

What is peace journalism media essay



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How could the media contribute to peace building? Most of the peace settlements even with the Oslo peace Accords in the Middle East, the Dayton Accords which ended the Bosnian War took place as far away from the media as possible. It is known to the related parties of the world situations that media is usually seen as a threat. On that perspective this study will measure the importance of 'Peace Journalism' as new concept of journalism and its acceptance to the audience as one of the tools for world peace. Peace is always related with conflict as its nature, so this study will find the attitude of audience to 'Peace Journalism'.

Key-Words: Peace Journalism, War Journalism, Conflict resolutions, audiences of media.

Introduction:

When some journalists and researchers like David Loyn, Philips argued against peace journalism then Jack Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick argued in favour of it. They tried to find the real distinctions, debated over 'right' or 'wrong' points of peace journalism. Academic writers and scholars also commented on the topic. Some thought it was critical, some thought it's not critical enough and some thought it's better than war journalism as journalism.

This study will find the reality and necessity of peace journalism in the contemporary civilised world when the planet earth is facing undeclared world war with different battle fields and the manipulation of media publicity with propaganda.

Background:

Peace journalism follows a long history of news publication originating in non-sectarian Christian peace movements and societies of the early 19th century, which published periodicals. Sectarian organizations also created publications focused on peace as part of their proselytizing in the 19th century, as did utopian communities of the period. From the 20th century, a prominent example of sectarian journalism focused on peace was Dorothy Day's *Catholic Worker*.

Besides being an element in the histories of pacifism and the social movement press, peace journalism is a set of journalism practices that emerged in the 1970s. Norwegian sociologist, peace researcher and practitioner Johan Galtung proposed the idea of peace journalism for journalists to follow to show how a value bias towards violence can be avoided when covering war and conflict. Christian organisations such as The World Council of Churches and The World Association for Christian Communication also practice peace journalism.

Professor Johan Galtung, a professor on Peace Studies and director of the TRANSCEND network, started using the term, 'Peace Journalism' in the 1970s. Conflict and Peace Forums, a think-tank developed Galtung's original ideas in a series of international conferences from 1997-99, and in publications: *The Peace Journalism Option* (1998); *What Are Journalists For?* (1999), and, *Using Conflict Analysis in Reporting* (2000).

Former BBC journalists Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick adopted the phrase ‘ Peace Journalism’ and they became scholars and educator in peace journalism.

What is peace journalism?

As Lynch and McGoldrick describe the word ‘ peace journalism’ is misunderstood as advocating peace. They agree that the phrase ‘ Peace Journalism’ would not appeal to all. They also tried to make a definition which was “ Peace Journalism is when editors and reporters make choices- of what stories to report and about how to report them- that create opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict.” (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005)

Today, journalists often write and report from a third-person perspective and it seems like they just report ‘ the facts’. If journalists compete not to distort any report to publish the facts as they are, while maintaining awareness of the reporting impact, then it may fall in step with the ideals of peace journalism. But journalism is not only reporting. In a feature or article a journalist could express every truth of fact even from a first-person position.

Characteristics of Peace Journalism

Lynch and McGoldrick versioned that journalists would not do just for the idea and practice but they should know the differences between Peace and War Journalism and how they could avoid from engaging the war journalism as always its character is propaganda.

Understanding peace is very important. Without knowledge no journalist could engage with the mission. The first condition to seek peace is conflicting

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situation. In my understanding, if the situation is peaceful from beginning then no advocacy on peace is needed. Because there is already peace there. They need development journalism rather peace. So within a conflicting situation if the question of peace arises then the journalist does their mission with their understanding first.

Then as part of peace journalism they need to measure the conflicting stories and the role of disputed parties. For a greater knowledge, Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick prescribed 17 tips for better peace journalism. They described what to avoid and what to accept.

Who's benefit?

Some western journalists advocate through their reporting to justify the aggression by the super powers on any sovereign (?) country and nation, destructions on their assets and killing their citizens for the greater interest of world peace (?). Any destruction and mass killing is treated as collateral damage. For their own survival media often overlook the reality. Reporters must continue with embedment (a big joke on neutral journalism) otherwise they could easily end up dead.

There is no peace journalism without a conflicting situation or a war or damages against any civilisation. So any conflicting situation is a pre-requisite for peace journalism if any media desires that. And it always depends on the choices by the editor or authority of the media not to the reporter.

“ But peace is made neither by culture alone, nor by politics and economics alone. It is made by all three, synergistically. The formula for peace is

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always equality, equity, and mutual respect. We have to learn to celebrate not only the peace elements in our own culture but also in others.” (Galtung, 2003).

Peace is always for the benefit of the people and they are the audience. Peace is act of non-violence with creativity which was described by Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick as followers from the life of three greatest personalities of human race:

Mohammed laid down his cloak in the Ka’ba at Mecca to forestall violence in a quarrel over who had the right to carry a sacred black stone. It meant everyone could lift a corner of the cloak with the stone placed in the middle.

Christ intervened to prevent the stoning of an adulteress by saying, “ let him who is without sin cast the first stone.”

The Buddha intervened to prevent a war breaking out over water. She reminded the parties that the water was worth very little. Whereas the lives of their warriors were ‘ beyond price’.

” Peace to be peace, must give something to every one. If it is for one party/person and against another, it cannot be peace.” (Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick, 2000)

Objectivity and Discontents

Objectivity and peace journalism totally depends on the authority of media. A freelance could cry on social media for peace and pro-fare objectives but people always use to depend on the main media of the world. But the freelance cannot change anything through his crying.

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David Loyn criticised peace journalism not only as his believe but also attacked it as meaningless, worst and misleading journalism. He wrote reporting wars in the way of encouraging peacemaker rather than warriors are the most dangerous part of peace journalism as it became as a new orthodoxy.

How does objectivity work in practice? Anyone who has ever interviewed two observers of the same incident knows that there is no perfect account. Each reporter takes a ‘view from somewhere’. When a Russian armoured infantry company arrived in Kosovo out of the blue in 1999, after the NATO bombing campaign but before NATO ground troops, and seized the airport in a sneak raid, a British and a Russian journalist would have covered the same event completely differently. There could be no agreed narrative- but both would use the tool of objectivity to tell the story in their own terms, and in the terms understood by their viewers, listeners or readers.”

Here this study only could observe the debate between the scholars in favour or against peace journalism. It is also seems quite dangerous to determine the right or wrong of the both sides. Both Lynch and Loyn argued on the theory rather than practicality of the circumstances of journalism of this time.

Media has become more visible, readable, and audible than ever in human history. Beside the reality its importance also realised by the powers who are doing everything against peace. In every country where there is a government that has their own interest at heart rather than the peoples. Either the supporter of peace or war loves to use media as their propaganda

mechanism. So that they invisibly control over the media authority thus they control the reporting. Direct conflict or war reporting is not possible without an embed or attachment situation which ultimately paralyses the life of a true journalism. Media authority also don't want to take any risk on the life of a journalist where there is a greater chance to assassinate the reporter even in a friendly fire scenario for his truth. These types of practice are already taking place.

It is a fact that to continue with a huge establishment no media authority would take any risk to stand against the powers of the world. Only a few but they are also backed by some other powers. There is no neutrality. Peace journalism creates some questions. Why peace and for whom? When does the topic of peace arise? How could we define peace as a peace not as a trick?

Critical peace journalism

There are some other types of journalism which are also not branded as peace journalism but their actions ultimately goes to the benefit for peace journalism. Noam Chomsky and Robert Fisk are two of them.

This study found both of them as critical peace journalists. But they are not recognised as peace journalist at all. This study will evaluate their recent published articles on the assassination of Osama Bin Laden which brought their reactions to the audience and it carries the message of world peace in final.

Robert Fisk: “ So now for a reality check. The world is not safer for Bin Laden's killing. It is safer because of the winds of freedom blowing through

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the Middle East. If the West treats the people of this region with justice rather than military firepower, then al-Qa'ida becomes even more irrelevant than it has been since the Arab revolutions". (Independent, 4/05/2011)

Noam Chomsky: " We might ask ourselves how we would be reacting if Iraqi commandos landed at George W. Bush's compound, assassinated him, and dumped his body in the Atlantic."

" There is also much media discussion of Washington's anger that Pakistan didn't turn over bin Laden, though surely elements of the military and security forces were aware of his presence in Abbottabad. Less is said about Pakistani anger that the U. S. invaded their territory to carry out a political assassination. Anti-American fervour is already very high in Pakistan, and these events are likely to exacerbate it. The decision to dump the body at sea is already, predictably, provoking both anger and skepticism in much of the Muslim world." (guernicamag. com, 6/05/2011)

The two above cases clearly indicated that both the articles warned the related parties about the situations from the perspective of audiences and its target against the conflict in favour of peace. The author of this study finds those as critical peace journalism which was not widely accepted or circulated as peace journalism rather than criticism.

" The way the media present conflict and violence will be a major factor in determining the reaction: war, or peace. One assumption is readiness to identify the legitimate goals of the other. Most parties are carriers of mixed bags of goals, so the task is to provide an umbrella for all legitimate goals.

Sufficient prominence of such possible outcomes in the media is a basic necessary, if not sufficient, condition.” (Galtung, 2006)

War Journalism -VS- Peace Journalism

The common understanding on war journalism is that it's violence oriented where the elites or power based forces use media as their propaganda mechanism. All the related parties want to see their possible victory in the war reporting. Also the national media have the same desire as their audience in a conflicting situation.

In the same way ' Peace Journalism' is based on conflict but peace oriented and reports should be truth oriented and reports mostly cover both parties in the conflict for a better solution or outcome avoiding a more disastrous situation.

” In a phrase, Peace Journalism is a broader, fairer and more accurate way of framing stories, drawing on the insights of conflict analysis and transformation. The Peace Journalism approach provides a new road map for tracing the connections between journalists, their sources, the stories they cover and the consequences of their reporting – the ethics of journalistic intervention. It opens up a literacy of non-violence and creativity as applied to the practical job of everyday reporting.” (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2001)

As Lynch mentioned war journalism is

Violence/war Oriented

Propaganda-oriented

Elite- oriented

Victory- Oriented

And peace Journalism itself is therefore

Peace/conflict oriented

Truth- oriented

People- oriented

Solution oriented

Problems for reporting on a conflict situation is that when two nations start fighting each other, both sides automatically become involved in psychological warfare also. In that situation side wants to see their victory. Here is the success of war journalism. To capitalise on that position, super powers allow journalism with attachment just to control the media for propaganda. In a conflicting situation to overcome human disaster there is no alternative but ' peace reporting' for a possible calm situation. But it may not possible all the time.

Kathleen O'Toole of Stanford University news service quoted from James Schear, deputy assistant secretary of defence for peacekeeping and humanitarian affairs that for most of the parties in most of the conflicts, war is a safer bet than peace. James Schear told the campus audience and described it as a brutally depressing fact. Schear previously worked for the United Nations in Cambodia and Bosnia.

“ War is often safer, he said, because it has “ a familiar pattern; it imposes order, stifles dissent, generates profits in Angola and other places, provides employment, provides a pathway to advance.” (O’Toole, 1997)

Role of social media for peace

Social media plays a major role in the field of mass communication. That role could recognise as one of the event of journalism also. When journalists fail to publish any report to their respective media they are leaking the topic or report to the public through social media. Any member of the public could have the chance to publish any news in the social media as well. In terms of peace journalism there is a huge opportunity to serve the people targeting a peaceful environment avoiding any conflict or war situation. A Reporter could avail of the advantage of wider publicity of social media to reach the audience and to get a prompt response from the audience.

Journalism of Social Media now is a reality. The web has changed everything. Anybody with a blog can be a reporter, with a mobile phone can be a camera man, and even on Facebook, Twitter or a thousand other platforms can be a news editor or at least a curator. So it’s easy to see the power that lies in the future of social media.

“ The future of social media in journalism will see the death of “ social media.” That is, all media as we know it today will become social, and feature a social component to one extent or another. After all, much of the web experience, particularly in the way we consume content, is becoming social and personalized.” (Lavrusik 2010)

So it's possible that traditional media could be merge with social media meaning the content of 'Peace Journalism' would be different from now. Journalists would be more realistic and even free to serve their ideas for audience without any type of 'super-power' pressure which could distort the news content. But still it's difficult to know whether the audience would accept more peace journalism than war. Though it differs the mind of audiences is still more or less captured by violence. They love to play violent videogames, watch violent movies, documentaries even bloody sports they like more than anything. They like to see the victory over others, its a psychological matter but on that reason nobody could be definitive whether audience would accept peace journalism or not.

Audience of Peace Journalism

War may be pointless for mankind but peace never will be pointless. If peace journalism is a mission then it could not be a pointless topic. It is very hard to see how it could be a popular one and how to get journalists to view the topic as one of the most important requirements for mankind. Theoretically there is no alternative but peace journalism at this stage for the audience, but other researchers, academic and journalists argued on that point that it's not possible to find a solution of conflicts worldwide but beyond the conventional duties of journalism.

" The mass media don't parrot militaristic arguments as bluntly as bloggers, but there's no great taste for peace there, either. I can't name a single major columnist who advocates massive military cuts. Nor a single one who has openly sided with the peace movement. The opinion elites have gradually allowed the concept of immediate withdrawal from Iraq on to the front page, <https://assignbuster.com/what-is-peace-journalism-media-essay/>

without taking the radical step of turning the U. S. away from being a threatening bully on a global scale.” (Chopra, 2005)

Who cares?

This moment the most circulated news of the planet of earth is the killing of unarmed Osama Bin Laden the famous leader of CIA created terrorist organisation Al-Qaeda. This killing news captures whole media attention. The Noble Lauriat on Peace US President Obama’s popularity already increased with his successful killing mission of an unarmed terrorist (their creation). It is now very tough to define the reporting character whether those are reflecting peace journalism or propaganda journalism. Some people accept the killing as an act towards peace and some are totally reversed.

For example journalist Robert Fisk is a successful media personality, who is continuously criticising the aggressions and imperialistic activities of superpowers. The view of this author is that Robert Fisk’s articles are the latest version of journalism and the ultimate target is to reduce conflict if the conflict creators realise the message of his articles. This type of article which was criticising the conflict makers might not be acceptable by the super powers or by some others audiences who like to watch thrill and war. Fisk’s articles always bring some messages which never in favour of War Lords or War super powers.

So it is tough to measure the peace journalism without a definite standard to compare with anything.

Conclusions:

At this stage of the planet earth where the Homo sapiens are living for a consecutive period might enter in a dangerous band of time cycle. People are used to watch wars and conflicts through news media and movies. New generations love to see thrill and suspense with fighting. Even people are enjoying the latest video game of the assassination of Osama Bin Laden. Huge people gather around any show on armaments in different countries of the planet. They love to see the heroes till the disaster falls into their own life. This is reality. But it varies with time and circumstances. Though 'peace journalism' faced controversy from the beginning, its existence now also the reality of journalism. 'Peace Journalism' basically exist on research, academic and theory rather than practical. Audience also like to see war journalism but like the idea of 'Peace Journalism' for all mankind. But for 'Peace Journalism' to become a reality it requires a complete shift in the thinking of the media machine, at the moment there are few voices speaking out in favour of it. Only when that changes can there be any hope for 'Peace Journalism'. For audiences to accept it all of our mainstream media sources must do it.

Acknowledgement:

This essay has been read by Mr. Joseph Coffey my classmate and I acknowledged his extended cooperation to correct my mistakes.