investigated whether the EU implemented its outspoken principle of local ownership in the CSDP missions. One research group that did explore these questions found that the imperative of local ownership has merely become “one of the refrains endlessly repeated across EU external policy statements”, while its “implementation has been far from smooth” (Ejdus, 2017). Another group of researchers diagnosed that in many cases, such as the EU missions in Mali and the Sahel region, the Union not only failed to communicate its procedures adequately, but that the goals set out by the mission did not entirely correspond with the priorities of the local population. For instance, locals stated how they would have wished other security issues to be fixed first than those addressed in the EU mandate. Herewith the researchers point to a “serious information gap that cannot be glossed over as it is totally counter-productive to the local ownership that the EU claims it strives to achieve” (Cissé et al., 2017). Seemingly far away from putting locals in the ‘driver’s seat’, these analyses press for rather rudimentary issues to be fixed, like a solid understanding of local needs ahead of all missions.

Even less attention has been paid to the EU’s efforts outside of the interventionist realm. While it is widely acknowledged that the EU is the largest donor of humanitarian aid, it also operates a vast set of flexible non-humanitarian instruments that could be seen as complementary to the Human Security doctrine in various ways. However, these efforts mostly happen “out of the limelight” of global media coverage, which largely focuses on the EU’s diplomatic participation in peace talks across the globe or the implementation of sanctions (Youngs, 2018). For the funding of non-humanitarian initiatives, the EU can rely on readily-available funds garnered in instruments such as the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), whose budget of €189 million is aimed to assist the development of democracy, rule of law or respect for human rights. Of this money, 90 per cent is scheduled to reach local civil society organizations, while merely 10 per cent goes to
international ones. Another example is the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), whose €2.44 billion are meant to support programs for good governance, rule of law and infrastructure for the youth in countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Palestine and Syria (Yearbook of European Security, 2018). The functionality of ENI was reassessed in the context of a general review of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2017. In the review’s concluding report, the Commission specifically refers to a new “Rights-Based Approach” that aims to increase the instrument’s flexibility towards situations in which cooperation with host governments might not be possible due to their involvement in human rights violations (EU Commission, 2017).

Indeed, what these instruments imply is a process of outsourcing European efforts to a complex network of actors beyond its borders. But considering the long list of challenges and failures in scenarios where actual (military) personnel was deployed, this might not necessarily be of negative implication. The case of the Syrian civil war provides an insightful example, especially because the EU has been strongly criticized for not acting up against Assad’s brutal assault on civilians. In fact, there was little the Union could have done by military means and within the realm of international law. CSDP missions were ill-suited, as they would have strengthened the regime’s assets. Any kind of other intervention undertaken outside the realm of the Security Council would have been against UN Charta principles on the territorial integrity of Syria, which, as a matter of fact, were violated by the 2018 airstrikes of France, the US and the UK on Syrian factories suspected to produce chemical weapons (Herden, 2018).

In this context, the EU chose to focus on other means to stay engaged in the country and explored ways to support the population instead of its government. Bilateral programs with the previous partner country Syria were suspended in 2011 and sanctions were imposed on several individuals within the government. Additionally, a variety of initiatives that somewhat followed the core idea of supporting localized ‘legitimate political authority’ were launched, aimed at strengthening civil society’s capacity to organize themselves in rebel-operated areas. The EU mobilized over €2.7 billion for non-humanitarian aid alone, a record figure compared to previous years. Through the European Endowment for Democracy fund, 13 projects in Syria and three in Lebanon were supported, which focused on improving citizen participation in local governance. The Commission, as well as some individual member states, sponsored
Search for Common Ground efforts to promote women’s rights ahead of a then-prospective new constitution. Other projects aimed to boost civil society’s role in post-conflict planning as well as tribal leaders’ local roles in decision-making processes. Naturally, these efforts can only be sustained in areas of relative stability and therefore are vulnerable to unexpected outbursts of violence instead of effectively preventing it. But research has also indicated that areas, where certain solid governance structures are in place, find themselves to be less susceptible to extreme downfalls (Human Security Study Group, 2016).

These few examples make clear how disintegrated these alternative methods appear within the larger strategy of finding peace the local way. The various ‘back-doors’ of access and assistance channelled through external partners, grants and open calls make it extremely hard to evaluate the EU’s approach to peace as a whole; to track which partners and organizations have received funding, to cross-check results, failures as well as improvements. While budget figures and program scopes usually are public and accessible across related websites and EU documents, there still seems to be a decent lack of information accompanying the process on the ground. Therefore, these features could serve as one point of entry for later considerations on the media’s role.
3.1 Reporting ‘New Wars’: Trends and Challenges

What do ‘new wars’ look like through the lens of journalists? With the new realities on the ground, the scene media-makers aim to depict has equally transformed: conflicts essentially branded by fragmentation, transnationalism and lawlessness intensify the already existing challenges of covering war. Especially in conflicts where the drivers are increasingly obscured by a mixture of religious, ethnic, economic, political and societal factors journalists can face difficulties discerning why violence rages and where it originated. With few exceptions like ISIS or other radical Islamic groups, who actively communicate their extremist ideology and the goals aligned with it, much violence out there is hard to make sense of and to pin down to a single reason. In cases like South Sudan or the Democratic Republic of Congo, violent tribal rivalries have deep cultural and psychological roots, which are difficult to retrace and comprehend for the external world. Additionally, all current conflicts have been dragging on since at least four years and more. In some places, initial triggers have been replaced by endless circles of revenge, in others, the younger generation might have grown up to the plain urgency or culture of self-defence. Despite that, journalists are often admonished to assign rather clear labels to the drivers of violence: For instance, ‘Christians vs. Muslims’, ‘Sunni vs. Shia Islam’, ‘radical vs. moderate’ or ‘pro- and anti-government’ are all common flags hoisted to put a conflict into perspective for the audience. Not only do they often crumble on a local level (Sunni-militias defending Christian minorities in Syria; Salafist militias fighting ISIS in Libya, et cetera), but they also suggest a clear and conscious goal in the mind of every armed actor on the ground, leaving out the erratic psychology behind any act of violence.

The dwindling of a state-like structure and the erosion of a monopoly of organized force can equally challenge media coverage, as it indirectly limits the means of organized access and procedures for journalists. Once a government begins to outsource security efforts to sub-state actors and shadowy ad-hoc military formations, it becomes increasingly unlikely that journalists will be able to follow along—less in
the sense that embedding journalists with a state military is the only way to ensure good coverage, but rather that the multiplicity of indistinct actors reduces transparency and the chances for the press to do its work. Journalists, therefore, are often forced to single out those armed actors who are willing to cooperate with the press. This, in turn, can lead to one particular view becoming far more visible than others. In the case of Syria, approximately more than one hundred different military divisions, paramilitaries, foreign mercenaries, and other armed groups have participated in the fighting, however, major news outlets like the BBC, CNN, France 24, Aljazeera, Fox News, CBSN, ABC, The Guardian, Sky News and ARD all primarily embedded reporters with the US-backed Kurdish paramilitary Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which suggests that the SDF—likely for political reasons—showed a cooperative face towards the international press. As a result, much footage of the recent ‘final battle against ISIS’ is almost interchangeable. Images of SDF fighters guarding field positions, firing through loopholes of ruined houses or securing the streets of bomb-out cities are found in almost all video reportages of these outlets (See Figure 3).

Figure 3: 2019 Coverage of Sky News, Arte, BBC, CSBN and CNN from Syria
This imbalance is further deepened by the presence of various state and non-state groups that refuse ideas of a free press as a whole or have even incorporated the persecution of journalists into their warfare strategy.

In light of these highly volatile settings, NGOs and news agencies have gradually emerged as alternative sources of information. For the coverage of less prominent conflicts like Yemen or South Sudan, some major news outlets (*Deutsche Welle, Russia Today, France 24, CNN*) have relied almost exclusively on material provided by agencies such as *Reuters, Agence France-Presse* and *Deutsche Presse Agentur* (Scott et. al., 2018). In the coverage of conflicts of great geopolitical interest but with limited access such as Syria, recent studies indicate a greater visibility of NGOs across media reports, primarily *Amnesty International* and *Human Rights Watch*— both organizations that are widely perceived to be more credible and unbiased sources than, for instance, government officials (Berganza et. al, 2002; Meyer et. al, 2017). As a common practice, many media outlets merely re-publish the latest reports and press releases in the form of a summary, citing figures and analyses without adding any self-produced content or contrasting evaluations.

Interestingly, the war in Syria has also produced a few abnormalities in the hierarchy of NGO sourcing. Next to rather established organizations, one exceptional source discreetly emerged from ground level: the *Syrian Observatory for Human Rights* was quoted extensively throughout the most intense periods of fighting, with a notable impact: The figures, locations and descriptions of bombings and killings published by the *Observatory* were used by military analysts in Washington to gauge the course of the war; by the United Nations and human rights activists as evidence for war crime allegations; and by major media outlets for breaking-news updates on the casualties after an airstrike (MacFarquhar, 2013). However, behind these figures stood merely a single man: Rami Abdul Rahman operated the *Observatory* out of his home in Coventry, England, ever since he fled Syria 13 years ago. He reportedly used simple Internet technology to track war developments and airstrikes, receiving messages from more than 230 activists on the ground and monitoring *YouTube* videos around the clock (MacFarquhar, 2013).
These trends raise conflicting questions about diversity, credibility, and authenticity in the sourcing of crucial war-related information. In general, to rely exclusively on material provided by NGOs and agencies—regardless of their size—reduces the diversity of voices and evidence presented. And if NGO content is to be recycled, does a Syrian national with a *WhatsApp* list of locals make a more credible and authentic source than professionally skilled, yet Western-based analysts? In both cases, the distribution of such material at least carries the responsibility to make visible its origin, especially if these sources are not in line with professional standards of verification.

To enhance authenticity, the voice of civilians has always been a journalist’s primary tool. As noted in chapter 1, civilians have become the main focus of violence and warfare strategies. This together with the fact that domestic spheres like urban districts and villages have become the primary location of fighting and attacks has increased civilian visibility in news coverage. Moreover, in some places, access to digital and social media has transported resident’s perspectives directly onto news platforms in the form of mobile photos and videos, Facebook posts and tweets – artefacts of “digital witnessing” (Chouliaraki, 2015). The voice of civilians—especially when covering the brutal and lawless wars of today—usually tells tales of suffering, personifying the human toll of ongoing violence. Consequently, much coverage is rich in extreme accounts of violence and crimes hard to comprehend due to their sheer brutality, for instance, the widely circulated images of infants starved to death in Yemen, or poisoned by gas bombs in Syria. Likewise, the portrayal of women in conflict is usually linked to equally cruel events. In a recent report, a journalist described the common frames of women to be “either a ‘die in childbirth’ or ‘its got to be a sexual violence thing’” (Scott et al., 2018, p. 18).

Regarding audience and impact, accounts of human suffering aggregate issues of responsibility (who is to blame? who is to act?), but also of compassion fatigue as a result of recurrent frames of victimhood. Though graphic news of this intensity is nothing new to global audiences, the fact that all conflicts of the present time are producing such news will increasingly put to the test how much audiences can take in before growing indifferent. Especially the continuously surfacing label of “large-scale human rights violations” —partially an effect of citing human rights organizations—indicates a clear crime, but these headlines are rarely followed by reports on successful
prosecution or legal consequences for the perpetrators. Gradually, this contributes to a feeling of passive and helpless witnessing and might leave audiences with the impression that much violence out there is impossible to stop.

In this context, it seems of no surprise that some media coverage has also been focussing on figures of hope amidst the turmoil. A particular group of volunteer rescue workers, which came together from all parts of Syria to form the “Syrian Civil Defence”, found global attention throughout many media outlets with their first-response emergency missions. The civilian volunteers rushed to the scene in the immediate aftermath of an airstrike, attempting to rescue survivors trapped in collapsed buildings and recover the bodies of those killed. Due to the common practice of follow-up strikes on initial targets shortly after the first hit, these missions were of great risks and indeed ended fatally for many of the workers. A British communications NGO took notice of the group in 2014 and launched a support campaign with the new name, the “White Helmets.” Through online presence, personalized newsletters and channels for donations, the campaign helped “to secure millions of dollars to continue their life-saving work and making them famous around the world” (The Syria Campaign, 2018). The new name and the group’s deeds quickly found their way into global media coverage and beyond. US streaming giant Netflix released the Oscar-winning documentary “White Helmets”, spiked with the most emotional and brave moments from the group’s missions as well as member’s personal accounts of loss, belief, and brotherhood. While the bravery of the “White Helmets” certainly deserves particular attention, the film gives almost no context of the crisis itself, instead juggles between frames of pathos and heroism. Even if the movie classifies as entertainment more than as journalism, its success indicates that after eight years of brutal civil war, audiences welcomed a different angle to the crisis, stories of humanity that transpired in the midst of inhumanity. However, given the fact that in ‘new war’ scenarios civilian roles have exceeded binary roles of ‘victim or hero’, these frames raise questions about balanced, comprehensive storytelling.

In sum, these examples not only highlight the shifting conditions media outlets are facing. They also give an impression of how some have responded to such challenges. Essential journalistic drivers of actuality, factuality and impact naturally influence decisions to embed reporters at the frontline of conflict; to cite figures of the dead,
injured or displaced and depict the brutal effect war has on human life. But if the path to such coverage produces the necessity to rely on incomplete, unverified or unidimensional webs of information, key goals of journalistic practice could be missed. Likewise, standard frames of war coverage that divide actors into winners and losers, heroes or villains, seem not to be in sync with the realities on the ground and thus become increasingly vulnerable to claims of bias, oversimplification or misrepresentation. These risks invite to conceptually rethink the media’s approach to depart from the status of sporadic, reactionary adaption to ‘new wars’ and move towards a more grounded, foresighted and proactive vision.

To explore this potential, three existing comprehensive frameworks that address and discuss the media’s role in conflict can serve as a starting point:

1. Peace Journalism, (as coined by Johan Galtung, Annabel McGoldrick and Jake Lynch in the late 90s)
2. Humanitarian Journalism (as currently researched by Mel Bunce, Martin Scott and Kate Wright)
3. Human Rights Journalism (as developed by Ibrahim Seaga Shaw in 2012)

Each of them offers specific incentives, that resonate with previous findings in one way or another and can therefore be used as a lens to review some recent media formats as well.

3.2 Peace Journalism

In its core, Peace Journalism encapsulates the idea that in a conflict scenario, journalists must push their research beyond the binary code of confrontation and glance into all directions, investigate all contributing factors, give voice to all parties and be present throughout all phases of conflict, not just when violence reaches its peak (Galtung, 2006). In his critical review of Peace Journalism, Hanitzsch (2004, p. 485–486) notes that, in theory, these suggestions are basic journalistic principles every qualified practitioner should have internalized as his or her operational guideline. Nonetheless, in some respects, Galtung made a foresighted bid that reverberates previous evaluations and challenges classic notions of war and peace: his call for a focus on “people peace-makers”, by highlighting peace initiatives over victories and cease-fires, as well as investigating the structure and culture of a peaceful society.
closely relates to the idea of integrating ‘pockets of peace’ into any political strategy. Moreover, he debunked misguided hierarchies and classic categorizations of involved parties: “Do not fall for the idea that peace has to come from governments; governments matter but their decisions are empty unless backed by public sentiments and civil society”, the Norwegian pointed out more than a decade ago (Galtung, 2006, p. 2). Accordingly, Galtung emphasizes the need of a certain sensitivity towards terms like ‘peace’ vs. ‘cease-fire’ to be reflected in the coverage, while also referring to the previously discussed distinction between ‘Positive and Negative Peace.’

Without direct reference to Galtung’s original concept, conflict researcher and former UN correspondent Rousbeh Legatis echoed these understandings in a recent interview with Deutsche Welle. The media, Legatis said, would “determine to a crucial degree whether and to what extend conflict actors recognize the array of constructive options available for resolving their difference.” Though rather narrowly referring to the signing of an agreement of the conflict parties as the ‘beginning’ of a peace process, Legatis notes that in this moment “the range of media topics expands” and journalists should start to “track down peace initiatives even in the most remote communities, feature them in their articles and thereby make them visible” (DW, 2019). That the media is more and more seen as a potential benefit to these processes is reflected in the recent increase of peacebuilding-related media projects developed and implemented worldwide, Legatis adds.

How coverage on these ‘pockets of peace’ could look like can be seen in an example from Yemen: In 2017, a group of Western journalists and researchers were invited by the Sana’a Center for Strategic Studies to the Yemeni city of Marib, located just about 120 kilometres East from the Houthi-occupied capital Sana’a. The province marks an oasis of relative stability amid the war-torn country, despite having been a location of fighting not all too long ago. Now, a new football stadium, businesses and a recently opened university with 5,000 students headline the city’s current strive towards prosperity. “As much of Yemen slides towards famine, residents of this dusty desert town can now buy food many locals had never tasted before: pizza, hamburgers and ice cream,” journalist Ben Hubbard afterward wrote for the New York Times. He describes how the city has attracted Yemenis fleeing from more troubled areas of the country, some of them bringing money to buy property and open businesses. Additionally, the
province has the natural benefit of being home to much of the country’s oil resources, of which governor Sheik Sultan al-Arada took advantage of in the wake of the political decentralization caused by the war. By retaining a share in the oil business, al-Arada was able to improve infrastructure, expand government services and pay state employees their salaries—a unique quality in the Yemen of today. Moreover, Hubbard addresses the ambition of the governor to make his success visible to the visiting journalists: “He clearly wanted to show off his town’s progress while elevating his political profile. It worked. After the local news media reported on our visit, Yemen’s president and prime minister both called to congratulate him”, Hubbard writes, next to the fact that al-Arada had also arranged an armed convoy and security guards for the group’s stay.

Despite the corridor of hospitality laid out by the leading political figure of Marib, Hubbard managed to keep his piece multifaceted. Not leaving out recent reports of violence and bombings, he also interviewed a variety of locals such as business owners, two girls studying physics, the head of a local youth organization, human rights activists and injured fighters in a nearby hospital—some of whom also shared critical accounts of the governor’s political practice. Hubbard also mentions that al-Arada’s friendly ties with Saudi Arabia are another “ingredient” which makes Marib’s success “unlikely to be easily replicated elsewhere” (Hubbard, 2017).

As a whole, Hubbard’s piece is an example of a manifold and multi-voice portrait of one peaceful spot surrounded by war. Clearly, the story distinguishes itself from the majority of Yemen coverage as it breaks free from the recurrent narrative frames that dominate most reports of the war (famine, cholera, rebels, Saudi Arabia). In the introduction, Hubbard creates links for Western audiences by including relatable story items (pizza, students, football stadium), yet goes on to discuss the killing of a young boy just a few paragraphs below. This not only conveys the contrasted reality of the situation on the ground, but manoeuvres the reader past stereotypical, and thus less engaging and thought-provoking narrative images. It is likely this effect that scholar Farea al-Muslimi of the Sana’a Center for Strategic Studies and organizer of the trip had in mind when he told the journalists: “We can’t stop the war in Yemen right now, but at least we can cause more conversation about it. We want to bring the world to Yemen and bring Yemen to the world” (Hubbard, 2017).
Most crucially, the NYT journalist also succeeded to inject multiple layers of reflection and transparency into his article: first, he clarifies why, how and by whom this trip was made possible and what measures had to be taken (armoured vehicles, governor’s guards, organized tours). Second, he informs the reader about the Western media’s (desired) role and the impact of their visit (local news, call from president). This way, the reader is not only presented with a rare case of peace in the midst of chaos but also understands the immediate effects, benefits, and interests associated with this piece of reporting. The conceptual idea of Peace Journalism to report all sides of a conflicts, including the non-violent, irregular or mundane ones, could therefore motivate to more actively reference the ‘media side’, as well: outlining how safety was guaranteed, what had to be compromised to ensure coverage, why particular parties were able to be interviewed and whose voices could not be heard.

### 3.3 Humanitarian Journalism

According to Bunce, Scott and Wright, Humanitarian Journalism can very broadly be defined “as the production of factual accounts about crises and issues that affect human welfare.” This can include “general reporting about humanitarian crises, advocacy journalism that aims to improve humanitarian outcomes, but recognizes also that, vice-versa, aid agencies and humanitarian campaigners frequently subsidize or directly provide journalistic content” (Bunce et al., 2019). The latter resonates with the idea that nowadays both the media and the aid sector are producers of humanitarian news, at least each has a share in circulating information. Humanitarian Journalism is less of a theoretical framework than a specialized field of journalism, and for a long time, it has also remained within the aid cosmos, providing disaster overviews and briefings with aid workers, organizations and donors as the target audience. However, based upon the increasing variety and interconnectivity of tasks emerging for each crisis and the plurality of organizations present on the scene, it could be argued that the aspects to be covered by Humanitarian Journalism nowadays stretch beyond tracking allocation of aid resources.

A good example can be found in the history of UN communication. Back in 1995, in the wake of the Rwandan genocide, the UN made a notable step towards a more
pluralistic information output and invested in a new journalistic format, hoping it would help prevent future failures in crisis management. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) launched *IRIN News* as a platform for on-the-ground reporting from the areas of operation. Twenty years later, tensions grew between the editors and OCHA, with the latter demanding less coverage on Syria to not threaten the UN’s access to the country. *IRIN* then split from the UN in 2015 and has since established itself as a principal source for humanitarian journalism through the help of funding by a range of private organizations, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; and the Swiss, Belgian and Australian governments. Managed by a relatively small team of staff, the platform receives coverage from all areas of the globe by a network of more than 200 freelance reporters (Scott et. al., 2018). The success of their enterprise seems to be expressed in their March 2019 relaunch: with a fresh name—now: *The New Humanitarian*—a redesigned website and a devoted campaign, the platform advertises its adaptation to the changes in global crises: “Humanitarian need is growing every year, but also the needs are changing. There are new crises, new contexts, new forms of suffering, new risks that can be mitigated,” Ben Parker, senior editor and former UN OCHA director in Syria, states in the relaunch video. As Heba Aly, director of *The New Humanitarian* and former crisis journalist, points out in the same video, their site amplifies “the voices of people caught up in forgotten crises (...) and we know the humanitarian sector well enough to hold accountable those who are meant to help.”

But *The New Humanitarian* not only unearths local dynamics in the scope of the aid sector. Their coverage also highlights various creative coping strategies of civilians that often have emerged completely autonomously from international efforts. A common storyline is portraits of locals, who have adjusted to the war economy and the inability to continue with their previous job. For example, an April 2019 report introduces the successful collaborative business project by a group of internally displaced people in Nigeria. Forced to flee Boko Haram, they have relocated to the city of Abuja, yet were left without help, since humanitarian aid is channelled through other parts of the country. The group then organized itself and pooled resources to rent a tract of land and build the ‘IDP Farmer’s Beans Market’. “We do not want to depend on anybody to survive, that is why we started this market,” the initiative’s chairman told *The New Humanitarian* (Unan, 2019).
Another article tells the story of Hadi Juma’aan. After the war broke out, the Yemeni decided to begin collecting corpses of fallen fighters and return them to families for burial—a job usually done by health workers. Before the war, Juma’aan had worked for a government-run organization that promoted sustainable development. With the collapse of much of the state businesses, he was left without work until he chose to recruit his own team and enter the field. In the article, he states to have evacuated more than 360 bodies from the front lines and negotiated the release of 170 prisoners; an effort that needs months of preparations and negotiations and has put him in many life-threatening situations. “To identify himself as a non-combatant when he enters an active conflict zone, Juma’aan wears white clothing and raises his white scarf as a flag. He brings plastic bags, his truck, and a mobile phone. He never brings a gun,” the article describes Juma’aan’s diplomatic approach (al-Dawsari, 2019). To cover expenses, he charges a ‘small fee’ from the parties to the conflict, but never from the families.

It is particularly the absence of any ‘classic’ international humanitarian action that makes these stories so vigorous. Though essentially providing a micro-perspective of single individuals, these particular case studies of self-help have the potential to transfer even larger narrative frames to the audience. While The New Humanitarian’s coverage effectively was born out of the will to shed light onto the civilian side of war, these stories do not simply trace human suffering, but present creative coping strategies of the local population. Moving away from recurrent frames of passive victimhood, the platform makes room for insights into the complex realities of the war economy. While the IDP’s beans market in Nigeria might be a format that can be sustained for times after the violence, the case of Juma’aan raises more complicated questions: although desirable, the end of fighting in Yemen would also mean an end of the activist’s current fieldwork. At the same time, he will not be able to pick up his former job for the government soon after, as the state will be occupied with the reconstruction of basic infrastructure. It is precisely a vacuum period like this, which is often overlooked.

Overall, The New Humanitarian manages to create a bridge between the expertise of crisis response and the broader public. The articles do not read like specialized pieces
targeted for a professional audience, because style and content align with general principles of storytelling and factual journalism. Simultaneously, the portrayal of individuals and their very own coping strategies within a war economy goes beyond the assessment of large-scale NGOs and governments. This creates an interesting paradox: while global media outlets tend to reproduce the agenda of dominant NGOs by republishing their analysis of crises, a platform originally established to investigate the aid sector has found ways to break free from these patterns and produce original content from the outskirts of the institutional cosmos.

3.4 Human Rights Journalism

The concept of Human Rights Journalism was coined by Ibrahim Seaga Shaw and adds a “human rights-based approach to journalism”, founded upon the idea that journalists not only have the duty to inform the public but equally to educate, increase awareness, monitor, investigate and report all possible violations of the public’s civil rights (Shaw, 2012, p. 2). If journalists manage to consistently address less visible forms of structural and cultural violence, more direct forms of political and physical violence could be minimized or even prevented, Shaw notes (2012, p. 11). His argumentation resonates with the general notion that the media should publicize abuses of power, discrimination, hate speech and marginalization even before it turns into a crisis bloody enough to headline primetime news.

Especially relevant to this paper is that Shaw’s approach carries a judicial standpoint that can be connected to the Human Security model’s emphasis on justice and accountability as the top priority for restoring peace in any conflict situation. Just like the latter rejects the idea of bringing all actors of a conflict cycle to the table in order to find a peace agreement, Shaw criticizes that conflict resolution approaches tend to give equal attention to all players, violent and non-violent alike. Instead, just like in the human rights discourse, Shaw calls for a differentiation between offenders and victims in related media discourse. Accordingly, he introduces the twofold expression of ‘justpeace’, which stresses the strong interconnectivity of the two disciplines and invites to think peace systematically through the lens of accountability (2012, p. 15).

Placing the idea of human rights and their implementation through law at the centre
stage is difficult without taking notice of their primary origin and the role of key political institutions that have developed related mechanisms in the first place. Though strengthening local structures for judicial control matters, critics have also argued that this proves pointless until the global response to human rights violations is fully intact. In an April 2019 opinion piece for the Guardian, David Miliband, president and CEO of the International Rescue Committee and former UK foreign secretary, condemns the inconsistency of Western states and the UN to prosecute war crimes: “If the most powerful countries in the world do not set an example, then it is impossible to police the system. The continued failure to expose the perpetrators of [such] atrocities (...) means that talk of accountability is meaningless,” Milibrand writes, referring to direct violations of international law such as the August 2018 bombing of a school bus in Yemen that killed 44 children, multiple bombings of hospitals in Syria and 330 chemical weapons attacks against civilians through the Assad regime. None of these crimes led to profound legal consequences—despite being widely reported in the media and condemned by government officials. However, even if the use of landmines, chemical weapons, attacks on aid convoys and hospitals all indeed represent violations of UN rules, there essentially are few possibilities to try, for instance, the Assad regime in front of the International Criminal Court (ICC), since Syria as a country is not a signatory of its Statute (ECCHR, 2019). Therefore, media reports that call for such a prosecution might ring hollow, with audiences expecting action to follow where it will not. These enormous and complex legal questions require more expertise than usually provided by media reports, although the media certainly has the potential to clarify possibilities and limitations of the law.

While it remains important for the media to keep track of these larger processes, recent advances in the pursuit of global justice present some approachable cases for journalists to cover. In June 2018, German prosecutors issued an international arrest warrant against a Syrian intelligence chief for crimes against humanity, which, according to a report by Deutsche Welle, “marks the most serious effort to date by a Western nation to hold a ranking member of the Syrian regime to account for carrying out war crimes against Syrians” (DW, 2018). The procedure was led by the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), an independent and non-profit organization based in Berlin. The Center operates towards the outspoken goal of not merely applying current law but using “the emancipatory potential of law” to “tread
“new paths” and “re-create legal norms in the spirit of global justice” (ECCHR, 2019). Together with Syrian lawyer Anwar Al-Bunni and journalist Mazen Darwish, the ECCHR team interviewed dozens of men and women who said to have been tortured by forces under command of the intelligence official before they managed to flee the country (DW, 2018). Their testimonies together with hundreds of photographs showing torture victims in government detention facilities—smuggled out of the country by a former military photographer—the body of evidence was rich enough to take it to German federal authorities. In its appeal, the ECCHR relied on a specific clause in international law that allows genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity to be prosecuted from anywhere in the world (ECCHR, 2018). Next to the pursuit of individuals, the ECCHR has also focused on keeping an eye on corporations involved in illegitimate spheres of the war economy. Together with a French rights group and 11 former employees, the ECCHR made it possible to file charges against French cement company Lafarge. The production giant allegedly paid millions to jihadists, including ISIS, by keeping a factory open in war-torn Syria, for which they are suspected to have purchased oil from the extremists. If the case succeeds, it again would mark “the first time that a parent company anywhere in the world had been charged with complicity in crimes against humanity” (The Guardian, 2018).

Although these cases did surface across outlets like Deutsche Welle or the The Guardian, the content in these reports was in part republished material from news agencies, like the French APF. Few articles were found that investigated these matters more in depth. To contrast the case with the larger context of war crimes prosecution or to highlight how less prominent actors such as the ECCHR can sustain these efforts would have invoked an innovated and productive advance in ‘rights-based’ journalism. Moreover, the collaborative utilization of information should be stressed in particular: The way in which the ECCHR cooperated with a journalist and a lawyer from Syria to process raw material coming from the conflict zone and to turn it into solid ground for legal action suggests that cooperation between different fields of expertise can produce an impact that goes beyond storytelling and publicity. Especially in the complexity of ‘new wars’, a multidisciplinary eye is required to connect the dots, therefore media-makers could ‘outsource’ part of their competencies in a productive manner to diversify their stream of analysis.
To conclude, Peace Journalism, Humanitarian Journalism and Human Rights Journalism each present valuable incentives for reporting on ‘new war’ scenarios and for reviewing present coverage. They have the potential to broaden the horizon of the journalistic gaze and stress thematic core issues of contemporary conflicts. Without necessarily being a direct product of each theoretical framework, the examples presented show different ways of implementing such focus points in nuanced and progressive ways. If directly contrasted with the Human Security doctrine and the suggestions tailored to ‘new wars’, parallels can be drawn between crucial understandings, such as the sensitivity towards rights and justice as necessary bases for any peace effort; the extended view beyond the frontline towards the larger context; the relevance to give voice to local figures in peace processes; the attempt to assess civilian coping mechanisms and to contrast them with international efforts. Thus, it could be followed, that a comprehensive approach like the Human Security model could function somewhat as an inspirational blueprint for a media strategy, and vice-versa, that a media output of such kind could contribute to the goals set out in this political strategy.
Chapter 4

Media Potential for the European Approach to Peace

To develop the previous realization further into the practical realm, the European Union’s approach provides an opening wedge to start from. As one security actor who has been inspired by and integrated key principles of the Human Security model into its strategy, some of the previously reviewed tools shall be put forth for a discussion from the media perspective. Evidently, a functional flow of information is key to any successful crisis management, both for the pre-assessment of the situation on the ground as well as for the eventual implementation of goals such as ‘local ownership’, which guide endeavours like the EU’s CSDP missions. Since the media can be regarded as one transmitter of information within and beyond the sphere of conflict, it is not far fetched to situate its potential within these processes.

Much literature on the relationship between peacebuilding efforts and the media largely focuses on (re-)building private and independent media institutions in (post-)conflict areas as a way to amplify democratic developments within the process of state-building. However, as Putzel & Van Der Zwan (2006) have argued, this might proof meaningless if not dangerous in cases where centralized state structures and control have vanished. The assumption that the presence of media organizations in highly chaotic environments automatically empowers civil society “underestimates the complexity of the contexts of fragile states” (2006, p. 1), as media outlets just like any other public institution could be subject to manipulation by either of the actors. Therefore, Putzel & Van Der Zwan highlight the necessity for a customized media development strategy that places support for credible media actors within judicious regulation and the evolution of domestic and international laws that protect information flows (2006, p. 2).

In reality, as the EU approach reveals, there is little that suggests a coherent strategic umbrella specifically designed for the improvement of information flows and media coverage. Rather, these larger goals break down to ad hoc allocations of funding to individuals and organizations that often operate in juxtaposition to a lawless, repressed or non-regulated media environment. As we have seen earlier, especially in conflict
areas where there is limited political access or bilateral cooperation the EU has on several occasions operated from a distance and through its developmental funds.

This also applies to initiatives directly channelled into the media environment. In the case of Syria, Richard Youngs (2018) found that the EU Commission has funded the BBC to “spread moderate narratives across Syria via radio.” Individual member states have followed similar paths: Germany allegedly supported ‘citizen journalists’ in rebel held-areas and Sweden sent funds to various media organizations that monitor the rights of journalists under the Assad regime. While these initiatives suggest an increasing awareness of the benefits of balanced coverage and journalistic presence, there is little detail to be found on the scope, realization, and validity of these transactions. When asked about these matters in a private correspondence, Youngs admitted that finding information on these initiatives is difficult and in the case of his research required personal consultations with EU diplomats in Brussels (Youngs via E-Mail, 2019). This raises a paradoxical problem: while these financial incentives seek to improve the flow of information in a media environment subject to censorship and political control, the funding agenda itself falls short of easy access to the broader public. For this research, precisely such details would have been highly valuable, for instance, what the EU considered to be “moderate narratives” and what the Commission hoped to achieve by having them spread. Germany’s initiative to fund ‘citizen journalists’ presents an equal set of questions: How were these individuals selected? How protected from manipulation was their reporting? If not clarified, in the worst case, financial support of this kind could also cause suspicion of political bias and attempted influence over the independence of the media —especially in cases where funding was exclusively channelled to rebel-held areas.

A more indirect approach of fuelling the information cycle, the EU has also provided financial support for Rami Abdul Rahman’s one-man Syrian Observatory of Human Rights. In this case, too, the exact scope cannot be found anywhere on the internet. Only in an interview with the New York Times, Rahman confirmed that he had received “small subsidies” from the EU next to one other European country he did not want to identify (MacFarquhar, 2013). Again, further information on these subventions would have been highly valuable such as the precise goals of the funding, but especially to what extent the EU had insight into the way Rahman collects and verifies his
information. For these matters, the given *NYT* article is virtually the only available ‘behind-the-scenes’ analysis into the *Observatory’s* way of working and impact, as there seemingly has been no academic research into this recent yet powerful source to date. The article provides useful hints on the political motivation of Rahman, stating that his past as a political opponent of Assad has raised allegations of bias; while it also details his verification techniques: a Skype group of activists in every province, aides and local doctors who confirm casualty figures after counting the dead at field hospitals, and even government soldiers who report back to Rahman (MacFarquhar, 2013). All these aspects are of high relevance if legitimate and effective allocation of EU funding is to be guaranteed, especially when there is a growing trend to fund alternative, less established or locally-based actors who might not operate according to international standards. Complementary to this development, journalistic coverage that takes a closer look into the working cycle of how information is collected and distributed can contribute to a more transparent system of checks and balances. Additionally, readers might develop an awareness of how difficult the verification of facts from war-torn countries can be, which could help to build critically-literate audiences in the long run.

In contrast, the previously presented coverage on Marib, Yemen’s island of stability, offers somewhat of a best-case model for how EU funding can foster effective and unique ways of reporting. The EU has allocated funds to the *Sana’a Center for Strategic Studies*, the research institute that had organized the trip for the Western journalists. The website of the Center visibly indicates that it has received funding from the EU among other institutions and governments. Equipped with the necessary resources, the Yemeni institute had the capacity to share a substantial amount of local insights with foreign visitors. Allowing the journalists to interview multiple local sources and proceed with their reporting independently, they were able to create their own account of what is happening on the ground and take these realizations home and into global coverage. This cycle delineates an approach in which financial aid is channelled to independent local researchers and analysts, which enables them to assess their region’s needs and dynamics, before sharing their knowledge with external outlets.

This way, the EU can substitute ground-level expertise while can encouraging the
outcome to travel into various directions. Several Western-based think-tanks have published policy briefs on the Marib case, some of which specifically address the EU with proposals on how to engage in the region. For instance, in a publication for the *European Council on Foreign Relations* fellow Adam Baron understands the success in Marib as a “potential opening for Europe given its relatively neutral position in the conflict and key European actor’s pre-existing outreach to players currently outside of the political process, such as tribal figures, southern secessionists, youth, women and civil society groups” (2018, p. 14). While such publications can help to influence, scrutinize and extend the EU approach in the area of interest, they tend to remain in the sphere of academia and specialized policy work. At the same time, it is hard to assess to what extent EU officials integrate such briefings into their strategy. On the other hand, a complementary journalistic piece such as the *NYT* article on Marib has the potential to translate expert analysis—and with it, academic jargon and technical keywords—into a concept accessible to a wider audience. As we have seen, the media holds the power to bring global (and therefore as well the EU’s) attention to local actors and NGOs, for example witnessed in the case of the “White Helmets,” who, after gaining extensive publicity, had the opportunity to lobby for a no-fly zone in the EU Parliament.

In sum, the above sparks a handful of broader assumptions: Lacking access or transparency into the records of public funding projects can make media coverage about the overall success of EU-subsidized peace initiatives difficult. To evaluate metrics of efficiency (and legitimacy!), both media- and non-media related funding projects should integrate the aim of greater visibility, including through media debate. Vice-versa, the media can address challenging, unique or dysfunctional flows of communication in a *self-referring manner*, for instance by shedding light into the machine rooms of (publically or privately funded) local media outlets, monitoring agencies, interpreters, fixers and press advocacy groups. Lastly, the media can create links between expert assessment and the broader public: subsidized local know-how is not only valuable for professionals in the ranks of academia and politics but can have an additional impact if translated into a commonly understood output.
To conclude, these realizations shall be translated into a handful of practical suggestions: How can the EU support alternative narratives and foster a better flow of information within the conflict cycle?

1. **Educate and Train Journalists on ‘New War’ Realities**
   To nurture a grounded knowledge of journalists about the EU’s Global Strategy the Union could rely on its Brussels-based European Security and Defence College (ESDC). This institution is specifically tasked with training future EU personnel (for instance ahead of ESDP missions). The curriculum includes Orientation and High Level Courses on CSDP policy, Crisis Management, Security Sector Reform, Legal Matters, “Development in a Changing World”, “Negotiation and Dialogue Skills” or “Integration of Gender Perspectives” among many others. Currently, candidates from a Member State’s ministries and service institutions have to be nominated in order to participate (ESDC, 2019). Whether this process could be opened up or not, the course program indicates that the EU is equipped to transfer both its know-how and mission scope to a learning audience. This suggests an opportunity for journalists to better conceptualize new types of war and the complex parameters of Human-Security-inspired policies, as well as it might encourage them to extend their reporting agenda by themes relevant to ‘new wars’.

2. **Allow Ground-Level Evaluation Through Visibility**
   To counter increasing obscurity as a result of outsourcing much of the groundwork to external partners, NGOs and other security actors, the EU should make sure that their partners are in touch with the local sphere. This not only implies increased visibility of with whom, under which conditions and for which goals EU cooperation and funding are exerted. Outreach to local journalists and media outlets could be one helpful tool to have efforts evaluated from the perspective of the local civil society. Transparency through press briefings and public evaluation reports by external partners could be included as one condition for the allocation of aid in the first place. This would also decrease the chances of manipulation.

3. **Foster Partnerships and Exchange between External Actors**
   Once researchers, civil society, NGOs, local and international media outlets are better connected, all of those actors would benefit from exchange and publicity. For instance, ‘embedding’ journalists at the frontline of (EU-funded) local peace initiatives could generate public support—or, in less successful cases, make visible mistakes and inefficiencies. In turn, local NGOs or other institutions could host international journalists to conduct independent research alongside their activities. Naturally, parameters of objectivity have to be safeguarded and journalists should not be deployed as substitute PR professionals. But by at least providing a haven amid difficult surroundings, the early fruits of local ground-work might travel into global consciousness, which not the least increases chances for future funding.
Conclusion

At the heart of this dissertation lies a deceptively simple question: how to keep up with a vastly changing security environment at the outskirts of Europe? This query challenges policy-makers, the media and citizens alike: the rapid speed of destabilization processes repeatedly exposes political response mechanisms as smoking mirrors, ill-equipped to prevent disasters from unfolding. Professional news journalism, already stifled by the impact of economic downfalls in the internet age, would have to massively upsurge its resources to adequately inform their audiences about the innumerable and fractured hazards in every corner of the world. As a result, large portions of Western populations are left only with shards of information. Struggling to connect with a geographically distant event, they might simply exit the debate in lethargy, numbed off by repetitive frames of misery. However, despite all that, one should not grow tired in the attempt to untangle this Gordian knot: as deadlocked as it may seem, it is also rich of unexpected turning points.

Walking through the dispersed reality of ‘new wars’, it became obvious that there is a lack of clear targets to race towards. Little can be done in retrospect to alleviate deeply rooted feelings of suppression, long years of ethnic or religious discrimination, and psychological trauma. Nonetheless, examining the various actors in the conflict cycle has also brought forward new players both from the international and local realm. Many of them hold the power to transform, step by step, their immediate environment. Civilian coping strategies might be tied to undesirable economic conditions or illegitimate practices, however, they also present a certain degree of much-needed creativity in the absence of organized state structures.

Fortunately, to an extent, the need to reconfigure political strategies to ‘new war’ scenarios has crept into the consciousness of some key actors on the security stage. Admittedly, investigating how locally-owned and bottom-up peacebuilding approaches have found their way into the policies of powerful ‘top-down’ institutions such as the European Union presents an argumentative paradox. Nevertheless, it is only realistic to include the EU, given its particular financial resources, geopolitical interests and active campaigning for these matters. Especially in the eye of recent nuclear rivalries and military ‘strongman’ rhetoric flaring up on the global stage, it seems to be the right
time to address the EU’s initial ‘soft core’ approach. In having done so, multiple policy tools came to the surface that hold the potential to support creative conflict solutions.

Situating the media within these dynamics has led to further realizations: some coverage suggests that media outlets hold on to classic conceptions of warfare, depicting conflict in binary formats and based on event-driven parameters. While these practices in part are tied to editorial routines and market demands, a structural overhaul of the media perspective suggests that even by slightly adjusting and expanding the journalistic gaze, alternative narratives are indeed possible and partly out there already. Therefore, taking into account the complexities of ‘new wars’ must not necessarily lead to confusion. It can, in fact, crack open a vast set of fascinating themes to cover. Likewise, reforms crafted for the political spectrum can almost directly be translated into a roadmap for journalists as well.

Having fleshed out this formula, selected EU projects were reassessed in this context. Especially the aspect of funding (local) actors to enforce pertinent flows of communication was considered, as it presents an intriguing concept but seems to have been implemented only sporadically. A closer look raised multiple questions about transparency and efficiency in these activities, of which some could be solved by subtle reforms and amendments. Overall, transnational collaborations between various actors of the information cycle (NGOs, monitoring agencies, legal experts, journalists and citizens) emerge as a key opportunity to produce multi-layered coverage with an impact beyond the news bulletin. Though concluding at this point, the intricate nature of this research makes this dissertation mainly a first gateway for future deliberations, ideally conducted in close cooperation with other disciplines and fields of expertise.
**Bibliography**


