

# Intercultural communication in a conflict-torn world: Critical questions/ connections/implications

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The six articles that follow address the theme of intercultural communication in a conflict-torn world. The articles exemplify diverse ways in which intercultural communication is constituted by and is constitutive of conflicts across the world. There are several types of conflicts examined by the contributors to this special issue that demonstrate how the meaning of what constitutes a conflict has changed in the world with changing politics, economics, cultures, and technologies. The different articles here overall indicate that although conflicts have local, contextualized beginnings, they have deep intercultural/interethnic/global issues embedded in them that need to be examined from multiple perspectives. While the ways in which each conflict scenario is dealt with is culturally specific, there is much to learn from each instance. Previous scholars have established six imperatives that help understand the necessity of intercultural communication in the world (Martin and Nakayama, 2010). These imperatives are self-awareness, demographic, economic, technological, peace, and ethical. Each one of these imperatives is touched upon by the articles in this special issue in some significant way. Moreover, scholars have also recognized the need for broadening the scope of intercultural communication research by moving the focus and privilege away from white, western, northern discourses in order to be more inclusive of many other, newer forms of conceptualizing intercultural communication (Collier, 2002; Starosta and Chen, 2003). The articles here solidify such a shift in approach in intercultural communication research. Finally, the articles examine diverse conflicts using an equally diverse range of analytical and methodological frameworks. Some contributors employ critical discourse analysis of newspaper texts and political speeches while others rely upon personal interviews with Russian Interfax executives; some conduct an in-depth literature review to expose strategic gaps in intercultural scholarship and others employ grounded theory protocols to expose ideological difference in approach to conflict by Chinese overseas online commentators.

Shaw, in his contribution, traces the connection between intercultural communication, peace journalism, and human rights journalism by examining the extent to which the reporting of the 7/7 terrorist attacks in the London underground contributes to the clash of cultures or civilizations between the ‘civilized’ West and the binary opposite Muslim world. Boyd-Barrett, for his part, theorizes about the relationship between news

agencies and national development and interethnic peace and stability with specific focus on the Russian news agency Interfax. He concludes that by developing a relatively independent, horizontal informational infrastructure for the entire region, Interfax has a strong claim as contributor to regional stability, cultural and economic integration. Dong examines the reactions of and interactions between Chinese overseas online users about matters pertaining to political discourses and ideological debates on China as well as China's external tensions with other world powers. Roy conducts critical discourse analysis of newspaper texts pertaining to the conflict representation between Israel and Palestine in *The New York Times*. She demonstrates how mediated, discursive conflict representation has implications for intercultural communication with regard to issues of identities, instances of 'othering,' and unconscious projection of cultural expectations in conflict reportage. Anderson analyzes the Canadian Prime Minister's 2008 apology to the victims of residential schools in the country to reveal a contested meaning of the apology. The analysis indicates that the apology was perceived by intercultural audiences as tenacious in its discursive ability to recall Canada's colonial history and genocide against native Indians. Finally, in the last contribution, Oliha reflects on the field of intercultural communication and its internal contradictions that continue to deny the voices of scholars from particular cultures and proposes the notion of *avante-garde epistemic confluence* to foster greater inclusion of diverse voices in the field.

Together, this special issue offers diverse ways of typifying conflicts, demonstrates from multiple perspectives the deep impact conflicts and representation of conflicts have on intercultural communication, provides evidence of conflict within the field and ways to contend with them, and proposes ways to improve representation of conflicts in the media and politics.

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