

## The Harmony of Peace and Conflict

Social media has provided the world with an array of tools that have changed society completely. It has transformed the way we communicate, fill free time, find information, and more. However, the impact of social media on peacebuilding is not straightforward. Just like the concept of Yin and Yang, social media provides different and opposing views from any and all stances on specific topics. While it does provide great opportunities for individuals to promote positive change, it also serves as a popular spot for hate and misinformation.

The Yin and Yang is a traditional Chinese symbol that represents the balance between opposite things and how they are able to complement each other. The dark side, Yin, represents things that could be described as somber or calm; night, shadows, rest, cold, and the moon. Whereas Yang, the white side, is the exact opposite; brightness, positivity, the sun, and activeness. Because these things share such duality, they can live in harmony and balance one another out. There cannot be darkness without light. There cannot be day without night. There cannot be peace without hate. This very idea is evident on social media. Social media is a place that thrives on popularity. There have been countless viral videos about violence and also about peace. There can only be an awareness post if there is something to be aware of.

Opportunity could be considered a description for Yang: a chance or a favorable circumstance. Social media allows anybody to be somebody, an opportunity. Joe Biden, the current President of the United States, has 17.5 million followers on Instagram. The official United Kingdom Royal Family has 13.1 million followers on Instagram. Charli D'Amelio, a 19-year-old social media influencer, has 47.6 million followers on Instagram and is known for dancing to 15-second clipped songs. Social media gives anyone, of any age, an opportunity to become more famous than some of the most known people in the world in a matter of seconds

from anywhere, anytime. Many teenagers and adults with a message have been able to make a platform for themselves in order to spread a message. Greta Thunberg, for example, uses her platform to spread awareness about the climate crisis. By sharing her speeches online she has initiated movements towards creating more concern about climate change among young people. Greta Thunberg saw this opportunity to share her message and beliefs and used it to inspire others. Social media gives this opportunity to anybody. This being true, social media also allows anyone to say whatever they want, anytime, anywhere. Although in this sense, the opportunity turns into an obstacle, which would be a description for Yin. Things such as hate comments and death threats. Being behind a screen gives many people the security they need to say whatever they want no matter how hurtful it may be. The safety of not having to say it to another person's face allows them to speak their mind with what they think without repercussions. Social media created and gave people the opportunity to speak their minds whether it's to spread a message of peace or to spread a message of hate.

A movement, as in a change or organized activity, would also be considered a description for Yang. Social media promotes many different social movements across the world, such as Black Lives Matter, Me Too, LGBTQ+ Rights, and so much more. Generally, these movements being released to social media have allowed them to reach thousands of new people and call attention to many more for change. For example, the #MeToo movement brought awareness to survivors of sexual assault. When seeing others share their stories of what happened to them it gave thousands of women the confidence and support to share their stories as well. Since the movement started in October of 2017, the phrase #MeToo has been used millions of times in 80+ different countries. The numbers and endorsement this movement has received and is still receiving, show that social media has an impact on peacebuilding. There are instances, however,

where these movements have not been used as intended. In 2020 when the Black Lives Matter movement was on the rise on social media, there was a protest against police brutality happening in California. A journalist, Fiona Moriarty-McLaughlin, claimed to have attended the protest and even helped a man who was boarding up a business for the protest. Although a video was later released showing Fiona asking the man to hold a drill for the picture and then getting back in her car to go home. Social media allows people to see the photo, not the true moment. This journalist did not attend the protest and did not care to support the cause but wanted the public to think she did. Social media spreads lots of movements that have helped many people but it has also spread lots of fake news and lies.

It's important to ask yourself how many hashtags and comments have you seen and really seen the truth behind them. How many people really mean what they put out on social media? So how impactful is social media on peacebuilding? Truthfully, peace does not exist without inherent conflict. While social media may promote peace, it also promotes hate. No matter which way one looks at it, there will always be hate comments under kind posts, protests against other protests, people going to movements, and those who disagree with them or just don't care. The reality is that social media is a double-edged sword of peace and conflict in the world.