

## The Peace Journalism Controversy

# **Friedens- und Demokratiepsychologie**

**Band 6**

**herausgegeben von**

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**The Peace Journalism Controversy**

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## Preface

In the social sciences there is probably no other phenomenon that is as well documented as the affinity between war reportage and propaganda. The ethical norms of journalism – truthfulness, objectivity and detachment – count for little if all that matters is helping one's side to win and force the enemy to his knees.

Already for Harold Lasswell this was virtually self-evident. In his study on propaganda techniques in World War I (1927) he argued that democratic societies in particular need propaganda in order to be able to wage war. The end justifies the means, even when the basic democratic right of freedom of opinion is thereby trampled underfoot, and until the 1950s psychological attitude research quite unself-consciously used the concept of propaganda and made the optimization of propaganda for the purpose of changing attitudes its research object.

As well the resistance of critical intellectuals to the misuse of the media for the purposes of war propaganda can look back on a long history. Already during World War I the publicist Karl Kraus unmasked the propaganda constructions of war journalism and dealt with them in satirical form in his theater play *The Last Days of Mankind*. However, the concept of propaganda first acquired its negative connotations during the Cold War, when it was only applied to the enemy's propaganda, and countries began to apply harmless-sounding terms like 'persuasion' or 'public relations' to their own.

Parallel to the rise of these euphemisms a development in international law took place that on the one side guarantees freedom of the press, and on the other hand anchors the media's mandate to promote peace in a great number of international treaties and documents. Thus already Article 29 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UN, 1948), that in Article 19 guarantees the right to freedom of thought and free speech, adds the qualification that everyone also has duties to the community and in no case should they be entitled to employ their rights and freedoms contrary to the aims and principles of the United Nations. Article 20 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (UN, 1966) legally forbids war propaganda and incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence, and Article 3 of the UNESCO *Media Declaration* of 1978 (UNESCO, 1979) not only requires that the mass media must make a significant contribution to strengthening peace and international understanding, but also specifies this peace mandate to the effect that incitement to war, racism and human rights violations must be op-

posed and information must be disseminated that makes the citizens of countries more sensitive to the needs of others, to secure respect for the rights and dignity of all nations, all peoples and all of mankind, as well as to reduce international tensions and further peaceful dispute settlement.

The legal anchoring of the media's peace mandate in international law and its practical implementation are, however, ambivalent. Measured against the enormous expenditure that at the latest since World War I has been invested in optimizing propaganda strategies, military media management and psychological warfare, efforts to utilize the media as instruments for constructive conflict management and securing the peace seem rather modest. Of course there is a vast quantity of literature that critically illuminates the functionalization of the media for purposes of war propaganda – not only by dictatorial regimes, but also in democratic states – but only toward the end of the Twentieth Century did the question of how the media could be used not as a catalyst for conflict escalation, but instead as a catalyst of conflict de-escalation and of peaceful dispute settlement attract the attention of peace researchers, media scholars and journalists.

The aim of peace journalism that arose in reaction to the Gulf War and the post-Yugoslavian civil wars is to avoid the functionalization of the media for the purposes of war propaganda, to replace it by constructive conflict coverage that helps to implement journalistic quality norms – even against the interests of the ruling elites – and to make advances toward fulfilling the media's peace mandate by drawing on the findings of conflict and peace research instead of reducing conflicts to a struggle between good and evil. Nonetheless, the concept of peace journalism has not remained unchallenged, however. Just the term 'peace journalism' alone is sufficient to awaken fantasies that make journalists fear for their integrity and/or make the concept of peace journalism seem like an unrealizable postulate that overstrains journalism.

Considerations of this sort deserve to be taken seriously and have provoked intensive discussion among peace scholars, journalists and media scholars, a current highpoint of which is constituted by the topical issue *The Peace Journalism Controversy* of the interdisciplinary journal *conflict & communication online* (Vol. 6, No. 2) which appeared in October 2007. Thanks to verlag irena regener berlin, this controversy is now available in book form. For the book publication a number of classical articles on the conception of peace journalism were added that in part were previously only available in German.

The editor hopes that the present book will help clear up some misunderstandings of the peace journalism project and give new impulses to the struggle for quality journalism that in particular does not let itself be misused for propaganda purposes.

Wilhelm Kempf

Constance, Germany, May 2008



## **Part I**

### **Models of peace journalism**



## **News coverage of conflict: Between escalation and de-escalation**

Wilhelm Kempf

### **1. Introduction**

In modern war, intentional and systematic propaganda represents a central element of psychological warfare. Thus already Lasswell (1927) concluded that psychological resistance to war is so great in modern societies that every war must be given the appearance of a defensive war against a threatening, homicidal aggressor. In order to achieve this, a massive expenditure for propaganda is needed, whose aim is to strengthen the willingness to wage war on the part of one's soldiers and civilian population, to induce them to identify with the war aims, the logic of the war, and to fend off calls for peaceful dispute settlement.

Since the Gulf War, the peace science discussion has increasingly begun to deal with the role of the mass media in this process and has raised the question of how far news coverage of war makes the media into catalysts of violence. The steering of news coverage of war by the military leadership (censorship measures by the Pentagon, Pool-System, etc.) and the activities of public relations agencies (e.g., Hill & Knowlton, Ruder & Finn), which operate outside the professional guidelines and professional ethical norms of journalism, have made the call to establish a new profession widespread: the profession of peace journalism, which should be able, through special qualifications, to report on conflicts in a manner that – in contrast to conventional news coverage of war – contributes to the de-escalation of conflicts, or at least does not help to escalate them.

When journalism looks like propaganda, smells like propaganda and tastes like propaganda, it has actually become propaganda. This can occur intentionally or out of negligence. Propaganda and journalism are often scarcely distinguishable. For well-crafted propaganda does not stink like propaganda, and it has the best chances, because the processes of distorting perception that it supports in escalating conflicts take place even without systematic propaganda – quasi-organically grown. If we know these processes, we can already see, smell and taste propaganda before it begins to stink. And we can oppose to it the model of a critical peace journalism that escapes the propaganda trap by proving itself resistant to this quasi-organic process without turning into counter-propaganda.

## **2. Divergence of perspectives**

War propaganda produces a distorted perception of reality that polarizes the parties to the war and makes the war seem equally necessary and justified. It does this by taking up and supporting the conflict parties' quasi-organic tendencies to perceptual distortion. These tendencies have their origins in the systematic divergence of perspectives between the conflict parties: While we perceive our own actions from an internal perspective that sees the intentions being pursued, we perceive the actions of others from an external standpoint, i.e., they are experienced on the basis of the effects of their actions.

Mutual understanding of the manner of action of the conflict parties thus requires an active process of adopting new perspectives. However, if one of the conflict parties continues to be entangled in its perspective, the others seem to them to be aggressors, a viewpoint that implies not only the necessity, but also the justification of defending oneself against aggression.

The more the conflict parties become enmeshed in such an aggressive interaction, the more they will simultaneously be attached to their own perspective, which leaves no space for empathy with the opposing party, and also cannot leave any room, since this could destroy the foundation upon which the conflict parties think they have the situation under control (Kempf, 1995).

Once this constellation of mutual threat has come about, conflict has become an autonomous process where each of the conflict parties sees no other alternative for themselves except to defend their own aims. Independently of whether their defensive actions are successful or not, they are, however, perceived by the opposing group as aggression which threatens its aims, and against which it believes it must defend itself ...

## **3. Destructive conflict processes**

What course a conflict takes depends, according to Deutsch (1976), essentially on whether the conflict is understood as a competitive or cooperative process.

Destructive conflicts have a tendency to expand and escalate. They become autonomous and continue even when the originally disputed matters have become irrelevant or have even been forgotten. Parallel to the expansion of the conflict, an increasing fixation on power strategies takes place, on tactics of threat, of coercion and of deception.

The tendency to escalate conflict results from three interconnected processes: from the competition that results from the attempt to win the conflict, from the misinterpretation of the opponent's actions and his intentions (divergence of per-

spectives, construction of enemy images), and from the processes of social commitment that go together with making victory over the opponent the inner group's primary aim.

The competition process impoverishes the communication between the conflict parties. They do not exploit existing communication possibilities, or use them to intimidate or deceive their opponent. They tend to distrust their opponent's claims. This furthers the misinterpretation of information in the sense of already existing preconceptions.

The competitive process suggests the view that a conflict solution satisfactory for one's side can only be achieved at the expense of the opponent and by opposing him. Thereby the parties tend to favor the employment of increasingly drastic and violent means to achieve their aims.

The process of misinterpretation results first of all from the divergence of the conflict parties' perspectives, and escalates the conflict because of the increasing asymmetry of trust and suspicion, so that the conflict parties become less and less willing to see opposing actions (also) from the opponent's perspective. The conflict parties become less open to information that could correct prejudicial interpretations of the opponent's actions, and they tend to regard their own aims and actions as more expedient and justified than those of the other side.

The competition process leads to a suspicious and hostile attitude toward the opponent that sharpens the perception of oppositions between the conflict parties and reduces the perception of commonalities between them.

Through the sharpening of the conflict, increased tension arises which reduces the possibility of finding alternative paths to conflict settlement. In group conflicts, the process of social commitment to victory over the opponent further reduces conflict settlement competency: Group members who excel as fighters gain increased influence; members fend off willingness to compromise and mediation efforts as betrayal, and the ongoing entanglement in the conflict binds group members to the conflict strategy, in that it justifies their previous participation.

#### **4. News reporting on conflict that escalates it**

Successful propaganda rests essentially on its not being immediately recognized as propaganda. It succeeds because it does not simply construct its own propaganda reality, but rather takes up quasi-organic processes of perceptual distortion, and furthers and intensifies them.

In every conflict our side has rights and intentions that are interfered with by the other's actions, so that we experience the other's actions as threatening. At the

same time, the other party also has rights and intentions that our actions interfere with, so that they also experience our actions as threatening. But there are also shared rights and intentions, and common benefits from the relationship between the parties, which offer an opportunity for building mutual trust (cf. figure 1).

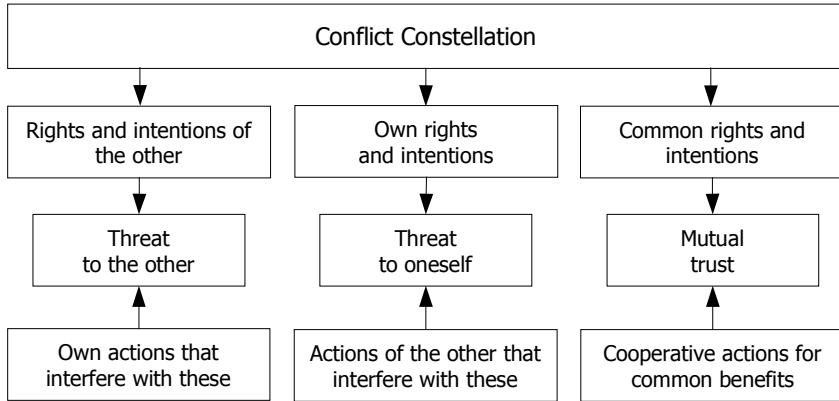


Figure 1: Conflict constellation

However, the systematic divergence of perspectives between the parties hinders achieving such a comprehensive view of the conflict constellation. Parties limit their viewpoint to their own rights and intentions and their endangerment through the actions of the opponent, which they simultaneously view as both a threat to shared rights and intentions, and also as a threat to shared benefits.

If they interpret the conflict as a competitive situation, they will ignore common rights and intentions, and likewise common benefits. Mutual trust declines. Each side sees only its own rights and intentions and their endangerment by the opponent's actions.

If the competition escalates into a struggle, each party disputes the rights of the other and demonizes his intentions. Parties justify their own actions that interfere with their opponent's rights and intentions, and they emphasize their own strengths. Alongside of the perceived threat by the opponent there is confidence in the capability to win the struggle and realize one's own rights and intentions. Parties idealize their own rights and intentions. They condemn the actions of the opponent that interfere with them and emphasize the opponent's dangerousness. Parties deny that their own actions threaten their opponent's rights. They view the opponent's actions as unjust and increasingly distrust him.

With a further escalation to war, the perception of conflict narrows itself completely to the standpoint of military logic. To support this process, to set it in motion and to maintain it is the object and aim of war propaganda.

Parties reject the alternative of peaceful conflict settlement, they fan distrust of their opponent. They dispute common interests which could be the foundation of constructive conflict management. They completely reject the possibility of cooperation with the opponent. They transform (justified) outrage at war into a (self-righteous) outrage at the enemy: they refuse to see the shared suffering that war brings to both sides, and they ignore the common benefits that peaceful conflict settlement could bring (cf. figure 2).

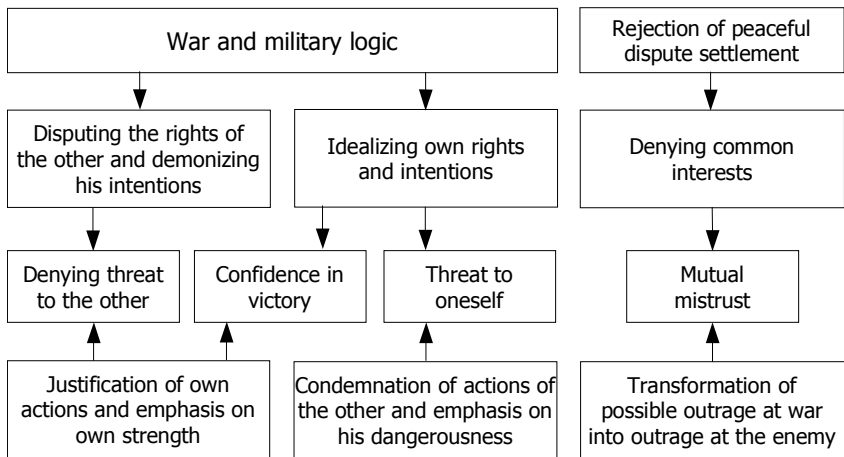


Figure 2: War propaganda

## 5. Constructive conflict processes

In a cooperative environment, conflict can, to the contrary, be viewed as a common problem where the conflict parties have a shared interest in finding a mutually satisfactory solution. This favors constructive conflict settlement in three regards: The cooperative process facilitates more open and honest communication. Freedom to exchange information enables the conflict parties to press forward from the apparent conflict issues to their underlying interests and thereby to first work out a suitable definition of the problem that they face together. At the same time, each party is placed in the position to profit from their partner's knowledge, so that their contributions to solving the conflict are optimized. Not least of all, open communication reduces the danger of misunderstandings that can lead to confusion and mistrust. The cooperative process encourages recogni-

tion of the partner's viewpoints and interests and willingness to search for solutions that are fair to both sides. It reduces defensive attitudes and enables the partners to approach their problem in such a way that their particular competencies have an effect. The cooperative process leads to a more trustful, positive attitude on the part of the partners to each other, which increases their ability to recognize commonalities and reduces the importance they assign to differences. It encourages the harmonization of convictions and values.

Just as in competitive processes, characteristic forms of misperception and misjudgment occur, to be sure with different warning signs. Cooperation tends to weaken the perception of contradictions and to strengthen the perception of the partner's good will. These typical changes often have, according to Deutsch (1976), the effect of containing conflict and making escalation unlikely, but they also harbor the risk that conflict issues will be overlooked or that the partners will begin their cooperation prematurely and thus will fail to achieve a stable agreement, because they have not dealt adequately with their disagreements or with the matters of dispute (Keiffer, 1968).

## **6. News reporting on conflict that de-escalates it**

The necessity to avoid this danger is part of the dilemma in which news reporting on conflict finds itself as soon as it tries to understand itself as critical peace journalism that is not propaganda, neither intentionally nor through negligence – neither propaganda for war, nor propaganda for pacification which merely robs people of their powers of resistance and leaves them defenseless in the face of injustice, oppression and force.

A peace journalism so understood should not mean either the adoption of oppositional propaganda (which is based on the same sort of perceptual distortions and misinterpretations as propaganda for one's side), nor should it be peace propaganda (which is characterized by perceptual distortions and misinterpretations with reversed signs). However, it can pose critical questions about war and military logic, respect the rights of the opponent and attempt to represent his intentions in an un-distorted manner. It can practice a self-critical and realistic view of our claimed rights and intentions, and can take into account that the opponent also has reasons to feel threatened and feels himself in a defensive position. For this it requires the critical evaluation of our actions that interfere with the rights of the opponent and an unbiased evaluation of the opponent's actions - even if they appear threatening to our side. It requires reducing our sense of threat and communicating insight into the price that must be paid for a military victory.

Critical peace journalism ultimately also requires the call for peaceful alternatives. It distances itself from both sides and criticizes their modes of action. It places



common rights in the foreground and searches for signs of willingness for peace on both sides. It reports on the common suffering that war can mean for both sides and focuses on the shared benefits that both sides could enjoy by ending their war. It pays attention to the opposition to the war on both sides and opens up perspectives for reconciliation (cf. figure 3).

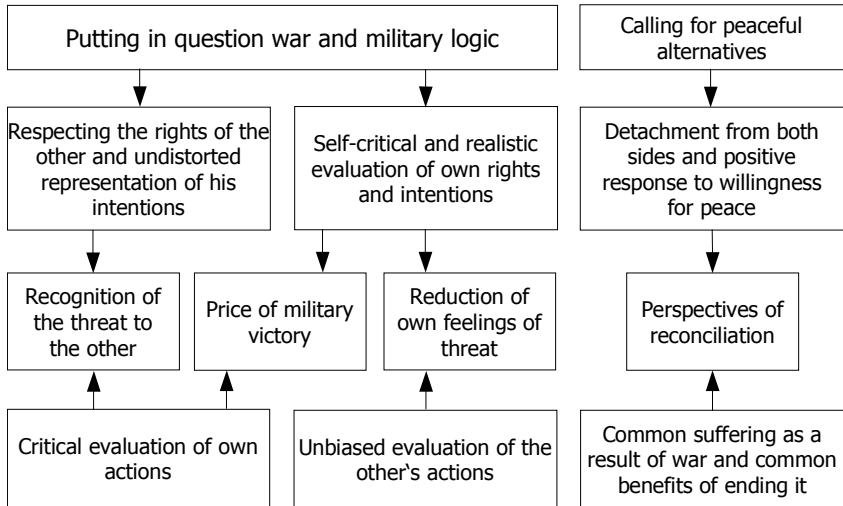


Figure 3: Critical peace journalism

## 7. Social identification

The decisive issue in maintaining readiness for war is the coexistence of feelings of both being threatened by the enemy and yet having confidence in the outcome of the war, confidence in one's leadership, etc. In order to achieve this, the enemy must be made to appear both as evil as possible and as dangerous as possible. But the demonization of the enemy should not go so far that it demoralizes one's citizens and deprives them of faith in their ultimate victory.

We can assume that not only do the directly participating war parties use this type of manipulation in order to legitimate military conflict, third parties and independent journalists are not immune from assimilating the massive perceptual distortions that exist in war zones, promulgating and intensifying them.

The polarization of the war parties in the media helps recipients orient themselves in a familiar world where good and evil struggle against each other. It reduces feelings of discomfort over military interventions. It sharpens the subjectively experienced pressure to act (something has to be done) and gives it an orientation

(evil must be checked). Thus war per se no longer appears absurd, but rather stands in an overarching context of meaning whose rejection is not merely a cognitive act, but rather a social process that touches on fundamental value orientations: anyone who rejects the logic of war is in danger of being found guilty of inadequate solidarity, of failure to provide assistance, etc.

In contrast to war propaganda that tries to create partisanship and one-sidedness in conflict perception, critical peace journalism aims at a differentiated consideration of the arguments pro and contra. Also of central significance for this are processes of social identification. This is oriented, however, not to the particular interests of the one side or the other, but rather to the process of balancing interests and violence-free conflict settlement. Emotional involvement that obligates us to take a perspective outside the conflict furthers a critical discussion with both sides.

## Peace journalism: What, why, who, how, when, where?

Johan Galtung

### 1. What is peace journalism?

Imagine a blackout on everything we associate with medical practice; nothing would ever be reported about it in the media. Diseases, however, would still be reported on in full, terrifying detail, particularly when elite persons are affected. Illness would be considered perfectly natural, a struggle between the human body and pathogenic factors, e.g., micro-organisms, trauma, stress, strain, etc. Sometimes one side wins, sometimes the other. It is like a game, almost like sport competition. Fair play means giving both sides a fair chance, not interfering with the forces of nature, where the fittest ultimately survive. The task of journalism is to report on this Darwinian struggle objectively, naturally hoping that our side, the body, will ultimately triumph.

That kind of journalism would be disease-oriented, and the journalist could refer to himself as an epidemiological journalist or correspondent. He would be firmly rooted in the tradition of the journalist as midwife, helping to bring elites onto the front pages whenever something negative happens to them. His concern would not be to highlight how diseases could be cured, except when the means are as disruptive as the disease itself (open heart surgery, chemical or radiation therapy.) The softer approaches would go under-reported; so would anything viewed as preventive medicine.

Fortunately, reporting on health and illness has liberated itself from much of that fatalistic tradition. There is now also a clear tradition of health journalism. But

- 
- 1 An example would be the excellent Health (and Science) page in the *International Herald Tribune*, which could serve as a good model for a Peace/Conflict Transformation page, filled with information, reports on new thinking and critical evaluation.  
To explore this analogy, consider the typical finding from a UCLA study on TV violence as reported in the *Washington Post*, 6 February 1996, 'Study Finds Real Harm in TV Violence':
    - 'Perpetrators of violent acts on TV go unpunished 73% of the time', 'When violence is presented without punishment, viewers are more likely to learn the lesson that violence is successful'.
    - Most violent portrayals fail to show the consequences of a violent act, 'no harm to the victims' (47%), 'no pain' (58%).
    - Few programs (only 4%) emphasize non-violent alternatives for solving problems.
 Translated into illness/health reporting this means:

there is still no corresponding tradition of 'peace journalism', whereas 'war and violence journalism' seem to be in good standing. But exactly what could be the content of that concept, peace journalism?

In general there seem to be two ways of viewing conflict, the high road and the low road, depending on whether the focus is on the *conflict* and its *peaceful transformation*, or on the meta-conflict that comes after the root conflict, created by *violence* and *war*, and the question of *who wins*. Media even confuse the two, discussing conflict when they really mean violence.

*The low road*, by far dominant in the media, sees a conflict as a battle and the battle as resembling a sports competition and/or gladiator circus. The parties, usually reduced to *two*, are combatants in a struggle to impose their goals. The underlying reporting model, often very visible, is that of a military general staff: who advances, who capitulates short of their goals; calculating the losses in terms of numbers killed, wounded, and material damage. This zero-sum perspective draws upon sports reporting, where 'winning isn't everything – it's the *only* thing'. The same perspective is applied to negotiations as verbal battles: who outsmarts whom, who forces the other side to give in; who comes out closest to reaching his original goals. War journalism has taken sports journalism and court journalism (!) as models.

*The high road*, the road of peace journalism, would focus on conflict transformation. Conflicts would be seen as a challenge to the world, like having 2,000 ethnic groups wanting their own nation-state in a world with only 200 countries and only 20 nation-states. As peoples, groups, countries and groups of countries seem to stand in each others' way (that is what conflict is all about), there is a clear *danger* of violence. But in conflict there is also a clear *opportunity* for human progress, using conflict to find new approaches, being imaginative, creative, transforming conflict so that positive opportunities gain the upper hand. – Without recourse to violence.

I make no claim that violence should not be reported on. *But the first victim in a war is not the truth. That is only the second victim. The first victim is, of course, peace.* That good reporting, low road or high road, should be truthful, is obvious. But truth journalism alone is not peace journalism. And truth does not come easy, given the tendency of journalists to take sides once the 'who wins' perspective has

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- 1    - Nothing is done about a disease 73% of the time;  
       - Disease does no harm (47%), leaves no pain (58%);  
       - There is no alternative to disease, such as prevention (96%).

Centuries ago this was a relatively adequate description of attitudes to illness/health: little or nothing was done, nothing could be done, disease was bad luck, it made no sense to describe the harm, the pain in any detail. Fortunately we now face the problem of disease head on, and no doubt reducing suffering per person/year lived enormously. Reporting has followed suit.

But portrayals of violence in the media have continued by and large unabated (cf.. Radecki, 1987).

been adopted. If one side is backed by its own country, nation, class or a particular paper/station/channel, then journalism will tend to take the low road that invites untruthfulness, as witnessed in the Gulf, Somali and Yugoslav conflicts.

Here is a short list of tasks for peace correspondents, intended as an introduction to the elaboration below:

1. What is the conflict about? Who are the parties, what are their real goals, including the parties beyond the immediate conflict arena where the violence, if any, takes place? The list is often long.
2. What are the deeper roots of the conflict, in social structure and culture, including the history of both?
3. What sorts of ideas exist about other outcomes than one party's imposing its will on the other, particularly creative new ideas? Can such ideas be sufficiently powerful to prevent or end violence?
4. If violence erupts, what should be reported about such invisible effects as trauma and hatred, and the desire for revenge and for more glory?
5. Which actors are working to prevent violence? What are their visions of conflict outcomes, their methods; how can they be supported?
6. Which actors initiate reconstruction, reconciliation and resolution, and which are only there to reap benefits such as reconstruction contracts?

With more reporting of this kind, the conflict in and over Northern Ireland could have entered a more peaceful phase much earlier. Focus on the violence of the IRA/RUC only disguises the true nature of the conflict and nourishes more violence. Focus instead on non-violent outcomes, empathy with all parties, creativity: and peace may come.

Building on this introduction, the following Table 1 is an effort to fill both concepts with operational content:<sup>2</sup>

Starting with the first two victims in war: peace and truth, we then add the next two victims: people and solutions.

Both categories are given content if we read the table vertically. And the position taken here is *not* that good conflict reporting is some sort of compromise, a little from the left hand column, a little from the right. The position taken is rather to be in favor of peace journalism and against war journalism. There is a challenge in the term 'peace journalism', and that is entirely intended. If a society sees a need for war reporting of the sort described here, then it is better to leave it to

2 Lest the journalist-reader imagine I am presenting merely a naïve theory constructed in an ivory tower, I will only point out that I worked for three years as a part time journalist for the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation, in 1960-62 and 1965, producing a number of radio and TV programs. I remember very well the thrill of interviewing the Dalai Lama, Fidel Castro, etc., and how much more valuable interviews with ordinary people were for understanding what was going on.

Peace/conflict journalism	War/violence journalism
<p>I. Peace/conflict-oriented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explore conflict <i>formation</i>, x parties, y goals, z issues general 'win-win' orientation</li> <li>• open space, open time; causes and outcomes anywhere, also in history/culture</li> <li>• making conflicts transparent</li> <li>• giving voice to all parties; empathy, understanding</li> <li>• see conflict/war as problem, focus on creating new understanding of conflict</li> <li>• humanizing all sides; the more so the more terrifying the weapons</li> <li>• <i>proactive</i>: prevention before violence/war break out</li> <li>• focus on invisible effects of violence, trauma and striving for glory, damage to structure/culture)</li> </ul>	<p>I. War/violence-oriented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• focus on conflict <i>arena</i>, 2 parties, 1 goal (win), war general 'zero-sum' orientation</li> <li>• closed space, closed time; causes and exits in arena, who threw the first stone</li> <li>• making wars opaque/hidden</li> <li>• 'us-them' journalism, propaganda, voice, for 'us'</li> <li>• see 'them' as the problem, focus on who prevails in war</li> <li>• dehumanizing 'them'; the more so the more terrifying the weapons</li> <li>• <i>reactive</i>: waiting for violence to erupt before reporting</li> <li>• focus only on visible effect of violence (killed, wounded and material damage)</li> </ul>
<p>II. Truth-oriented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• expose untruths on all sides</li> <li>• expose all cover-ups/lies</li> </ul>	<p>II. Propaganda-oriented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• expose 'their' untruths</li> <li>• help protect 'our' cover-ups/lies</li> </ul>
<p>III. People-oriented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• focus on suffering everywhere; including on women, the aged, children, giving voice to the voiceless</li> <li>• reveal the names of all evil-doers</li> <li>• focus on people as peace-makers</li> </ul>	<p>III. Elite-oriented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• focus exclusively on 'our' suffering; on able-bodied elite males, being their mouth-piece</li> <li>• reveal only the names of their evil-doers</li> <li>• focus on elite peace-makers</li> </ul>
<p>IV. Solution-oriented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• peace = nonviolence + creativity</li> <li>• highlight peace initiatives, also to prevent future war</li> <li>• focus on structure, culture the peaceful society</li> <li>• aftermath: resolution, reconstruction, reconciliation</li> </ul>	<p>IV. Victory-oriented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• peace = victory + cease-fire</li> <li>• conceal peace-initiatives, before victory is at hand</li> <li>• focus on treaty, institution the controlled society</li> <li>• moving on to next war, return if the old flares up again</li> </ul>

Table 1: Peace/conflict journalism vs. war/violence journalism

the ministries of (dis)information, of defense (war), of foreign affairs, state departments, etc. Do not corrupt the media by assigning the task to them, pressuring them to take it on voluntarily, or forcing them into the kind of journalism the

Pentagon promoted in the Gulf War, following the English model of reporting on the Falkland/Malvinas War.<sup>3</sup>

As a normative model, the table clearly favors the left hand column. But as a model descriptive of what actually happens in the world today, some comments have to be added. Most media are in-between. When a war peaks, as in the Gulf and Yugoslav conflicts, the war journalism column is clearly activated. But before and after there are often some hesitant, amateurish moves into the left hand column, as against the professionalism, and the courage of the seasoned war correspondent spreading pro-war propaganda.

A note: we tend to focus on wars between states. But what is written here also applies to violence between other groups, to rape and wife battering, child abuse, racial and national strife, class conflict. Violence is reported on, and the blame is usually fixed clearly on one side. In fact, all the advice for peace journalism also applies to all these cases.

The war focus in war journalism can polarize and escalate, calling for hatred and more violence to get revenge and punish 'them'. This is in line with a neo-fascist theory of war termination: let them fight and kill each other till they are 'ready for the table'.<sup>4</sup> The broader category is 'peace enforcement', peace by warlike means. For some it matters that peace comes about in 'the old way', forcing the other party to submit to one's superior force, preserving one's status in the world hierarchy, the status of the war machine, and the status of war itself as an institution (and war journalism as a form of journalism). For some time to come, the old content may persist, merely disguised in new clothes.

Peace journalism tries to depolarize conflict by showing the black and white of all sides, and to de-escalate by highlighting peace and conflict resolution as much as violence. How successful it can be remains to be seen. But changing the discourse within which something is thought about, spoken of and acted upon is a very powerful approach.<sup>5</sup>

Peace journalism stands for truth as opposed to propaganda and deception, 'truthful journalism' being, as mentioned, one aspect of peace journalism. It is not 'investigative journalism' in the sense of only uncovering lies in a way beneficial

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- 3 This is described very clearly by the leading specialist on war reporting, Philip Knightley (1975), in his major book on the field, *The First Casualty*. Also see Mira Beham's (1996) excellent book on war reporting in Yugoslavia. In that case the role of the public relations agencies (particularly Hill & Knowlton and Ruder Finn) seems to have been so extensive, and filters to sort out PR virtual reality from real reality so few, that it is difficult to assess the situation without knowing what the PR firms contributed.
  - 4 Anybody advocating anything like that might ask whether they themselves would be willing to risk death for the sake of the 'table'. In that case faith in the 'table' as a peace instrument must be as great as the patriotism of yesteryear.
  - 5 See Galtung & Vincent (2004). This is the basic overall theme of the book.

to 'our' side alone. The truth aspect in peace journalism holds for all sides, as does the exploration of conflict formation and giving voice (*'glasnost'*) to all sides. Peace journalism is a 'journalism of attachment' to all actual and potential victims; war journalism only attaches to 'our' side. The task is to report truthfully on both war and peace, putting to shame the old cliché that 'peace must be working, there is nothing in the news'.<sup>6</sup> The task of peace journalism is serious, professional reporting, making these processes more transparent. The task of peace advocacy is better left to peace workers.

## 2. Why peace journalism, why war journalism?

The first question is normative: Why do we need a peace journalism that we still do not have? What we have is war journalism, so the second question is descriptive: How do we explain this?

The first question is easily answered, in two parts. For many, a moral answer would be both necessary and sufficient: because a focus on solving conflicts rather than winning them, given the horrors of modern warfare, may reduce human suffering.

But there is also a non-moral (not amoral) answer: because what is described as 'peace journalism' gives a more realistic image of what is happening in the world. What is described as 'war journalism' reflects the militant logic of a world of states pitted against each other, with international conflict and war being matters of states and statesmen, off limits to ordinary people. The world comes nicely parceled into nation-states (in fact only about 10% of them are even close to being ethnically homogenous). Citizens are supposed to identify with their state; that also goes for the media. Consequently, reporting will take the form of, and indeed be informed by, communiqués from the top political and military commanders, reflect their worldviews, and contain what they deem good for people to know.

But today's world is globalizing, pluralizing and democratizing. If the world is to move closer to unity, then issues have to be seen from more angles than one's own. Moreover, education is no longer an elite privilege; in today's world very many people are as well, or even better informed than the elites. And the desire for democracy makes them demand the right to participate in matters affecting them. Conflict and war in particular affect them. War journalism is simply passé, a relic of the past. Change is long overdue.

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6 A good example would be many years of disarmament and cooperation in reconstructing the country in Nicaragua, by the Centro de Estudios Sociales, (Apartado 1747, Managua, Nicaragua), headed by Alejandro Bendaña and Zoilamérica Ortega.



But there are more factors sustaining war journalism than the zero-sum patriotism of the classical state system. Media feed on news. And news is something reported today that happened yesterday (or an hour ago, or right now, if the media report in real time) and was not the case the day before yesterday (or two hours ago, or a split second ago). The time cosmology of news is punctuated, based on *events*. *Processes* that need more time to reveal where they are leading need more time to unfold. The difference between one day and the next may pass unnoticed; moreover, the momentary direction may not be typical of the long-term trend. And then there are the *constants*, phenomena that do not change, or only at a glacial pace, and for that reason usually pass unnoticed, not only by journalism, but also by the professionals, the social scientists. The constants are taken for granted, since they have always been around, like the shores of continents and mountain ranges. It is usually assumed that processes and permanent background factors (such as the historical background or cultural parameters) would be the stuff that *commentary* (on the news) is made of.

Does it make sense to say that war journalism is news, while peace journalism is commentary? No doubt the violent act, a bullet fired in anger, an explosion, is made to order: it is an event, neither a process, nor permanent. To analyze conflict formation is commentary. To dis/uncover the stakes of parties far removed from the arena in the outcome of a conflict, and how they try to influence that outcome, is news. Peace proposals by important groups of NGOs about the abolition of landmines are news. But it may still take some time for journalists to see it that way; even though today such NGOs as Pugwash may have more impact than most states in the world.

But even if it is news, is it 'hard news'? If hard news is about hard power, violence, sticks and carrots, and not the soft power of persuasion and non-violence, then this is so by definition. Hard news is produced by war journalism, compatible with that kind of mind-set. But there is another and more interesting interpretation: hard news are [1] indisputable facts, and [2] consequential. Soft news satisfies neither one nor the other condition.

But is that really the case? Typical peace journalism items that did not really make it as news, although it was all known while it was happening, would include the following:

- The real end of the Cold War took place on the streets of Leipzig on 11 October 1989, with 75,000 demonstrating non-violently, defying Stasi force; one month before the fall of the Wall, the majority of demonstrators women.
- The cover-ups in the Gulf War:
  - Hill and Knowlton news management: incubators, organized demos – the oil bombing by the coalition, the fake bird,
  - the depleted uranium contamination,

- the 'tractor' mass killing, burial alive, on the Road to Basra
- the bunker bombing,
- the number of soldiers and civilians killed in Iraq,
- not so 'smart' bombs,
- the significance of bombing Basra
- Saddam Hussein's goals: honor, dignity, courage, not to win,
- Saddam Hussein's negotiation proposals in Fall 1990,
- King Hussein of Jordan's peace initiatives
- talks with the US ambassador before the invasion
- Pérez de Cuéllar's peace proposals for Yugoslavia in his strong letters to Hans Dietrich Genscher against early recognition,
- The numerous Yugoslav peace groups, mainly women, mediating for peace
- The massive numbers of conscientious objectors in Yugoslavia, and Western fears of recognizing them as political refugees,
- Joe Camplisson, a peace worker from Northern Ireland, and his mediation between Moldova and Transnistria.<sup>7</sup>
- The Mothers of the Russian Soldier peace initiative in Chechnya.<sup>8</sup>

Nobody can claim that these are not important, verifiable and highly consequential events. But they are not captured by the war journalism mind-set, the major reason journalists miss the key facts. To do an adequate job, that mindset has to change.

However, that conclusion presupposes rationality. In the real world, strong factors oppose that commodity, adding deeper perspectives on why the media are so irrational. News communication operates under the strong influence of many factors, and four of them seem particularly relevant:<sup>9</sup>

The 'ideal' top news event is something negative (not positive – that is less interesting), happening to a person (not structural/institutional, abstract – less interesting) belonging to the elite (not ordinary people – less interesting) in an elite country (not second, third or fourth world country – again less interesting). The tragic death of Diana and Dodi on the night of 31 August 1997 will be the archetypal example for years to come, overshadowing even the Kennedy assassination

7 See Camplisson & Hall (1996).

8 For an account of the Chechnya war from a man who certainly made a major contribution to bringing it to an end, see Kovalev (1997). His conclusion is: 'The war was won by those few dozen, and only a few dozen, non-governmental organizations all across the country – the Mothers and Memorial, among others – which from the first day raised their voices against the meat grinder. They were seen and heard by only a small percentage of citizens' (p.31). He then goes on to praise the few journalists who could be called peace reporters and castigates the citizens who did not 'shake Moscow with a 500,000 person strong demonstration in the first days of the Chechen adventure – as we did in January 1991 after the events in Vilnius. The price of our civilian passivity was 100,000 corpses in the North Caucasus'. Excellent. A peace reporter should also report the negative causes, what does not happen, the speeches not spoken, the ideas not thought.

9 See Galtung & Vincent (1992), chapter 2, summarizing research by the present author on news flows, first published in 1961.

on 22 November 1963, possibly because Kennedy was more an institutional actor, and Diana more an appealing personality (not just because of better media coverage overall).

		Person		Structure	
		Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive
Elite country	Elite people	No problem: any gossip; however false (4)	Happy family events (3)	Cabinet falls (3)	Elections, even minor change (3)
	Non-elite people	Accidents (3)	Prizes, lottery, wealth (2)	Economic crashes (2)	Economic growth (1)
Non-elite country	Elite people	Scandals (drugs) (3)	Prizes, lottery, wealth (2)	Coup d'état (2)	Elections, but major change (1)
	Non-elite people	Catastrophes (2)	Miracles (1)	Revolutions, 'trouble', riots (1)	No chance: however true (0)

Table 2: A four-factor news communication model

By far most events are not 'ideal', but can be ranked on a scale from 0 to 4, depending on how many of these four criteria are met. 0-4 is something external, the frame for the event, and the lower the ranking of the event, the more dramatic the internal content has to be. For elites in elite countries, even just a little gossip will do; for ordinary people in an ordinary country, the event has to be momentous, such as a major earthquake destroying towns or cities and killing thousands. And thus we get the image, produced by the external frame, not by the internal content, of the First World as a quiet place, laced with some court gossip, and the Third World always a boiling caldron of social and natural catastrophes.

How do the low and high roads, war journalism and peace journalism, fit into this model of factors influencing news production? By and large they tend to favor war journalism. Peace journalism starts with a major handicap: while violence is obviously negative, peace is positive, hence boring and trivial – hardly worth reporting on. But beyond that external frame, the internal content would direct reportage in the sense that the frame serves to reconstruct what happens, making it more fit for war than for peace journalism (and further removed from reality).

More concretely, if attracting the attention of the media means that ordinary countries have to compensate for their 'ordinariness' by being the locale of nega-

tive events, while elite persons in elite countries become newsworthy even if they do something positive, then the ideal structure of a conflict would be:

- something negative, violence, happens in ordinary countries;
- something positive, peace, is brought to them through patient and costly intervention by elite persons and elite countries.

And that seems to be the construction of Israel-Palestine, the Gulf War, Yugoslavia, and Somalia. Rwanda and the Congo were different; they somehow fended for themselves – and went under-reported.<sup>10</sup>

The conclusion will have to be that the general bias in news communication only partly tips the balance in favor of war journalism. Peace journalism could also be very personal in reporting the dreams and daily work of the kind of people and organizations that ultimately receive peace prizes for work that changes the world (like the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize for the campaign against landmines, and the Alternative Nobel Peace Prize for campaigning against nuclear weapons). But such news is not negative enough, and very often the achievement of ordinary people. Thus, when the Pugwash movement earned the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995, it was referred to as 'unknown' – obviously by people with war journalism mind-sets. If the first order news factor serves as a filter for the flow of events, then the second, deeper, order would be to redefine events to fit the frame so that the conflict can be reported. In a reinterpreted world, dissonant events would go unreported:

- peace initiatives taken by ordinary people in ordinary countries: not even noticed, by definition unlikely and inconsequential.
- peace initiatives taken by elites in ordinary countries: how can something positive come from such people, they have to be of a Havel or Mandela magnitude to break the barrier,
- peace initiatives taken by ordinary people in elite countries, such as NGOs: to some extent reported when compatible with elite initiatives,
- war initiatives (like giving or selling arms, training local fighters for war) taken by elites in elite countries: not reported, by definition unlikely since these countries are so peaceful).

This theory of dissonance relative to the news-filter generated construction of reality also explains the missing news mentioned above. No theory of political bias, even control, is needed to explain this pattern of highly biased war reporting.

Or, put differently: news-filter theory and political-bias theory, steering by friend/enemy images (*Freund-/Feindbilder*), would lead to the same media image of reality. This may also be taken to mean that news-filter factors have grown out of

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10 For an excellent article in depth, see Gourevitch (1997, pp. 42-55) and compare that with the frame-ridden news reporting.

political attitudes and behavior, or, more interestingly, that news images function as primary political socialization. One might also settle for the trite formulation of 'co-dependent origination', interdependence.

Two hypotheses: for media to sell, or be read-heard-viewed:

1. The external frame has to be mind-set compatible.
2. The internal content is frame-compatible.

The second hypothesis is found in Table 2: the frame decides the content to the extent that the story is written in advance. The first hypothesis tries to anchor this in reader-listener-viewer psychology. It seems plausible that people in general, the famous 'masses' in the terrible expression 'mass media', should be more interested in persons than in structures, and more in the elite than in ordinary people. But what about the negativism of the media?

Standard argument: *it sells*. But of course it sells: it may even contain a warning to oneself – watch out, this could happen to me! One car accident tells more than driving X-thousands of accident-free miles, if the damage is catastrophic. Moreover, even better than gazing at elites in the sky is to watch them fall to earth.

But that is no proof of a lack of interest in positive news, unless we assume that negative-positive is a dichotomy, so that acceptance of one automatically implies rejection of the other. If 'negative' and 'positive' are both seen as separate dimensions, then there are four types of news: the negative, the positive, the ambivalent and the bland, neither one nor the other. Perhaps interest centers on the first three and not the fourth, the bland?

At this point a gender difference may enter in, with men more interested in the negative (e.g., violence – and the male hunter-warrior becomes alert) and women more in the positive (e.g., romance – and the attention of the female gatherer-reproducer is aroused). Under the sway of patriarchy, male tastes would prevail, and women would feel more alienated by news reports – 'only bad news'. This sounds plausible, but calls for empirical exploration.

That women should be more interested in peace news than in war news tallies well with the assumption that women are the better peace workers/peace advocates. If women more than men believe in horizontal networking for the care of other humans, then that is more like modern peace work by private persons, NGOs, etc. than the traditional male faith in vertical organizations like states for the glory of princes, their successors and principles.

But is it really true that men would not be interested in the news offered by peace journalism? The political left-right axis would play a role if we assume the political right to believe more strongly in 'my country right or wrong' values. But that would only exclude a limited fraction of men, and even they may be somewhat interest-

ed. In short, the hypothesis is at best to be doubted, at worst simply false. Moreover, if sports turn winners into elites, peace could also create new types of heroes. Who is more admired, Rabin or Netanyahu, Mandela, Gandhi or Nehru? As the examples indicate, the key peacemakers can even come from seemingly 'unimportant' countries.

But peace journalism requires more work in space and time, political geography and history. Good journalists would love it, while the mediocre would stay in hotels collecting rumors of violence. And after some time they would have their networks in the peace community, not only in the security/intelligence community.

### **3. Peace journalism: Who should do it?**

Any journalist can do the Table 1 left hand column work, just as anyone can tackle the right hand column tasks. The left hand column may require more psychological courage and the right hand column more physical courage right now, but the differences are small.

One problem is the mind-sets of editors, like the proverbial night editor inventing war journalism headlines for peace journalism content. One answer is to start with schools of journalism, and the editors will in due time move on. But the owners will stay and may not like what is going on.

A more promising approach would probably combine intensive summer courses for the highly motivated and cooperation with media organizations (newspapers, radio stations, TV channels, news agencies) that are themselves motivated. They see the handwriting on the wall and are in need of no persuasion. Courses organized for the whole staff would produce results quickly. One successful media organization will have an impact on others. There will be more peace/conflict transformation news and less war/victory news. A forward-looking newspaper may even introduce a special weekly or fortnightly page on the 'World Conflict Situation': is there any movement in conflicts? If there are financial and sports pages written by specialists, why not also pages on something even more important?

One reason why all of this is going to succeed is the great number of peace prizes defining individuals and groups through their peace work in the same way as medals and decorations make heroes of soldiers, positively defining their war work. The world is changing and so is the military, from war tasks to defense tasks, and from defense tasks to peace tasks – and all that in just one century.

At this point a plug could be made for gender as a crucial dimension in answering the *who* question. Most of the violence in the world – well over 90% – is committed by men, the victims being probably more than 50% women. This also applies to collective violence in the form of war. The vested interest of women to change

the situation is obvious; just as there is a vested interest for males to preserve the status quo: wars offer opportunities to display courage and gain honors, and also for upward social mobility. This is perversely expressed in war reporters in bullet-proof vests portraying the cruelty of war by having the courage to be there, but without feeling compassion.

But there are also other reasons why women may be better at peace journalism, in no way claiming that the burden of this civilizing mission should fall on women alone. Peace is more holistic than war; women may be more sensitive to a broader range of variables than men (expressed in a tendency for women to use more adjectives?). Peace is a complex process, not linear, demanding a style of reporting reflecting multitudes of small dramas, rather than one big dominant narrative. War is more linear (zero-sum), aiming at 'victory' for one side or stalemate for both. War may lend itself better to male writing, linear, logical in the sense of letting conclusions flow from the premises presented at the beginning of an article. Female writing may be more circular, trying to keep in mind many more aspects than one overriding dramatic *leitmotif*. As a matter of fact, the way journalism has developed (Table 2!), it may be custom-tailored to male rather than female intellectual styles. And if males are more attracted to hardware and women to human beings (software), then we may be entitled to expect an explosion in peace reporting – on the part of women.

#### **4. Peace journalism: How to do it?**

Essentially by doing what journalists do anyway, keeping in mind a maximum number of items from the left hand column. The eye for the essential, the devotion both to facts and to hope, the need to be a good writer, to work quickly and hence to be a good administrator of 'own time' – all that remains the same.

But new types of knowledge would be needed. Examples:

As mentioned above, an indispensable beginning is to identify the nature of conflict formation, the parties, their goals and the issues, and not fall into the trap of believing that the key actors are where the action (violence, war) is. In medicine, no physician would make the mistake of diagnosing a swollen ankle as simply an 'ankle disease', s/he would be alert to the possible signs of disturbances in the cardio-vascular system and the heart. The underlying problem is not necessarily on the surface where the problem signs first show up, and that holds for both the body and military conflict, for a 'race riot' or a case of child abuse, as well as for inter-national and inter-state conflicts. But to know where to look for deeper knowledge is indispensable, even if learning from more experienced colleagues also goes a long way.

So does negative learning from the past, exploring and analyzing reportage in Yugoslavia, Somalia, the Gulf War, wars in Indochina, and World War II. What would peace reporting have looked like then?

How can the drama of working for peace, the struggle to see violence and the festering conflict as the problem, and from there to arrive at conflict transformation, be reported in such a way that it becomes exciting news? How is excessive moralism to be avoided, keeping in mind the basic goal: to reduce human suffering and increase human happiness? Not easy – yet not impossible.

*An example:* reporting on peace proposals. Somebody has come up with a plan: an intergovernmental organization, NGO, government, some other conflict party, or a private person. The task of the peace journalist is to identify such initiatives, give them a voice, highlight the positive points, stimulating dialogue, not signaling any agreement or disagreement, introduce the plan into the peace culture of the conflict, provided it stands for *peace by peaceful means*. But the task is also to ask difficult questions, pointing out possible deficiencies.

Here is a short checklist, intended more for the plan than the person or group behind it:

1. What was the method behind the plan? Dialogue with parties, and in that case with all the parties? Some trial negotiation? Analogy with other conflicts? Intuition?
2. To what extent is the plan acceptable to all parties? If not, what can be done about it?
3. To what extent is the plan, if realized, self-sustainable? If not, what can be done about it?
4. Is the plan based on autonomous action by the conflict parties, or does it depend on outsiders?
5. To what extent is there a *process* in the plan for who shall do what, how, when and where, with whom, or only an *outcome*?
6. To what extent is the plan based on only what elites can do, only what ordinary people can do, or on what both can do working together?
7. Does the plan foresee an ongoing conflict resolution, or is the idea a single-shot agreement?
8. Is peace/conflict transformation education for ordinary people, for elites or for both, built into the plan?
9. If there has been violence, to what extent does the plan contain elements of reconciliation?
10. If there has been violence, to what extent does the plan contain elements of rehabilitation/reconstruction?
11. If the plan doesn't work, is the plan reversible?



12. Even if the plan does work for this conflict, does it create new conflicts or problems? Is it a good deal?

In other words: do not take peace & conflict work lightly!

## 5. Conclusion: When and where?

Given the urgency, the task is long overdue, but better late than never. And, as conflict is a part of the human condition, and violence may be the outcome anywhere in the world when conflict parties see no way out, the place to start is everywhere.

Very soon this will lead to more complex problems, like:

What would a code of peace journalism be like? A war journalist is basically operating under rules imposed by his military commanders, his work being guided by norms of patriotism. To whom or what does the peace journalist owe his/her allegiance? To 'peace'? Maybe too abstract. To present and future victims of violence/war? Better, but what does that mean? How about keeping secrets? Some peace operations, like military operations, may depend on timing, and even if the long-term goals, the what, and why, are clear and out in the open, the who, how, when and where of a major non-violent campaign may depend on a surprise effect.

How could a monitoring process be initiated? Peace journalism, like everything else, should be evaluated. There are several levels, such as the quality of peace reporting (with prizes, of course), the quantity of peace reporting (what percentage of the media carry material of that kind), and the extent to which this reaches the reader/listener/viewer. The hypothesis that the public is uninterested could be tested and differentiated: whom to accept (women? young people? middle class?), whom to reject (men? middle-aged? lower/upper class?).

For good peace work, empathy, creativity and non-violence are needed. Exactly the same is required of the peace journalist. And that includes dialogues with war journalists.<sup>11</sup>

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11 Many, reporting on war or peace, or both, are 'Journalists Who Risk Death', *International Herald Tribune*, 5 August 1997, by Anthony Lewis: 'In the last 10 years, 173 Latin American reporters, photographers, columnists and editors have been murdered ... They were just doing their ordinary job: trying to publish the truth'. Risk should unite all journalists.  
For an excellent introduction for any kind of journalist to the intricacies of conflict, see Rubinstein et al. (1994) and Galtung (1996), Part II is about conflict analysis and resolution.  
A checklist of what to look for in conflict is also found in Manoff (1997). In that article Manoff also mentions the possibility of using the media for mediation, like CBS' Walter Cronkite's on-the-air negotiation between Sadat and Begin and ABC's Ted Koppel's mediation between the newly freed Nelson Mandela and de Klerk. Two objections in that connection: maybe that task should be better left to professional conflict workers, the job of making society in general, and conflict in particular, transparent being more than difficult for journalists to handle. And good conflict work is rarely done with millions watching and the parties playing to that enormous gallery.  
For the reality of war reporting, see Kempf (1996b, 1997), Kempf & Schmidt-Regener (1998) and Luostarinen & Ottosen (1998).

## Constructive conflict coverage: A social-psychological approach

Wilhelm Kempf

### 1. Interest perception

The media were for a long time mainly regarded as channels for the dissemination of news. Only recently has there been a change in how they are viewed. Today the media are seen as playing a more complex role in foreign policy (Naveh, 1998, 2002). They make a vital contribution to the construction of the foreign policy environment. This applies to both the national and the international media. National and international discourses are closely interwoven, and journalism plays a key role in this.

The view that journalists are not simply neutral reporters and that they can have an effect on political events has also strongly influenced the self-image of journalism and has led to the emergence of two opposing tendencies which are trying to change the nature of journalistic responsibility.

The first, a new school called the *journalism of attachment* (Bell, 1997), is already established. It assumes that, in view of the atrocities committed in modern warfare, journalists should not distance themselves from the events they cover. Journalists must side with the victims of war and publicly demand a change. The problem with the journalism of attachment is that it largely foregoes conflict analysis, sees war as a moral struggle between "good" and "evil" and its own task as to exert moral pressure on the international community to take sides and intervene using military means. This moral imperative authorizes journalists to suspend their professional norms and standards of truthfulness in the name of a higher moral duty. The coverage of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina is replete with examples of how journalists attempt to achieve their high-minded moral goals by both suppressing and fabricating news (Hume, 1997; Kempf, 2000a).

The second of the above tendencies was initially an academic project. Influenced by the Gulf War and the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, peace researchers and media scientists have begun to think about how media influence can be used to prevent and constructively transform conflicts (ASPR, 2003; Bilke, 2002; Galtung, 1998a, chapter 2 in this volume; Kempf, 1996a, chapter 1 in this volume, 1999a; Kempf

& Gutiérrez, 2001; Luostarinen, 2002a; McGoldrick & Lynch, 2000). An attempt has been made, in the form of training courses for journalists, to communicate the findings of peace science to journalists and to use these to improve journalistic work. Starting with the Conflict and Peace courses held in 1997/98 at Taplow Court near London, such further education has recently been provided by, among others *Transcend* (see <http://www.transzend.org/>), the *Conflict Resolution Network Canada* (see <http://www.cnetwork.ca/>) and within the *International Civilian Peace-keeping and Peace-building Training Program* (IPT)<sup>1</sup> at the Austrian Study Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR). Here the *peace journalism* project looks critically at both the role of the media as catalysts of violence (Kempf, 1994; Kempf & Luostarinen, 2002; Kempf & Schmidt-Regener, 1998; Luostarinen & Kempf, 2000; Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2001) and the professional ethical norms of journalism (Kempf, 2007; chapter 12 in this volume).

## 2. Task formulation

The object of this paper is to find out what psychology can achieve within the framework of such a project. At least four questions can be asked here.

1. What are the social-psychological mechanisms that can make journalists – despite the best of intentions – catalysts of violence?
2. If journalists succeed in resisting these mechanisms, do they then have any chance of influencing public opinion?
3. How should we picture such a peace journalism?
4. How could such a peace journalism be implemented?

With regard to the first question on social-psychological mechanisms, we can cite some well-known findings from social psychology about how the cognitive representation of conflicts (cf. Deutsch, 1973; Kempf, 2000b) and the social structures of groups (cf. Sherif & Sherif, 1969, Deutsch, 1973) change during conflict escalation. Based on the understanding that human beings do not react to the (objective) properties of events and things in their environment per se, but rather to the (subjective) meanings they attribute to them (Blumer, 1973), Deutsch concludes that conflict escalation and the accompanying group processes are not inevitable, but instead result from the cognitive-emotional framework in which conflict is interpreted. According to Deutsch's theory, which has gained great influence in the field of conflict management (cf. Fisher & Brown, 1989; Glasl, 1994), conflict is open to being interpreted as either a *competitive* or a *cooperative process*, depending on whether it is framed with a *win-lose* or a *win-win model*. Studies of the social structures of groups show that inter-group conflict strengthens intra-

1 The IPT program is not primarily directed towards journalists, it is open to peace workers from all professions.

group solidarity. Group members can increase their social status by taking a strong stand against the enemy. During conflicts, group members increase their identification with their group and its positions, and the degree of identification rises as conflict escalates. In conflict situations journalists do not behave like outsiders to the group, but are subject to the same intra-group mechanisms.

Summarizing these results, we conclude that: (a) journalists tend to frame conflict reports using the same types of mental models that prevail in the respective society and/or agree with the political agenda. (b) Journalists adapt the mental models with which they interpret conflict to changing political conditions and, in turn, (c) the escalation vs. de-escalation oriented framing of conflict coverage influences the media audience's mental models of conflict in the same direction.<sup>2</sup>

However, in addition to these general social psychological mechanisms, the specific conditions of news production must also be considered. These include structural factors such as the type of medium, existing formats, spaces, (transmission) times, news selection criteria, editorial procedures and expectations, the economics of the media and their connections with politics and the military. The social climate also exerts pressure on journalists to take a position, because of factors including historical, cultural and geographic proximity to the conflict region and/or to the participants in the conflict. The effects of these institutional and social factors are further magnified by the situation at the location of the conflict. The availability, or lack of infrastructure and logistics, the accessibility and credibility of sources and the possibility to check information influence reporting. Further factors are the security situation in the crisis region, the dangers journalists themselves face when they report from war zones, and the group dynamics of accredited journalists on location (Bläsi, 2004)<sup>3</sup>.

With regard to the second question, the theories of Moskovici (1979, 1980), about the influence of minorities can be cited. According to Jaeger (2002a), journalists can contribute to social change if they are willing to abandon existing models of journalism. Reconciliation can be furthered by courageous journalists and committed mass media that are not afraid to challenge both the conventional media rules and routines and the beliefs of the societal majority. Even when peace journalism is not the dominant journalistic approach, it can still make a difference: As Moskovici has shown, minorities can influence public opinion if they maintain their point of view consistently against the majority. Acting on this principle, minorities may produce an internalized change of opinions based on convictions. On the other hand, however, we should not forget that the opportunities journalists have to influence the public are limited by the above-mentioned group processes. Censor-

2 Editor's note: See also Annabring et al. (2005), Schaefer (2006).

3 Editor's note: see also Bläsi (2005, 2006).

ship and self-censorship of the media are only the tip of the iceberg. As can be expected, the social pressure that journalists face is strongest in societies directly involved in conflict. But it can also be quite strong in societies which are not (yet) involved militarily. A good example is the hostility expressed during the Bosnian conflict toward Peter Handke (1996) for his report "Justice for Serbia." During the Kosovo conflict, Greek journalists who deviated from the conventional anti-NATO and pro-Serbian discourse then characteristic of the Greek media and of Greek society found themselves in a similar, though reversed situation (Kondopoulou, 2002).

The third question is *normative* and hints at what peace journalism ought to be. Thus Galtung (cf. chapter 2), for example, makes a distinction between violence-oriented war journalism (and/or violence journalism), on the one hand, and solution-oriented peace journalism (and/or conflict journalism), on the other (cf. chapter 2, table 1). Of course, such suggestions cannot simply be plucked out of thin air; they require a theoretical basis, which in this specific case can be provided by Galtung's Transcend model of the constructive transformation of conflict (cf. Graf & Bilek, 2000). However, in addition to the theoretical basis of the suggestions, there is also the question of whether they are realizable.

This leads directly to our fourth question and, as with the previous questions, what is required here is not just a contribution from psychology. Thus Galtung, for example, shows that the criteria for the *selection of news* already provide a cognitive framework that permits a picture of reality to emerge which divides the world into elite countries and peripheral countries – and thus at the same time into good and evil. Terrible things occur at the periphery: catastrophe, violence, war, and the elites of wealthy countries seem to offer assistance and peace (cf. chapter 2). The implementation of peace journalism therefore also calls for a fundamental change in how the media *function*. As this necessarily implies a change in the journalistic *viewpoint*, and with it a change in journalists' perceptions, this question of media sociology, too, is very closely associated with social-psychological questions. Fundamental peace journalism research is necessarily *transdisciplinary*.

### 3. Basic theoretical assumptions

From a psychological perspective, the controversy over war journalism vs. peace journalism is about, first, aggressive interaction, second, the construction of social reality, and third, the question of what roles journalism and the media (can) play in this process. This is related to the notion that how conflict parties act is not determined by the objective conflict situation (i.e., the actual incompatibility of their

Escalation step	Cooperation	Perspective divergence
Conceptualization of conflict	Win-win orientation	Bias towards win-lose but win-win still possible
Valuation of rights and aims	Mutual respect for the rights of all participants and emphasis on common interests	Focus on own rights and needs (including common interests), the rights of others, however, vanish from view
Evaluation of actions	Consideration of the benefits for each of the parties	Focus on one's own benefits (also those resulting from the mutual relationship)
Emotional involvement	Empathy and mutual trust	Tension between threat and trust
Identification offer	Mutual	Self-centered

Table 1: Distortion in the perception of conflict during the escalation of conflict (according to Kempf, 1999b)

claims, intentions and actions), but rather by their subjective perceptions of the conflict. How they act depends not on the objective nature of their environment, but rather on what it means to them (Blumer, 1973).

Meanings result from a social negotiation process and are constituted by social discourse – here the discourse within and between conflict parties. Because the media assume an important mediating role in political conflict, conflict parties always try to make media reporting serve their propaganda aims. It would nevertheless be quite mistaken to locate media influence in the framework of a simple stimulus-response model (cf. Jaeger, 2003). The constitution of meaning is an interactive process in which the media is only one actor among many.

Journalists are themselves members of society and are subject not only to certain institutional pressures, but also to the same social-psychological pressures as other people, particularly the distortions that arise in the perception of conflicts, which, so to speak, adjust automatically with their own involvement in escalating conflict (cf. table 1).

Competition	Confrontation	War
Win-lose (possibly softened by rules of fairness)	Win-lose (increased by threat strategies)	Zero-sum orientation. Force as the appropriate means of resolving conflict, emphasis on military values, (shift from win-lose to lose-lose)
Focus on own rights and needs; common interests, however, vanish from view	Emphasis on own rights and needs combined with questioning the rights of the opponent and condemning his intentions	Idealization of own rights and needs, at the same time contesting the rights of the opponent, demonization of his intentions and denial of common interests
Focus on one's own benefits	Justification of one's own actions and condemnation of the opponent's	Idealization of one's own actions and demonization of the opponent's
Focus on threat to oneself, that to the opponent disappears from view, mutual trust is lost	Emphasis on one's own strength and the danger posed by the opponent creates a fragile balance between threat and confidence of victory; a threat to the opponent is actively denied; mistrust is present	Balance between threat and confidence of victory continues to exist, mistrust also directed against neutral third parties who attempt to mediate in the conflict, indignation against war turns into indignation against the opponent
Dualistic	Antagonistic	Polarized

It is obvious why distortions enter into the perception of conflict. Every conflict affects the rights and aims of all participants, and they can be resolved either cooperatively to everyone's benefit (win-win model), or competitively (win-lose model), mainly to the benefit of only one party. In the latter case each party tries to maximize its own rights and goals at the expense of the others. We can thus speak of a distortion in the perception of conflict whenever the perception of conflict excludes one of the two options for its resolution. Therefore, according to Deutsch (1973), there are both competitive and cooperative perceptual distortions.

To understand the role perceptual distortions play in the development of aggressive interactions, it is useful to define some key terms. Specifically, the word "aggression" is used in at least three different senses (Kempf, 1995).

- In the first sense, "aggression" is much like "attack." This is the sense in which the word aggression is mainly used in everyday speech, and also in the United Nations Charter – the aggressor is the one who attacks. As described in Pruitt and Rubin's (1986) aggressor-defender model, the others automatically be-

come defenders.

- In the second sense, "aggression" means achieving an aim against the wishes or at the cost of others. This is the sense in which the word aggression is used in much of peace research, and also in biology, and it corresponds with its etymological origin in the Latin "aggredior". In this sense of the word, the capacity for aggression is a basic disposition without which no organism and no species could survive. It is this understanding of aggression, too, that underlies Pruitt and Rubin's conflict-spiral model and also their model of structural change.
- In the third sense, "aggression" means one person injuring another. This is the sense that the term aggression has acquired in behaviorism and is still the sense typically used in most psychological aggression research (cf., e.g., Schmid, 2003). It is more or less synonymous with *individual* violence. This concept of aggression is not very useful for the analysis of the dynamics of conflict, however, and consequently A. Mummedey (1982), for example, suggested abandoning the concept of individual aggression completely and instead talking only about aggressive interactions.

A major problem for peace research is how violence can be avoided without reducing the capability to achieve aims. Therefore, in this case as well, the concept of conflict escalation does not necessarily have a negative connotation from the start, and in some cases it may be necessary for conflicts to escalate a little at first before they can be dealt with by constructive transformation (cf. Müller & Schweitzer, 2000).

The non-violent escalation of conflict, however, is also a risky undertaking and can at any time shift into violent escalation. This is because conflict becomes an autonomous process as soon as it is approached competitively (Kempf, 1993), as described in Pruitt and Rubin's (1986) conflict-spiral model. Whatever one party does to realize its rights and aims can negatively affect the rights and aims of another party, which must then defend itself against this. And whatever the latter does to defend its aims at the expense of the former limits the rights and aims of that party and will in turn be seen as an attack, and conversely.

The escalation of conflict will thus be driven by a twofold divergence of perspectives.

- The first divergence of perspective favors the shift from cooperation to competition in dealing with conflict. While we view our own actions in terms of our intentions, we experience the actions of the other primarily through their results, and we must first interpret the intentions behind these actions or learn them through communication (Kempf, 2000b).
- The second divergence of perspective accelerates the escalation process by encouraging the use of more, or more drastic means to realize rights and aims. This results from underestimating our own behavior's potential to do harm and cause injuries and from overestimating the threat of the opponent's behavior.



On the premise that the response should be proportional to the injury suffered, this leads almost inevitably to an escalation of violence (Fuchs, 1993).

Perceptual distortions influence efforts to legitimate conflict behavior and thereby function as catalysts in the escalation process. Focusing on one's own rights and needs while at the same time condemning the actions of the opponent makes it easier to shift from simple competition to struggle, where each of the conflict parties now attempts to impose its aims on the other parties. Justifying the struggle by emphasizing one's own rights and needs while at the same time denying the rights of the opponent and condemning his intentions facilitates a shift from non-military conflict to war. Here conflict is reduced to a zero-sum game in which there is now only one aim – to win the conflict, even if this means resorting to violence (Galtung, cf. chapter 2) – and this is justified by idealizing one's own rights and demonizing the opponent's. If the escalation process cannot be stopped, it leads to a total war in which the only thing that matters is not losing (lose-lose model) (Glasl, 1994).

#### **4. War discourse versus peace discourse**

The perceptual distortions shown in table 1 affect both the conceptualization of conflict and the evaluation of the rights, aims and actions of conflict parties and the incentives for emotional involvement in conflicts. As products of the social construction of reality, they can likewise only be deconstructed in social discourse. This transformation of social discourse into peace discourse involves more than just a change in the perception of conflict and/or in reportage as a way the media introduce a certain perception of conflict into social discourse. What is involved is primarily the orientation suggested by conflict-related questions. While war discourse centers on the questions: "Who is the aggressor?" and "How can his aggression be stopped?", the key questions in peace discourse are "What are the objects of the conflict?" and "How can they be transformed to create a solution beneficial to all parties?". Over and above the perception of the conflict, this also has an effect on the identification offers that are presented in the discourse, on the truth orientation of discourse partners, and on the motivation logic which the conflict unfolds (cf. table 2).

People are well aware of this aspect of war propaganda and therefore attempt to influence social discourse on all of these levels (cf. Luostarinen, 2002b). The aim of propaganda is to maintain a subtle balance between a sense of being threatened and confidence in victory, and thereby to strengthen the army's fighting spirit and the public's support for war. The enemy must appear so threatening that maximal force must be used to defeat him, yet, at the same time, so weak that confidence in our ultimate victory will not be shaken.

	War discourse	Peace discourse
Key questions	Who is the aggressor? How can his aggression be stopped?	What are the objects of the conflict? How can it be transformed?
Identification offer	Polarized <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• humanizes "our" political and military leaders and dehumanizes those on the other side</li> <li>• humanizes "our" soldiers and dehumanizes those on the other side</li> <li>• humanizes "our" victims and ignores or dehumanizes those on the other side</li> <li>• humanizes "our" civilian population for its loyalty and willingness to make sacrifices and dehumanizes the other side by attributing its sacrifices to rabid nationalism and xenophobia</li> <li>• humanizes the other side's anti-war opposition and ignores or dehumanizes our own as disloyal</li> </ul>	Universal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• avoids identification with political and military leaders on both sides</li> <li>• avoids identification with military on both sides</li> <li>• humanizes (or at least respects) the victims on each side</li> <li>• humanizes (or at least respects) civil society and avoids identification with militants on both sides</li> <li>• humanizes (or at least respects) the peace forces on both sides</li> </ul>
Truth orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sees truth as simply raw material and harmonizes frames of reference</li> <li>• describes "our" actions as morally just and those of the other side as morally reprehensible</li> <li>• construes the conflict context as an irresolvable antagonism</li> <li>• justifies "our" values by means of political, historical and ethnic myths</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is unconditionally committed to standards of truth and also exposes inconsistencies</li> <li>• also describes "our" side's violence and the suffering on the other side</li> <li>• explores opportunities for constructive conflict transformation</li> <li>• deconstructs mythological interpretations and seeks common values</li> </ul>
Motivational logic	Presents war as a bulwark against destruction and/or as a bridge to a better future	Focuses on the price of victory, the destruction of cultural, economic, and social values
Conflict reporting	Escalation-oriented with respect to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conceptualizations of conflict</li> <li>• assessments of the rights, aims and actions of conflict parties</li> <li>• encouraging emotional involvement in conflict</li> </ul>	De-escalation oriented with respect to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conceptualizations of conflict</li> <li>• assessment of the rights, aims, and actions of the conflict parties</li> <li>• encouraging emotional involvement in conflict</li> </ul>

Table 2: War discourse vs. peace discourse (according to Kempf, 1999b).

Because war discourse is marked by such contradictions, it can only be deconstructed with great effort. For logical reasons, any kind of conclusions can be drawn from contradictory premises. And the conclusions that conflict parties draw from them are usually justifications of the war, the justice of their own aims, the enemy's malevolence, etc.

The internal logic of war thus becomes circular and can only be refuted at a critical distance from conflict. As dealing with social conflict on a cooperative basis is associated with internal conflict, however, there are also emotional and/or motivational factors which hinder this (Kempf, 2001b). To become involved in cooperation with conflict parties always means living with uncertainty – "Can I still trust the other, or am I giving him an advantage by doing this?" And this internal conflict will be intensified by the divergence of perspectives discussed above – "Can I divulge my aims to the other, or would this be too risky?"

On the other hand, this internal conflict is resolved when social conflict is interpreted as a competitive process. The widespread tendency to deal with conflict competitively can, in this respect, also be seen as avoidance of the internal conflict associated with a cooperative approach. Since this tendency is so pervasive, the internal conflict will be increased for the conflict parties. And the greater their inner conflict, the greater the temptation will be to avoid it by trying to win at the expense of the other.

The media could counteract the powerful dynamics that conflicts develop by focusing on the common interests of the conflict parties and by keeping in mind the common benefits the parties could gain from a cooperative relationship. However, for journalism this would mean continuing to be trapped in the internal conflict from which the conflict parties have already freed themselves. The desperate search for good and evil that the media engage in once they are aware of conflict can, in this respect, also be seen as a tension-reducing activity which likewise frees journalism from the burden of internal conflict. And foregoing this secondary gain is no easier for journalists than it is for other members of society.

## **5. A two-step model**

Because polarized ideas of conflict seem so convincing and exert so much moral pressure on people to take sides, their effects continue to be felt long after wars have ended. It is particularly in long-term, intractable conflicts that distorted perceptions become established as basic societal beliefs (Bar-Tal, 1998). These include, besides widespread fear of the threatening, malevolent enemy, an overly positive national self-image, imagined national victimhood, our society's aims portrayed as just, resulting urgent (national) security needs, and peace as our country's primary aim.

As a result, implementation becomes harder in two different ways.

1. Journalists are not neutral, detached observers of a society, but instead tend to share the same basic beliefs as other members of their society. Consequently they must think critically and question the interpretations of reality that, due to shared beliefs, have the greatest plausibility in a given society.

2. Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance creates doubts about whether information incompatible with a society's basic beliefs will be accepted, or instead dismissed, and the more so, the more this information deviates from the dominant image of social reality.

Kempf (2001a)<sup>4</sup> therefore suggests a two-step procedure for deconstructing war discourse (cf. table 2), escaping from war-determined distortions in the perception of conflict (cf. table 1), and transforming violence-oriented war journalism into conflict-oriented peace journalism (cf. chapter 2, table 1).

The first step is called *de-escalation oriented conflict coverage* (cf. table 3) and broadly coincides with what is usually called quality journalism. It is characterized by neutrality and critical distance from all parties to a conflict. De-escalation oriented conflict coverage goes beyond professional journalistic norms only to the extent that journalists' competence in employing conflict theory bears fruit and conflict remains open to peaceful settlement (win-win orientation as an option, questioning violence as an appropriate means of resolving conflict, questioning military values and examining the origins of conflict).

This is, of course, still a long way from peace journalism in Galtung's sense, but it clearly goes beyond conventional war reportage. Thus, prior to the ground offensive in the Gulf war, Gorbachev's peace initiative and Saddam Hussein's readiness to accept the peace plan and withdraw from Kuwait were certainly reported on in the Western media, but at the same time they were subordinated to military logic, discounted and rejected. The headlines of newspaper articles included "USA troubled over cease-fire" (Aftenposten, 21-02-91), "Soviets want to get into the arena again" (Aftenposten, 22-02-91), or "The worst possible solution" (Südkurier, 23-02-91) (cf. Kempf & Reimann, 2002). And during the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina attempts at peaceful conflict resolution received hardly any support from the international press. The military intervention scenario was preferred, and even today leading representatives of the media are proud that they convinced the public (particularly the American public) to support the NATO intervention in Bosnia and, they believe, thereby helped end the war (Luostarinen & Kempf, 2000).

While de-escalation oriented conflict coverage still uses a dualistic construction of conflict and only deconstructs the tension and the polarization of the conflict parties, part of this dualism is abandoned in *solution oriented conflict coverage* (cf. table 3). Seen realistically, this second step of peace journalism can therefore only hope to win a majority when an armistice or a peace treaty is already in place. Nevertheless, as a consistent minority position, solution oriented conflict coverage can also provide an important stimulus during war and can contribute to the gradual deconstruction of war discourse. Since dissonant information is usually reject-

4 Editor's note: see also ASPR (2003, chapter 5.3)

ed, however, only individual aspects of solution oriented coverage are realizable. Just as conventional media coverage (even in peacetime, cf. Kempf, 1999a) is always one step ahead of conflict escalation, peace journalism must always proceed one step ahead of the dominant social discourse in moving toward de-escalation, conflict resolution and reconciliation.

	De-escalation oriented conflict coverage	Solution oriented conflict coverage
Conceptualization	Investigating origins of conflict with win-win orientation, questioning force as a means of resolving conflict and criticizing military values	Peace orientation (peace = freedom from violence + creativity); proactive (prevention before violence occurs); people oriented (focus on civil society)
Assessment of rights and aims	Respect for opponent's rights and unbiased representation of his aims; realistic and self-critical evaluation of own rights and aims; fair coverage of peace initiatives and mediation attempts	Focus on common rights, aims and interests and on the benefits for all sides of ending war/violence; gives the anti-war opposition a voice; focuses on peace initiatives, signals readiness for peace and mediation attempts
Assessment of actions	Realistic, self-critical evaluation of own side's actions and unbiased evaluation of opponent's actions; critical distance from militants on all sides	Focuses on suffering on all sides, reports on invisible effects of war: trauma and loss of reputation, structural and cultural damage; humanizes all sides and identifies all who are unjust; concentrates on reconciliation perspectives
Emotional involvement	Recognition of threats to opponent and reduced sense of being threatened	Recognizes costs of war, even in the case of victory; transforms outrage at the enemy into outrage at war
Identification offers	Neutral and detached	Universal

Table 3: De-escalation oriented and solution oriented conflict coverage (according to Kempf, 2001a).

Empirical studies of the media in El Salvador after the civil war and the peace treaty of 1992 (Nuikka, 1999) and of German press reports about France after the end of the Second World War (Jaeger, 2002b, 2005) show that media can only perform this function productively when peace is really on the political agenda. Thus Nuikka (1999) shows that journalism really can promote the democratization process by providing a platform for reasoned discussions which enable violence to be gradually renounced as the dominant means of dealing with conflict. Jaeger (2002b, 2005) shows further that the selection criteria for the choice of journalists' topics do not reflect invariant natural laws. In both the period immediately after a war (1946-1950) and at times of well-established German-French cooperation (1966-1970), German press reporting on France emphasized positive events. With

the advance of German-French reconciliation, reports about non-elite topics increasingly found their way into the German press. This was due, among other things, to increasing contacts with French culture and life-styles which helped German readers perceive France as a cultured nation and no longer as just the (former) enemy.

Studies of German newspaper coverage (Frankfurter Rundschau and Berliner Zeitung) of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process between 1993 and 1997 (Annabrig, 2000), on the one hand, and of the Northern Ireland peace treaty of 1998 (Hamdorf, 2001), on the other hand, reveal obvious deficiencies. Thus in the Frankfurter Rundschau's reporting on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process the news selection criteria did not change much, and negative contexts prevailed over positive ones. There were more reports about Israeli society (elite country) than about Palestinian society (non-elite country), and the reportage clearly gave elites on both sides preferential treatment. Segments of the civilian population that favored reconciliation were almost completely ignored. Only in two areas could an attempt to support the peace process be found. There were obvious efforts to build trust in the Palestinian elite, which was almost exclusively represented by Arafat, who was presented in positive contexts almost as frequently as in negative ones, and, in an obvious attempt at neutrality, the Israelis (elite society) did not appear any more frequently than the Palestinians (non-elite society) in the reportage.

As a kind of side-effect of this half-hearted attempt to display unbiased neutrality, in order to go along with the peace process without really supporting it, Palestinian society was, so to speak, split into an elite (Arafat), with whom trust was built up, and a population that remained foreign, unacknowledged, and possibly threatening and prepared to use violence. Over the years the Frankfurter Rundschau clung to the expectation that at any moment the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could break out again with full force.

Similar deficiencies show up in an article on the Northern Ireland Peace Treaty in the Berliner Zeitung of April 11, 1998. Although fully sympathetic to the peace treaty, it is clearly dominated by escalation oriented aspects, and important information that could give a positive perspective on the peace process is not discussed. Important questions about the conflict are hardly examined, the civilian population (and their eagerness for peace) is not given any attention at all, and to a large extent the hard-earned achievements of the negotiators are questioned. The subheadings of the article already indicate an ambivalent attitude towards the peace process and encourage readers to have doubts about it.

Although the headline emphasizes the peace treaty as a possible solution to the conflict, any win-win orientation is absent in the subheading – printed in boldface – that follows:

"The Northern Ireland wall is shaky but still standing"

After the first paragraph praises the peace treaty as an historic event and a new opportunity for the region, a subheading follows:

"Not a handshake"

This conjures up the antagonism between the parties in the Northern Ireland conflict and sets the tone for the rest of the article, which is finally summarized in another subheading after paragraph six:

"Deep mistrust remains"

Summarizing the research findings quoted above makes it seem that, to support the beginning peace and reconciliation processes, the media in conflict regions were themselves more willing to change their attitudes than the international media which, at best, stick to their sceptical wait-and-see position. Empirical research on media reportage during peace processes is, however, only just beginning, and it is still not yet possible to reach a final verdict.

## 6. The training of journalists

To implement the model of de-escalation oriented and/or solution oriented conflict coverage described above, Kempf (1999a) has formulated a number of ground rules that journalists should observe (cf. table 4).

- None of the parties to a conflict has absolute standards of truth
- Conflict is always open to being conceptualized either as a competitive (win-lose) or a cooperative (win-win) process
- Conflicts can take a constructive course only if they are conceptualized in the framework of a win-win model
- War culture is biased towards win-lose interpretations
- Peace processes are based on creativity – they must give a voice to the voiceless
- Peace journalism must provide an alternative motivational logic and re-channel outrage at the enemy into outrage at war itself
- Peace journalism must adopt an unconditional commitment to encompassing standards of truth

Table 4: Ground rules of peace journalism (according to Kempf, 1999a).

Observing these ground rules, however, requires more than just good will. It entails, among other things, overcoming the institutional constraints that result from the criteria for news selection, editorial procedures and expectations, the economics of the media, the ties between the media, politicians and the military, etc. It requires emancipating journalists from the (apparent) automatism of social-psychological mechanisms (group processes, perceptual distortions, etc.) in which journalists themselves are trapped, but to which they can react in different ways

if they become aware of these processes. Journalists should understand conflict theory (understanding conflict and conflict analysis, conflict management) and possess professional skills and journalistic techniques for writing interesting news stories which will attract attention by portraying the search for multilateral peace solutions, not by exploiting the polarization of conflict parties and the recurring cycles of violence and atrocities.

From a psychological point of view, overcoming institutional constraints on journalists requires them to have not only the courage of their convictions, but also the communicative skills they need in their interactions with institutions. Training programs for journalists which deal especially with this aspect have, to my knowledge, not yet been developed. To develop such programs, we could draw on the findings of organizational psychology (management training), on models of interpersonal change (Bläsi, 2001), as well as on training methods based on an understanding of group dynamics.

The emancipation of journalists from the automatism of social psychological mechanisms first presupposes that sound knowledge of the appropriate social psychological theories and research findings will be taught. Although this is being attempted within the framework of the IPT program at the Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR), the time available for it is relatively short. On the whole, it would be desirable to give the social psychological aspects – the work situations of journalists and also the social construction of reality and the role of journalism in this process – a larger place in the education of journalists and to combine imparting theoretical knowledge with contributions from their own experience.

While imparting competence in conflict theory has a central place in the framework of the IPT program, was given a relatively small place in conflict and peace courses. In contrast, the training courses provided by the Conflict Resolution Network Canada concentrate 100% on this aspect of the further education of journalists. In a personal communication, Jenifer Newcombe points out that demand for the courses of the Conflict Resolution Network Canada is fortunately increasing and that the Network does not have the same difficulty in attracting journalists for their training program that was reported by Jake Lynch (quoted in Zint, 2001) for the British NRO "reporting the world", which uses the Transcend model. There, the use of the term "peace journalism" seems to have had a rather off-putting effect. While war correspondents enjoy recognition, peace correspondents are seen from the start as biased and are thus discredited. Lynch thinks that a possible way out of the dilemma is to drop the term "peace" and focus more on factual topics like methods of dealing with conflict. The experience of the Conflict Resolution Network Canada appears to confirm this.



Zint (2001), also mentions the alternative that, assuming good journalism always promotes peace, the only need is to encourage journalistic quality. We can agree with the aim of this alternative, but its use of the word "only" leads away from the institutional, social psychological, and conflict dynamic factors which affect the escalation bias of conventional conflict coverage. Unless they know about these factors, journalists cannot emancipate themselves from them. In addition, the appeal to journalists to learn their craft properly and to deliver quality journalism impinges on their self esteem. Calling for this may thus not increase their willingness to participate in the appropriate training.

Nonetheless, peace journalism training programs cannot get along without communicating professional skills and journalistic working techniques like those that are central to the IPT courses offered at the ASPR and to the Transcend peace journalism courses. My experiences as a lecturer at the IPT courses, at a Heinrich Böll Foundation seminar with journalists from Ethiopia and Eritrea, and in courses for journalism students at the University of Costa Rica have shown that attributing the escalation bias of conventional conflict coverage solely to a lack of professional competence grossly underestimates journalists' constructive potential and creativity.

In practical work undertaken with journalists, four principles have proved worthwhile: (1) Providing basic knowledge of conflict theory and social psychology, (2) trusting journalists' abilities and creativity, (3) learning by doing, and (4) for training purposes, using news reporting about conflicts in which the participants in the course, their society, or their country are not directly involved.



## **Part II**

### **Criticism of the peace journalism project**



## Good journalism or peace journalism?

David Loyn

### 1. Introduction

Peace journalism is at best meaningless, and at worst a uniquely unhelpful and misleading prescription for journalism in general, and broadcast journalism in particular. I intend to start with a detailed critique of it, drawing mostly from the book by Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick published in 2005, as well as their earlier *Reporting the World* series. I will then set out my views of best practice in reporting, and tackle some of the themes that arose after a piece on this topic that I wrote online in 2003. I will finish with some case studies, highlighting two specific conflicts: Kosovo and Northern Ireland. The conclusions of this piece are those of a practising reporter, but I should stress that although most of my career has been with the BBC, this piece and the judgements in it are all my own work, and should not be taken as an expression of the stance of the BBC on these issues.

Lynch & McGoldrick (2005, 5) demand nothing less than a 'revolution' in journalism practice, using this definition: 'Peace journalism is when editors and reporters make choices – of what stories to cover and about how to report them – that create opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict.' The opposite of this, ie all other ways of doing journalism, are condemned as 'war journalism, biased in favour of war' (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, xvii). I will argue instead that the opposite of peace journalism is good journalism.

### 2. Artificial prescriptions

The peace journalism approach describes an active participation that is simply not the role of a journalist, and is based on a flawed notion that the world would be a better place if we reported wars in a certain prescribed way, encouraging peace-makers rather than reporting warriors. This prescription is the more dangerous part of peace journalism, as it tries to define itself as a new orthodoxy. The idea that most reporters currently look only for the epicentre of violence, or are somehow addicted to conflict is absurd. If anything we *under-report* conflict in the world

– certainly failing often to expose it in the early days, before major violence breaks out.

Most of the legal framework, and the codes of conduct by trade unions and responsible employers which we live and work in, provide a framework which proscribes what we cannot do – banning the unacceptable. That way we can continue to engage in robust sceptical inquiry, but also keep inside libel laws, and remain on the right side of civilised discourse (so we do not attach gender stereotypes to job descriptions, nor report racial origins, unless relevant to the story and so on.) But what is proposed by advocates of peace journalism is a prescription, defining a way of working which demands that reporters artificially seek out peacemakers. Leaving aside the merits or otherwise of the peace journalism case, this prescriptive nature alone should make it suspect. The searching inquiry carried out into BBC journalism by a former senior news manager Ron Neil (2004) in the wake of the Hutton debacle explicitly ruled out this kind of approach, saying 'Highly prescriptive rules inhibit good journalism'.

The peace journalists draw on methods and analysis developed by academics engaged in conflict resolution, and quote a list drawn up by the veteran peace studies expert Johan Galtung (cf. chapter 2). He accuses 'war journalists' of reporting war in an enclosed space and time, with no context, concealing peace initiatives and making wars 'opaque/secret.' This last suggestion is the most incomprehensible to me as a reporter who has covered several conflicts. Fighting against the opaque, lifting the cloak of secrecy, and reporting the history, the why as well as the who, how and what of war, are all key parts of reporting as I have seen it practised.

I once heard Galtung speak at a gathering of academics and journalists to discuss the Middle East where he painted a hypothetical picture of peace proposals which might begin as something small and beneath notice, but which might then be picked up and owned by politicians as their own. He exhorted us 'So gentlemen and ladies of the press, how much have you done recently to create such politicians?' My response is clear and simple: creating peacemaking politicians is not the business of a reporter.

He gave as an instance of press 'failure' the lack of reporting of a peace plan put together by the former UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar in the Balkans in 1991 before the worst of the slaughter in Croatia and Bosnia. It was not us who did not take it seriously. It was Milosevic and his Serb nationalist proxies, echoed in Croatia, who were busy provoking a war. We should get cause and effect the right way round. The peace plan was not dead in the water because it was not reported. It was not reported because it was dead in the water. Galtung's track record at conflict resolution was admirable. But he misunderstood our role and power. One of the most acute observers of that conflict, Ed Vulliamy of the

Guardian, reported that the whole thing was quite clinically laid out from the start in Zagreb and Belgrade, 'There was no place for a shared country in the War of Maps that was already under way behind the scenes. The Serbs and the Croats opposed but understood each other as they resurrected their ancient dreams ... For those dreams to be realised, the Muslims of Bosnia would have to be dealt with' (Vulliamy, 1994. 10). It was one of the comprehensively reported conflicts of modern times. There was context, understanding and compassion in the accounts, although there was also increasing frustration among journalists that what was happening on the ground was not well understood in London, Paris and Washington as governments did not want to get involved. This led directly to the desire to practise so-called 'Journalism of attachment'.

I will return to this theme later. But the key point to be made here is that reporters need to preserve their position as observers not players. Galtung's demand that journalists should become active participants, playing a part in the complex 'cat's cradle' that makes a conflict, is wrong. By *searching* for peacemakers, reporters are immediately on the wrong side of the fence. Reporting and peacemaking are different roles; reporters who give undue prominence to passing peace plans, or search for peacemakers, distort their craft and do not serve their audience.

### 3. Emotions and trauma

Some of the analysis in *peace journalism* appears to be at variance with my own experience. The authors claim that damage to psychology and culture is 'routinely omitted' by reporters, while there is a 'concentration on visible damage and destruction'. This is simply not the case. Rather there is a strong emphasis now on how people feel, and almost *too much* coverage of 'trauma.' Take the Darfur crisis. It is actually quite hard to get images of damaged villages and of the fighting itself, but the personal suffering, the 'damage to psychology, structure and culture', is not 'omitted', rather it is at the centre of most coverage.

And yet, that is not to say that everything is fine. There is a glibness about much reporting of trauma, meaningless throwaway analysis leading to nonsense lines like 'A community traumatised like this can never recover,' and a preponderance on seeking grief in place of understanding reality. The day after the July 7<sup>th</sup> bombs in London, an impromptu peace garden was set aside by the Thames, some way from the scene of the explosions, where people could come and sit and sign a book. It was a dignified low-key place, spoilt only by the intrusion of a foreign TV crew. As a BBC reporter at the scene put it: 'The only traumatic thing here is the way this Argentinian reporter keeps coming to ask people why they are not more upset.'<sup>1</sup>

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1 BBC Radio Five Live 08/05/05

Ensuring better emotional literacy for reporters in a world that understands this area much better would be useful. Mark Brayne is the Director of 'Dart Europe', a group dedicated to better reporting of traumatic events, as well as better care for reporters who cover them. He wants reporters who cover conflict to be as well trained in this as they might be in understanding defence equipment, not as an optional add-on: 'They are more likely to be authentic and impartial (much better qualities in journalism than "truth" or "objectivity") if they, and their editors, have an understanding of their own psychology and blind spots, and of the psychology of the story and its players. In other words, the media must become much more "emotionally literate".'<sup>2</sup> This is not peace journalism but a mechanism for a more complex understanding of context, as well as the safety of journalists in its widest sense. Yes, we need to report emotions better, but not throw out established journalistic tools along the way.

#### 4. Best practice – Truth and objectivity

Brayne's parenthetical throwaway of truth and objectivity provides the cue for the next section of this piece: concerning best practice in journalism. In an otherwise supportive review of a piece I wrote against peace journalism for the Open Democracy website<sup>3</sup>, the distinguished philosopher Julian Baggini took issue with my view that although there cannot be a 'single truth', the *pursuit* of truth should still be the goal of reporters. For him 'the pursuit of truth is impossible if there is no truth to pursue.'

It all depends what we mean by truth. Philosophers like to quote Pontius Pilate's famous question 'What is Truth?' It comes in answer to the only words Jesus offers in his defence in his brief overnight trial: 'For this I came into the world, to bear witness to the Truth'. This is Truth, with a capital 'T', multi-faceted and all-knowing, not the compromised quotidian truth of the average news story (which may still be 'true' in the sense of not being 'false.') In the metaphysical sense of the word a perfect understanding of truth is not available to any person, and this is what I meant by 'truth' being unattainable. But the *pursuit* of an ideal is surely philosophically coherent, even though we know that we will fall short.

Baggini may not agree, but comes to my aid by offering 'truthfulness' in place of 'truth' as the better term to use. He quotes from *Truth and truthfulness* by Bernard Williams, who defines truthfulness as 'a readiness against being fooled and eagerness to see through appearances to the real structure and motives that lie behind them' – a good definition of the reporter's craft, and similar perhaps to the 'ratlike cunning' once famously said to be one of the only three qualifications nec-

2 [www.istss.org/publications/TS/Summer05/media.htm](http://www.istss.org/publications/TS/Summer05/media.htm)

3 [www.opendemocracy.net](http://www.opendemocracy.net) 20/02/03; Baggini response 15/05/03



essary for journalists (the others being a plausible manner, and a little literary ability).<sup>4</sup>

For Baggini there is no such thing as '*the* (his emphasis) true account. This is because any account has to be selective, not for any sinister reasons, but because you can't describe any event coherently without leaving out some details...there are many true accounts, and they are made true by the fact that they describe true descriptions of what happened.' So there may be many versions of the truth, all different, but still all as true as each other, since none is false. By striving to be *truthful*, we can do the job well.

But apart from my metaphysical/secular distinction which holds truth to be an impossible ideal, but still worth pursuing, there must surely be other *degrees* of truth-telling (or truthfulness) which are different from the on/off, true/false, definition held to by Baggini. We all know how politicians are adept at speaking in a way which may be 'true' in the sense of not a lie, but still misleading and not the whole truth. The Neil Report is a useful source because it was a rare attempt to define some of these elusive qualities of journalism at a time of great challenge to the BBC. Neil found that while reporters need 'to strive to establish the truth of what has happened as best we can', this is not an exact science. The role of an Editor is to make a judgement without siding with one version of the truth: 'to ensure that the journalists reporting to him/her assess where the weight of expert opinion lies in a story without adopting it as a truth or wisdom. The scale of BBC journalism carries risk.' (Neil, 2004).

So what about objectivity, the other quality rejected by Brayne, who prefers his reporters to be 'authentic and impartial'? It has a different function from truth. While truth (or truthfulness) may be a *goal*, objectivity is a *tool* to reach it, and an essential one. Baggini supports this wholeheartedly, drawing on the work of Thomas Nagel in *The View from Nowhere*, a deliberately paradoxical title; every view has to be from somewhere. Nagel proves that there is such a thing as objectivity, opposed to subjectivity – giving as an example the physics of light waves as against our perception of colour: one objective, and the other subjective. Baggini says that this relates directly to journalists who can achieve objective reporting by working to remove their particular, local perspectives. 'Sceptics who retort that such biases can never be fully removed are simply stating a trite truism. Of course they can't, and that is why the ideal of pure objectivity – a "view from nowhere" – is chimerical. But that in no way undermines the idea that maximising objectivity is an achievable and worthwhile aim...the idea that journalists should be striving for objectivity is neither anachronistic nor incoherent...Nagel's account also has the merit of explaining how practices such as "peace-reporting" are bound to be

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4 *Sunday Times* – Nicholas Tomalin

less objective than alternatives, since they commit themselves to the adoption of particular perspectives, in effect giving up on the ideal of stripping away as much of these as possible.'

On this analysis, if we accept that objectivity is at least a worthy aspiration, even though not a tool to achieve the 'whole truth', then peace journalism fails a key test by imposing other expectations onto journalists.

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. The Russians were greeted as liberators by the embattled Serb minority, who had been cowering in their basements during the long bombing campaign. But they were seen as a major security threat by the American military, in overall command of the operation. (A British commander on the ground disobeyed a direct order to engage the Russians militarily, saying he 'did not want to start World War III', instead surrounding them at the airport, and providing them with water, while a compromise was agreed).

Reporters live in a social context and share a language and certain assumptions with their audience. To help the language of reporting, there is a constant if unspoken dialogue between the reporter and the reader/listener/viewer: shared assumptions that make it easier to report some stories than others, with foreign news the hardest. There is a shorthand saying in the BBC newsroom, 'New readers start here', to describe the clarity and context required to explain some pieces. Others are seen as part of a continuing narrative.

This is not a simple part of the newsgathering process, and there are obvious dangers. The assumptions need to be constantly examined, and some do not help understanding, particularly where they condemn a whole group as evil. Here Lynch and McGoldrick do have useful points to make, even quoting from a piece of mine, that analysed how the demonisation of the Taliban directly affected the course of history, encouraging hardliners rather than moderates in Afghanistan, with dire consequences. It was the hardliners who hosted those planning the events of 9/11.<sup>5</sup> The demonisation, which became a shared journalistic assumption, was something begun by western governments. A fuller understanding of the causes of the rise of the Taliban, and the reasons for their evident popularity, would have

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5 [www.opendemocracy.net](http://www.opendemocracy.net) 4<sup>th</sup> April 2002

better informed both the public and policy makers. (Similar mistakes were made with regard to the reporting of Hamas after their election victory in Gaza and the West Bank in 2006.)

But surely the antidote to this is a fuller context in the reporting of events, not discarding objectivity. Both the reporter and the audience need to know that there is no other agenda than explaining what is going on – that what you read, see on the screen or hear on the radio is an honest attempt at objectivity; that reporters treat any and every event with an informed scepticism, rejecting any attempt to co-opt them into involvement. Better reporting of the Taliban meant finding out what they were about, not promoting 'non-violent responses to conflict'.

## 5. Objectivity or attachment

Objectivity alone though is not enough. In his revisionist history of the media and Vietnam, Daniel Hallin (1986, 35) found that objectivity distorted what was happening because it meant that official accounts were not challenged. 'The effect of objectivity was not to free the news of political influence, but to open wide the channels through which official information flowed, often to keep issues off the political agenda by disguising major decisions as apparently routine and incremental.' A similar process happened, particularly in Britain and America, although not mainland Europe, in the run up to the Iraq war in 2002/3. Official sources crowded out almost all other voices, so that each day's news coverage became an 'objective' trawl through the laid-on events, but did not tell the whole story. Hallin is quoted in Jean Seaton's towering book *Carnage and the Media*, where she argues that what I have called 'shared assumptions' are actually a highly formalised set of images, as profound as medieval icons, and bringing the television of conflict into the same psychological space as was filled by the circus in Roman times.

For Seaton the response to critics like Hallin, is not to discard objectivity in favour of peace journalism, since the pursuit of facts remains the source of authority of the news. 'Impartiality and objectivity are indispensable tools; rather than criticize the concept, it is more fruitful to consider the structures that support better or worse practice' (Seaton, 2005, 198).

No analysts of objectivity discard it as ruthlessly as the peace journalists. Most others would rather see it put in its proper place, refined but not rejected. Philip Hammond (2002, 177) attempts a complex definition of objectivity. To him it comprises three distinct, though interrelated concepts: truthfulness and accuracy, neutrality, and emotional detachment. 'These are interrelated in that journalists are supposedly dispassionate and neutral so as not to let their own emotional responses and political allegiances get in the way of reporting truthfully.' His *supposedly* gives it away; he does not really believe it. In my experience reporting

can be hugely passionate, requiring emotional engagement and human imagination. But it is not about my passion, how I feel. Although the feeling reporter has become a fashionable way of reporting, even on some channels that should know better, the viewer or listener does not want to know how *I* feel. What they want to know is how people feel on the ground. Reporters are the channel for their passion – not active players. Hammond though is more worried about the loss of another of his three elements in objectivity – neutrality. This has come under hardest attack from 'journalists of attachment' or 'advocacy journalists' as they are known in America.

It was the BBC correspondent Martin Bell, frustrated by the quagmire of Bosnia, who first coined the term journalism of attachment. He no longer wanted to 'stand neutrally between good and evil, right and wrong, the victim and the oppressor'. Similarly in the US, the CNN correspondent Christiane Amanpour said 'the classic definition of objectivity can mean neutrality, and neutrality can mean you are an accomplice to all sorts of evil.' But to Hammond, in an analysis of the reporting both of Bosnia and Rwanda in the 1990s, this approach can end up as being as bad as the 'yellow press' of the 1890s in the US, that was 'thrilled by the consciousness of its moral responsibility'. The dominant journalists' narrative in Bosnia put most of the blame on the Serbs. And although Hammond goes rather too far in wanting to say they were all as bad as each other, his conclusions make uncomfortable reading, blaming some journalists for substituting *attachment* for *neutrality*, closing their eyes to things that don't fit: 'contemporary human rights journalism involves suppressing inconvenient information, distorting public understanding of conflicts, applauding the deaths of designated western hate-figures, and ignoring evidence of the destructive effects of western involvement.' In a harsh conclusion, he finds that this approach can in the end 'legitimise barbarism.' The final death toll in Bosnia was around 100,000, and around 40 per cent of the civilian casualties were Serbs, which was not the dominant narrative of those who reported it.

'News' is what matters, what gets into the political bloodstream, what counts. It can be jagged and visceral and uncomfortable and sometimes it does not work. Every reporter has had the unnerving experience of the exclusive story which dies a death because it is not followed up; it does not have any meaning or 'traction'. That is why the 'journalism of attachment' emerged in the mid-90s in Bosnia. The political establishment in America and Europe did not want to get involved, so they wrote it off as a Balkan tragedy where ancient ethnic hatreds had been awakened. The spin from inside western governments blocking engagement ran counter to the stories of the deaths of tens of thousands and the unravelling of civil society. So the journalists became frustrated. Their reporting was not having any 'effect'. They wanted to be liberated from the yoke of objectivity – to be allowed to 'tell it as it is' – to take a position condemning the Serbs. It was always an elitist demand, giving a special licence to the few.

The 'journalism of attachment' feels like the same self-serving western luxury as peace journalism itself, although at the other end of the spectrum. How could it have been managed for example in a BBC language service newsroom, staffed during the Balkan conflict by Bosnians of all shades, Serbs, Croats, Macedonians, and Albanian speakers from both sides of the Kosovo border? If the Martin Bells and Christiane Amanpour of this world were licensed to report with 'attachment' then these journalists would legitimately ask why it was not all right for them. It is not all right for any reporter.

But the advocates of peace journalism are seeing the spectrum completely differently. They tend to lump everyone else together – those (like myself) who insist on objectivity, including a commitment to neutrality, along with the journalists of attachment who want to be able to name evildoers. For them we are all 'War Journalists'. This single-minded contempt is allied with name-calling: 'Otto the objective Ostrich' (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, 195), digging his head into the sand in the face of all the glittering evidence collected by the peace journalists to change his mind. In this caricature Otto is seen to be left only uncovering the 'facts', not the whole nuanced and complex business of impartial objective reporting. Advocates of peace journalism cannot see that holding onto objectivity could be a useful vaccine against the relativism of 'attached journalists', since they prefer their own relativism instead. That's the problem with throwing out methods that work, rather than seeing how they might be made to work better.

There is an arrogance in the analysis by some promoters of peace journalism that is unnerving, as if they are the only guardians of a redemptive flame of truth that will set us free. Lynch & McGoldrick (2005, 78) bring together a list of approved non-violent leaders, included to promote the idea that somehow they are ignored. They are all pretty mainstream, but they are paraded to promote non-violence as an alternative to violence as a solution to the problems of the world. This is more idealistic than most of the rest of the wishful thinking in their book, but it also makes a mockery of the demand that journalists should *seek out* peacemakers. This list, including individuals as well as groups like the mothers of dead soldiers in Buenos Aires, and the rolling Leipzig demonstrations of 1989, is comprised of non-violent protestors who were reported. When activists like these make a difference, they are given proper prominence.

## 6. Some case studies

The theoretical constructs of peace journalism bear very little relation to how actual conflicts can actually end, and the role of the press. There is actually some nobility in this – believing the best of people, building consensus around peace and not war, and so on – but the world is not a noble place.

In one stark example, the gruesome war between Iran and Iraq finally ground to a halt in 1989, not through any clever peace plan, or complex journalism that understood the whole cat's cradle, but because the US shot down an Iranian airliner by accident. To America's surprise, Iran did not respond militarily, and offered a ceasefire, because they 'could not fight the US as well' (Clarke, 2004, 102). Iraq was exhausted by the war and accepted quickly. In the messy, visceral, real world, this random and accidental act of extreme violence, by a potential new party to the conflict, had the unintended consequence of ending a long war.

In the twenty-first century the world has moved on from the classic Clausewitzian vision of war as a continuation of politics 'by other means', to a situation where threats of asymmetric conflicts will continually wrong-foot diplomatic solutions as they are normally constructed as well as conventional armies. The tools of the reporter need to be sharpened not altered.

## 6.1 Kosovo

When fighting broke out in Kosovo in 1998, only two years after the Dayton agreement had finally forced a close to the Bosnian conflict, NATO was much readier to get involved quickly than they had been in the early days in Bosnia. They were willing to bomb the Serbs after 'only' a few massacres. A highly effective guerrilla campaign by the Kosovars secured the end of Serb control because of the willingness of Europe to become engaged militarily. There were not any demands for 'journalism of attachment' from the reporters such as myself who covered Kosovo, as our account became the 'dominant narrative.' Evidence of Serbian atrocities on the ground fitted the willingness of Tony Blair, only one year in office, who saw this as a place where his then unsullied policy of 'moral warfare' could be tested.

The effect of this was that the coverage played into the hands of the Kosovo Liberation Army, whether they engineered the media aspect of their conflict or not. They were hard to work with for the media and hostile to most reporters. But their military campaign was mostly targeted at Serbian and Yugoslav security forces, although some Serb civilians and government employees died as well. The KLA's key assessment was that NATO would intervene if the Serbs retaliated against civilians, which they duly did.

Lynch & McGoldrick (2005, 99) see this series of events as 'war propaganda' working because it fitted with 'the established conventions of war journalism', which in their view concealed the true nature of the conflict. Rather than the sequence of Serb atrocity and world reaction ratcheting up towards war in 1999, as the events uncovered by journalists working in Kosovo became the dominant narrative, they see another process altogether. Far from *revealing* things, it turns out with the 20/20vision of a peace journalism analysis in hindsight that reporters on the

ground were *concealing* the real course of events. They quote a BBC Panorama programme as uncovering the real extent of Kosovar Albanian perfidy,<sup>6</sup> breaking ceasefires, and being re-armed by agents from Britain and America. 'This fact was uncovered long after the war by a major BBC investigation; at the time, it was kept deadly secret, since it risked contradicting the basic propaganda narrative of Serb 'repression' of a defenceless population.'

This is not what happened. The truth is that this Panorama was a rather curious essay trying to be clever after the fact, a throwback to the old Balkan analysis that 'they are all as bad as each other.' Its most bizarre rewriting of the facts was to recount *more* incidents of dead Serbs than dead Albanians in 1998, the year before the NATO bombing raids, focusing on the town of Pec in the west, close to some of the most important shrines in Serbian Christian history.

I had spent a fair amount of time in Pec, or Peja, as the Albanian-origin majority call it, during 1998. I had been to several funerals of Albanian Kosovar civilians, shot for nothing in broad daylight, (none of these was in the Panorama). And I been in the streets where surly gangs of Serbian youths, many of them refugees from other parts of Yugoslavia, swaggered and boasted, running an effective curfew that made it too dangerous for the Albanian Kosovar majority to go out after dark. In its clever counter-intuitive way the Panorama programme interviewed instead a Serbian priest, hardly an unbiased witness, who said that it was the other way round, that Albanians persecuted Serbs there.

I had seen as well the horror of crammed maternity clinics, in the back rooms of private houses, and the classrooms in farm buildings, because for more than a decade the Albanian majority had been excluded from access to any state facilities. I had watched Albanian families being burnt out of their homes in the countryside around Pec/Peja in the summer and autumn of 1998, sent into internal exile, camping and dying in the mud in the forests and mountains.

And I thought Lynch & McGoldrick wanted context and background. Very little of this history was in the Panorama account, so intent was it at redressing some kind of 'balance,' and uncovering the 'fact', at the time 'kept deadly secret' that the guerrilla force the KLA increased in confidence and broke ceasefires that winter. What a surprise. The Albanian dead were not in isolated attacks, like the dead Serbs 'uncovered' for the 'major BBC investigation,' so highly regarded by this post-facto revisionist account. They were piled up in dozens across Drenica, in Obrije and Racak, and all the other places that forced themselves into the world's consciousness in 1998/99. The Albanian majority had had enough of rule by Belgrade.

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6 BBC Panorama *Moral Combat* 21<sup>st</sup> March 2000

Another part of the alternative history of Kosovo in *peace journalism* puts the strength of the KLA down to the CIA, said to be 'training, equipping, and preparing the KLA for war.' The sole evidence for this is a *Sunday Times* account, but on it is built the theory that the war was thus engineered by western agents. It does not feel like the whole truth – the KLA had been preparing for several months already – but even if it were, again it can not have been a shock, certainly not worth the emphasis put on it by Lynch and McGoldrick. By this time, there were UN resolutions condemning the Serbs, and active war-planning going on in NATO forces. They would have been failing in their military task if they did not have some discreet forces on the ground already, making contact with the KLA, and yes, surprise, surprise, possibly giving them military assistance. And of course as the fighting intensified, the leaders of Kosovo's majority population, 'long-time advocates of non-violence and a negotiated settlement' were displaced to the head-shaking despair of the advocates of peace journalism; as if keeping Ibrahim Rugova in power was going to lead to eternal peace. Although loved as a symbol, he was a weak and ineffective leader who had failed to make any impact for a decade, and whose worst failure was not bringing Kosovo to the attention of the Dayton negotiators who had forced an end to the Bosnian war in 1995. That left a policy vacuum that was filled by the KLA. But the ludicrous partiality of the peace journalists for 'advocates of non-violence' blinds them to proper analysis of what is actually going on.

## 6.2 Northern Ireland

The Good Friday agreement to end the conflict in Northern Ireland was an example of a situation where peace could have been lost if the peace journalists had had their way. Their demand is for transparency, and yet the way peace was forged in Northern Ireland was in secret talks, leading to a minutely choreographed series of public confidence-building measures. Casting a light on those talks would have killed them. There were discreet contacts between leading figures in the IRA and the British government going back into the years of the Conservative government of John Major, although they were strongly denied at the time. During all of this period the violence continued, and the public stances of politicians remained hardline. Would peace have been better served if journalists had tried to get behind the meaning of the words to unveil what was really going on? Lynch and McGoldrick say that peace initiatives were suppressed by journalists – 'the diligent and broadly based work of peace activists over many years remained below the radar of most newsdesks and reporters.' Hardly. One Northern Ireland peace group won a Nobel Prize for peace in the early years, so high was their profile; they were widely reported since they seemed to be making a difference.



But later there was a different game going on. Ironically the role of reporters in the peacemaking process in the end was the opposite to that promoted by peace journalists. They needed to report the bombs and the killing and the public statements while the real peace work went on behind closed doors. Bringing 'transparency' to this process would have killed it dead. Unionist and Nationalist politicians could not be photographed shaking hands, although they may have had good working relations in private. And slow careful analysis of all this did emerge, although the key headlines speaking of hard positions ('No Surrender') to their own communities, remained essential. The 'long war' in Northern Ireland was a unique crucible to study conflict journalism in such an advanced society. The reporters lived in the community, and had an intimate stake in the consequences of their own reporting, rather than being able to fly home.

There is one other piece of the Northern Ireland analysis that deserves attention. Lynch & McGoldrick (2005, 197) pay homage to the views of Noam Chomsky (1989), to make the case that journalists engage in 'omission, marginalisation, and distortion' in favour of the class interests of their bosses: 'the elite media ... are selling privileged audiences to other businesses. It would hardly come as a surprise if the picture of the world they present were to reflect the perspectives and interests of the sellers, the buyers, and the product. ... those who occupy managerial positions in the media, or gain status within them as commentators, belong to the same privileged elites ... and share perceptions reflecting their own class interests as well.'

On the very next page, they say that 'Business' actually wanted peace in Northern Ireland, for tourism as well as other industries. But those damned inconvenient independent-minded journalists were still going out there and reporting on the killings and the robbery and the intimidation, the daily digest of the long war – 'still stuck in the groove of war journalism', according to Lynch and McGoldrick. So Chomsky is wrong then? If he is right, if it is true that the media is in the corporate pockets of an 'elite' that determines everything, then the occasional knee-capping would surely have been ignored in favour of tourist features about the booming economy. The fact is that bad things were still going on, and good journalists were finding out about them and reporting on them.

## **7. Giving oxygen to warriors**

It used to be much easier than it was, when the nation was at least perceived by media owners to be supporting military action, and so there was a more cosy fit between media and military. That changed. The four biggest rows between the BBC and the government in the last quarter of a century have all been over reporting conflict. Apart from the most serious, the Kelly/Gilligan affair, there was

the Falklands War, when the BBC was condemned for not saying 'we' referring to British troops, US attacks on Libya, when again the BBC was not 'patriotic' enough, and the interviewing of Republican sources in Northern Ireland. The then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said that this gave terrorists the 'oxygen of publicity.' Supporters of peace journalism would applaud her.

One of their constant complaints is that journalists do not take enough notice of the impact of their reporting, nor the reasons why events have been staged (by people seeking 'oxygen'). In *Reporting the World* they quote the former editor of the Guardian, Peter Preston, with approval. He was concerned that the fighting between anarchists and police at the Genoa G8 summit in 2001 had dominated coverage. He demanded that there should have been more media introspection, since this was 'street theatre for media consumption...we, in the reporting, are not innocent bystanders, but carriers of oxygen. We are, essentially, the story itself'.<sup>7</sup> It was pretty violent street theatre, rightly leading the coverage, and if it was staged for 'media consumption', no one told the anarchists at the heart of the action, who beat up several journalists and destroyed camera equipment. But Lynch and McGoldrick are even more concerned about the effect of media 'oxygen' on wars than in street demonstrations.

Apart from their long (and wrong) analysis of the media in Kosovo, they have also been critical of the media in reporting the much more complex fighting in Macedonia that immediately followed the Kosovo conflict, and flared up again two years later.

This was a very difficult story to tell. The repression of Albanians was less clear cut than in Kosovo, and so support for the guerrillas was much weaker. The politics of the country were more mature, with mainstream Albanian-origin parties operating publicly in the capital not underground, and there had been a significant foreign military force, mainly of US troops, stationed in Macedonia for several years. There was though one key similarity. Like the KLA in Kosovo, the Albanian-origin guerrilla army, the NLA, wanted to provoke government retaliation against their civilians. Lynch (2002b, 12) wrote 'If members of a group like the NLA have expectations about the likely response of journalists to their actions, they can only have arisen from the experience of news gone by. If those expectations form even a part of their calculations in planning and carrying out their actions, it means every journalist shares an unknowable proportion of the responsibility for what happens next.' If this were true, it would impose an impossible burden on reporters. Like adherents of some austere Indian cult, wary of walking in the dust lest they trod on an insect, it would be hard for reporters to do anything at all for sharing a proportion of the 'responsibility for what happens next.' As a former senior BBC

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7 Guardian – Peter Preston 23/07/01

news executive Bob Jobbins put it robustly during a peace journalism seminar, 'Conflict resolution is something on which I report, not something in which I engage. A side-effect of my reporting may be that it makes conflict resolution harder or easier, but that's a judgement that is made after our reporting'. This rather sensible thought appeared, rather bafflingly, in *Reporting the World* in a section called 'Beyond cynicism' (Lynch, 2002b, 24).

Nik Gowing has persuasively argued that by 1994/5, guerrilla forces in the Great Lakes crisis that followed the Rwanda genocide, had learnt the media game, particularly the power of the 24 hour live news cycle.<sup>8</sup> He says that the press were ill-equipped to deal with this. But surely it is just another part of the media equation, like the spin of a government press conference. Foreign reporting, unlike the theoretical constructs of peace journalism is messy, arduous, hazardous, and expensive. And cause and effect is not simple. For example, whatever the NLA may have wanted, it did not 'work' in Macedonia, as it had in Kosovo. NATO did not bomb their perceived oppressors.

There is much concern in the analysis by these supporters of peace journalism about media-savvy guerrillas, but surely the savviest players are the big powers. The former US Secretary of State Colin Powell once enunciated a series of pre-conditions for America to be engaged in conflict, including that the war should be winnable, there should be no other option, and there should be an exit strategy. But the most important condition for the purposes of this discourse is that there should be 'strong support for the campaign by the general public.' Winning that support is now a major part of war planning among western powers, much more powerful than the new awareness of the media among guerrilla forces.

## 8. Conclusion

This is not to say that everything in journalism is fine. In a world where Fox News, with its ridiculously partisan comic-book view of foreign news, can try to patent the notion of being 'Fair and Balanced', and where most British newspapers take a strong 'line' one way or another on conflicts, there are problems. Seeing the *Sun* trying to find good news from Iraq has had a sort of black humour in recent months. The affair of Iraq's missing weapons of mass destruction raised searching questions in newsrooms on both sides of the Atlantic as it should have. Research findings showing that *most* of the British television audience believe it is the Palestinians who are 'occupying' territory, not Israelis, should set alarm bells ringing (Philo & Berry, 2004).

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8 [www.usip.org/oc/vd/mic/micwebcast.html](http://www.usip.org/oc/vd/mic/micwebcast.html)

But the solution surely is a better application of known methods, not an attempt to reinvent the wheel. The starting points of the intellectual under-pinning of peace journalism are statements of the obvious: eg the presence of journalists influences the events they cover; absolute objectivity is impossible; there may be more than two parties to a conflict. Most reporters are aware of this, and try not to influence events, take a subjective stance, or over-simplify conflicts. The key word is try, and as long as the reader/listener/viewer knows that they are trying, and not bringing another perspective, then the contract between them is intact. Reporters are not innocents abroad, but complex decision-makers in an untidy world. The solutions of peace journalism make other demands, seeking a different conclusion to the shared knowledge that journalists cannot achieve perfect detachment, objectivity or context.

Even if one might agree with the peace journalists about any parts of their diagnosis, their solutions are often the wrong ones. In the world of press conferences and media opportunities which surround us, the only reporting which matters is off piste – finding out what is really going on. And there is simply not enough of it around. The business of reporting foreign news is under threat from many sources. The deep cuts in commercial revenues and the drive for audiences make it harder to report a wide agenda on mainstream outlets. The collapse of serious documentary-making cuts away another prop for those who want to understand world issues. The tyranny of the satellite dish tends to encourage quantity, sometimes at the expense of quality, on live 24 news channels. These are the real challenges facing journalism, best faced by clear, consistent accurate reporting that attempts to be agenda-neutral, rather than having other expectations, such as conflict-resolution, loaded on board. Peace journalism's ethical checklist would fence us in to the detriment of understanding.

I support rather the sentiments of the photographer 'Guthrie', in Tom Stoppard's play *Night and Day*, who says, 'I've been around a lot of places. People do awful things to each other. But it's worse in places where everybody is kept in the dark. It really is. Information is light. Information, in itself, about anything, is light. That's all you can say really.' This is not a *passive* approach, as it is caricatured by Lynch & McGoldrick (2005, 183), who pretend that 'Guthrie' is just 'turning over stones', as if there were facts under every one. Enlightenment is a bigger idea than that.

## **Situating peace journalism in journalism studies: A critical appraisal**

Thomas Hanitzsch

### **Introduction**

According to the *Conflict Barometer*, an annual conflict analysis published by the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research (2005: 1-8), the number of conflicts has more or less continuously risen from 74 in 1945 to 249 in 2005. High-intensity conflicts have, for the most part, shown a regular increase from seven to 38 during the last 60 years. The large number of ongoing conflicts, part of which are carried out with a massive amount of violence, prevent entire regions (e.g. sub-Saharan Africa) from political democratization and socio-economic development. In addition, at least after Munich 1972 and even more so with September 11, 2001, terrorism has entered the picture. Wars are increasingly fought by non-territorial forces and global terror networks, with civilians becoming legitimate targets of bombings and hostages.

At the same time it is increasingly argued that public communication is an important factor in the course of events in times of war and crisis. Most wars and conflicts were not brought to our attention if there were no journalists to report on them and no media organizations to send their reporters to conflict spots. Having seen the endless atrocities of war and standing on the brink of professional disillusionment, many journalists started to ask how they can help to make the world a better place. In a similar vein, critical scholars, usually not from inside the realm of journalism studies, began to promote a vision of journalistic practice which extends beyond modern mainstream journalism and its enduring values of objectivity, neutrality and detachment. This coalition of concerned journalists and critical scholars is bound up by the philosophy of peace journalism.

As many other influential concepts of journalistic practice, such as investigative journalism, public/civic journalism and development journalism, peace journalism has its advocates – and also its critics. The controversy about peace journalism, its virtue, practicability and philosophical tenets, is the reason why the editor of *conflict & communication online* has decided to set up a special issue around this

important dispute. I have, on several occasions, argued against peace journalism, although I don't think that this journalism concept is *per se* bad. Peace journalism, as it inherits the values of non-violent conflict resolution, entails a very noble goal, that is, to make society more peaceful, which is particularly important in light of the pessimistic outlook given above. However, I will argue that the concept of peace journalism comes, at least for people familiar with journalism research, as old wine in new bottles. It rests, as I shall show, on a sweeping criticism of current media coverage and often ignores the manifold nuances in the media. While in some respects the basic tenets of peace journalism have already been incorporated in recent media coverage, other demands just seem impracticable if we take the workings of professional journalism into account.

### **The two faces of peace journalism**

The concept of peace journalism has been coined in the 1970s by the Norwegian peace researcher Johan Galtung who is a pioneer in the study of news values (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). Peace journalism inherits a normative impetus; it prioritizes "peace" as its central value and analytical starting point. Peace journalism, as a special mode of socially responsible journalism, can be defined as a program or frame of journalistic news coverage which contributes to the process of making and keeping peace respectively to the non-violent settlement of conflicts (Hanitzsch, 2004d, 482).

The advocates of peace journalism draw on a critical examination of the current state of war reporting. Galtung and Vincent (1992, 7) criticize the criteria of news selection that prevail in journalism, most notably the news factors related to negativity, personalization and proximity to elite countries and elite persons. Schicha (1999, 12) complains about the mono-causal explanations of the origins and causes of conflicts, while others expressed their discontent with the fact that the media pay attention to conflicts only when manifest violence is about to occur (Galtung, 1998a, 7, chapter 2 in this volume, 22; Jakobsen, 2000, 132; Kempf, 1999c, 20).

Recent developments in war reporting, especially those which became manifest in the coverage of the Gulf War of 1991 and Nato intervention in Kosovo in 1999, have played a crucial role in stimulating a critical debate on conflict and war coverage. Some experienced war correspondents, most prominently Annabel McGoldrick and Jake Lynch, began to promote the idea of peace journalism among their colleagues and established the network *Reporting the World*.<sup>1</sup> McGoldrick (2000, 19-20) described peace journalism as a "new form of journalism" which looks "at how journalists could be part of the solution rather than part

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1 <http://www.reportingtheworld.org>

of the problem". Lynch (1998, 64; 2002, 22; 2003) situated journalists as "participant-observers" in war zones, as news accounts are "a factor in the sequence of cause and effect" and the people involved in stories adjust their actions according to calculations about the possible effects of media coverage.

There is no single and universal concept of peace journalism, however. The idea of peace journalism is rather driven by a heterogeneous movement which does not always define itself in a clear-cut manner. There are two major strands in conceptualizing peace journalism. One could be labeled *interventionist reporting* and stands in the tradition of advocacy journalism. This form of journalism does actively promote peace through means of public communication. According to the German political scientist Jörg Becker (2002, 14), the media has the political obligation to participate and stand up for peace of its own accord. Journalism should not only report reality "as it is", rather it should create reality, set examples and call for change. This form of advocacy journalism – to the extent that it is sometimes misunderstood as legitimization for biased coverage – is vulnerable to Martin Bell's (1997, 8) controversial "journalism of attachment" by which he means a journalism that "will not stand neutrally between good and evil, right and wrong, the victim and the oppressor." What makes this view highly problematic is that journalists presume the power to identify victims and perpetrators (Are those being arrested in Guantanamo victims or perpetrators?) or, referring to Becker's view, to determine the direction of social change.

The second strand in conceptualizing peace journalism is closely related to the "classic" tenets of *good journalism*. This mode of peace journalism is not intended to substitute war propaganda with peace propaganda, but "it does imply dismissing simple antagonisms between 'good' and 'evil'" (Kempf, 2002, 71). War discourses should be deconstructed in a two-step procedure (Kempf, 2003, 8-9; chapter 3 in this volume): First, "de-escalation oriented conflict reporting", characterized by neutrality and detachment, entails an emphasis on win-win solutions, questioning of the military logic and exploration of conflict formation. In the second step, called "solution oriented conflict reporting", the dualistic construction of the conflict, still prevalent in the first step, will be abandoned. The practical suggestions made by Kempf are sympathetic to Galtung's (2002, 261) distinction between peace/conflict journalism and war/violence journalism, and they are, although based on a different approach, somewhat similar to McGoldrick and Lynch's (2000) "peace journalism manual". The major problem in both approaches is that they tend to address journalists as individuals, whereas the structural constraints of news making fade from the radar. While this issue will be discussed in another part of this paper, we will first have to clarify the position of peace journalism in the realm of journalism theory.

## Peace journalism and journalism theory

A clear definition of journalism is especially important in a time in which researchers tend to speak about "journalism" without giving any indication as to what conceptualization of journalism they subscribe to. Some limit journalism to the professional activities of people working for news media; others include Weblogs and other forms of participative journalism.

According to the well-known work of George Spencer-Brown (1969, 1), observers define objects by making distinctions. In order to define journalism, we have to draw a line between what is journalism and what is not. An effective way to identify journalism is offered by differentiation theory, which is rooted in the work of Émile Durkheim (1893). Differentiation theory holds that increased complexity, selectivity and contingency of modern society require functional differentiation of social systems (politics, law, economy, education, etc.), each of which fulfills a specific function that is essential to maintain order in society.

Public communication can be conceptualized as one of these social systems, it has evolved to function as common, socially binding reference by permanently (periodically) providing information of immediate topicality (Hanitzsch, 2004c, 48). This common reference is vitally important to society because it allows the co-orientation of the social universe. While less complex societies could maintain social co-orientation, coordination and integration through interpersonal communication, public communication has become central to the organization of modern society (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989, 319). In other words: The emergence and evolution of public communication as a system is a reaction of modern society to the problems caused by functional differentiation and social disintegration.

The system public communication consists of four arenas in which professional communication activities take place: journalism, public relations, advertising and entertainment. These fields differ in respect to two fundamental dimensions (see Figure 1). The first dimension, the *primary information value*, refers to the traditional distinction between fact and fiction. Because communication messages usually contain complex information, the individual scores have to be seen as rather relative to one another: They make up a continuum that stretches from "mostly factual" (+factual/-fictional) to "mostly fictional" (-factual/+fictional). It is important to note that the distinction between "fact" and "fiction" does only make sense on the micro level. That the sky is blue cannot be denied and is therefore an "objective" fact. "Reality", however, is conceptionally situated at the macro level and is essentially made up of an infinite number of facts. Journalists select and judge information which produces an inevitably contingent media reality. Increasing complexity of the factual basis means increasing contingency, which results in a growing number of "factually true" combinations.



The second dimension, *communication goals*, is concerned with the origin of a particular message. Communication goals can come primarily from the outside ("externally defined") and are defined by a client, host organization or particular groups of stakeholders. In these cases a communicated message is usually intended to have a particular effect on the attitudes and/or behaviors of those who consume it – for instance, in terms of purchase decisions, positive perception of a company, etc.). Communication goals can also originate from the inside ("internally defined") and are, at least in the first place, not intended to have a particular effect on the audiences. Journalism, according to this view, is made up of messages which are mostly factual, while the communication goals are primarily internally defined.

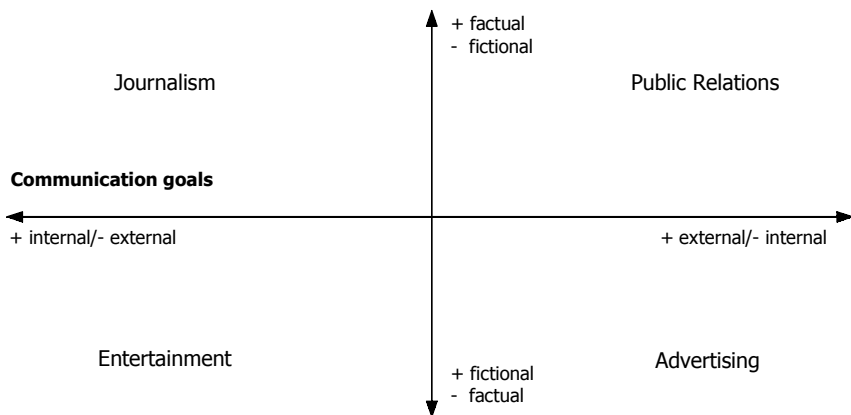


Figure 1: Distinction of journalism, PR, advertising and entertainment

This taxonomy does not attempt to simplify complex social phenomena in binary terms. It does not say that information can be either factual or fictional. To some extent, all fictional stories relate to social reality, the "facts". In a similar vein, it is not uncommon in journalism to include fictional elements in an article, especially in feature stories or the so-called new journalism. The presented model classifies the forms of public communication in relative terms, holding that some information, for instance, is more factual and less fictional than others. This allows us to capture the existing diversity of journalism cultures, including peace journalism. In the journalism quadrant of Figure 1, the traditional Western understanding of objective and neutral "just-the-facts" journalism would be located in the upper left. The diverse forms of advocacy journalism, on the other hand, would be situated to the right, closest to public relations, starting with high factual content in the upper right (e.g. civic/public journalism, development journalism) and moving

in a downwards direction as fictional content becomes more prevalent (e.g. partisan/patriotic journalism). Popular journalism, as a manifestation of entertainment and tabloidization in news-making, would be situated close to the entertainment quadrant.

The two different camps in thinking peace journalism occupy different spaces in the two-dimensional coordinate system: The mode of good journalism is located in the upper left in the journalism quadrant, as it is committed to the professionalism model that emphasizes objectivity, neutrality and detachment. The interventionist mode of peace journalism, on the other hand, is situated closely to public relations and may occasionally cross the line to PR when journalists start to actively engage in conflict resolution.

### **Peace journalism: A critical review**

The promotion of peace journalism among professional journalists has not always met an enthusiastic response. The BBC correspondent David Loyn (2003) argues that peace journalism could compromise the integrity of journalists and confuse their role as neutral disseminators: "Our task is always to seek to find out what is going on, not carrying any other baggage. If there is conflict resolution we report on it in context. We do not engage in it." While this point of view may seem simplistic, it is a blunt indicator of the dominant professional ideology as it is deeply inherited by many, if not most, journalists in the Western hemisphere.

This professional ideology, which entails the traditional values of objectivity, neutrality and detachment, is not unchallenged in the study of journalism, however. While some journalists argue that neutrality and detachment draws a moral equivalence between victim and aggressor (e.g. Christiane Amanpour, quoted in Hume, 1997, 6), others believe that journalism "is not a neutral and mechanical undertaking but in some sense a moral enterprise" (Bell, 1997, 11). In a similar vein, objectivity has been scrutinized by several scholars. Some argue that journalism is not objective; others that it cannot be objective; and still others that it should not be objective (Lichtenberg 1991, 238). The objectivity debate is an evergreen in journalism studies because it touches upon the philosophical underpinnings of modern journalism or, more specifically, its epistemological foundation.

Some advocates of peace journalism, most notably Johan Galtung himself, subscribe to a naïve epistemological view on media coverage. They argue that the practice of traditional war reporting results in a distorted representation of reality (e.g. Galtung & Vincent, 1992, 24; Kempf, 2006a, 5). I have argued elsewhere that complaints about a "media-biased reality" actually miss the point (Hanitzsch, 2004d, 486), and there is a growing awareness of the fact that the news is not a "mirror" of reality. Rather, the news "is a representation of the world, and all rep-

representations are selective" (Schudson, 2003, 33). Any serious inquiry into conflict coverage must acknowledge that news accounts are inevitably based on cognition and contingent (re)construction of reality. While this insight is partly built into the writings of Lynch and Kempf, peace journalism as analytical concept seems to be prone to epistemological realism. To say that reality can be "misrepresented", for instance by drawing on an "incomplete" factual basis (Kempf, 2006a, 5), assumes that there is a proper and "true" version of reality. However, every representation is inevitably biased, and any "correspondence" between an objective reality and its representation(s) is hardly possible. In everyday journalism, subjective representations can be objectified provided they cohere with other "facts", that is, with what we already know. An "external perspective", as demanded by Kempf (*ibid.*), is neither needed nor possible.

It seems that peace journalism still has to define its epistemological foundation. Such a basis may be provided by standpoint epistemology, a philosophical camp that originated with the feminist critique of the objectivity concept (Harding 1991). Standpoint epistemology holds that less powerful and marginalized members of society enjoy a certain epistemic privilege to see social reality differently from those who dominate society. Such a counter-hegemonic epistemology would require journalists to report conflicts from the perspective of the less powerful and marginalized people. Standpoint epistemology could encourage "journalists to re-think themselves and their craft from the position of marginalized Others, thus uncovering unconscious ethnocentric, sexist, racist, and heterosexist biases that distort news production as it is governed by the dominant news paradigm" (Durham, 1998, 132).

The lack of an explicit-made epistemological foundation is not the only omission made by the peace journalism movement, however. An assessment of the literature reveals that the ideas behind peace journalism as well as its practical implications are often based on an overly individualistic and voluntaristic perspective. This is particularly true for many essays published by (former) journalists, most notably by Lynch and McGoldrick, but also for the work of scholars who argue in favor of a "courageous journalist" (Jaeger, 2002a, 29). Their implicit argument seems to suggest that journalists only need to change their attitudes and behaviors, and as a result, they will produce conflict coverage that embraces the values of peace journalism. But this is an illusion.

There are in fact many structural constraints which shape and limit the work of journalists: few personnel, time and material resources, editorial procedures and hierarchies, textual constraints (news formats), availability of sources, access to the scene and information in general, just to name a few. Journalists consistently work under conditions of heavy time pressure, limited resources and tight competition. To the extent that time, space and resources are so limited, journalists need

to deconstruct complex and complicated conflicts in terms of ready-made narratives which are easily understood by their audiences. These accessible and commonly shared schemata are particularly salient in news photographs (Griffin, 2004; Trivundza, 2004), and they exactly embody what Fawcett (2002, 221) rightly calls the "constraining nature of the news text". Fawcett further suggests that, in order to encourage journalists to make use of "win-win" frames of conflict, one has "to address the power of these discursive structures, as well as the power of the political and professional cultures within which journalists operate". Wolfsfeld goes even further and maintains that the needs of a peace process are structurally incompatible with the imperatives of journalism:

"There is an inherent contradiction between the logic of a peace process and the professional demands of journalists. A peace process is complicated; journalists demand simplicity. A peace process takes time to unfold and develop; journalists demand immediate results. Most of a peace process is marked by dull, tedious negotiations; journalists require drama. A successful peace process leads to a reduction in tensions; journalists focus on conflict. Many of the significant developments within a peace process must take place in secret behind closed doors; journalists demand information and action." (Wolfsfeld, 1997, 67)

As a result, the media pays very little attention to the – mostly invisible – successes of preventive diplomacy (Jakobsen, 2000, 133). While media criticism is often concerned with professional news values (Galtung & Vincent, 1992: Chapter 2), it ignores the fact that these values, fundamental as they are in modern journalism, resonate with the expectations of the audience (Eilders, 1997; Tai & Chang, 2002). The main characteristic of news values is that they raise attention; and in our post-modern society public attention is the central currency and thus becomes an increasingly limited good. Consequently, virtually everything in public communication is geared toward public attention, be it journalism, public relations, advertising or entertainment. The mainstream media can ill afford to abandon news values, as this would jeopardize their economic base on which they are forced to operate. Ironically, in order to be successful in the "marketplace of public attention", peace journalism would have to subscribe to the same values as does corporate journalism.

All this clearly suggests that the conduct of peace journalism is not a matter of individual leeway. Modern corporate journalism involves processes of organized news production, thus giving priority to organizational and institutional factors as well as processes of professional socialization. A long tradition of research suggests that the characteristics, backgrounds and values of individual journalists matter relatively little in the production of media content (Berkowitz, Limor & Singer, 2004; Golding & Elliott, 1979; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996). "Courageous" journalists and media organizations, when subscribing to the idea of peace journalism, would have to tilt at windmills, unless they reach a critical mass, but this is nothing one should expect for the near future.<sup>2</sup>

Another problem of the peace journalism movement is that their sweeping media criticism fails to take notice of the various nuances of journalism. Similar to the routines of war reporting, media criticism tends to highlight the exceptional, spectacular and negative (Calließ & Raue 2004, 200-5) at the expense of the ordinary and positive, and then making generalizing conclusions about "the media". To the extent that media critics tend to focus on regular news broadcasts and the traditional news sections of newspapers, they ignore the existing diversity of media outlets and alternative, sometimes even counter-hegemonic forms of reporting, such as news features, documentaries and specials, which explore conflict formations and the true causes of violence in much greater detail. There are plenty of differentiated accounts that provide a complex and comprehensive picture, but these accounts are not likely to be found equally often in all media. The different functionality of media outlets goes along with manifold distinctions in journalism cultures, not all of which happen to be clear-cut: serious vs. popular journalism, broadsheet vs. tabloid journalism, public service vs. marketing journalism, to name only a few. All these areas of journalism are oftentimes lumped together, no matter the extent of their similarity is actually very little. For this reason, it is simply unrealistic to expect media like the British *Sun*, the German *Bild* or American *Fox News* to tune in the conduct of peace journalism, unless there is a strong audience demand for it. Due to their specific functionality, not all media will be equally receptive to the ideas of peace journalism.

This brings us to the next critical point: Peace journalism, if it is to survive a critical discussion of its analytic value and practical use, must learn to look at fragmented and active audiences instead of a passive mass that needs to be enlightened by virtue of right and proper reporting. Contingent needs in a society result in an increasingly contingent supply, thus leading to a selective use of the supplied products. For media content is strongly oriented to the disparate needs and expectations of the audience, as measured for instance by market research, the segregation into diverse publics reflects the growing disintegration of society. Furthermore, since the uses and gratifications approach took off in communication and media studies, the view of the audience as an active one gained ground. Uses and gratification theorist suggest that the audience actively uses the media as sources of gratification (Blumler & Katz, 1974). Assuming that there are various choices of media outlets, it is believed that people use those media outlets which promise the highest amount of satisfaction.

Because it is highly unlikely that all media will equally subscribe to the conduct of peace journalism, mainstream audiences may ironically choose the media which

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2 The low significance of individual factors has been acknowledged by some exponents of the peace journalism idea, in particular by those based at the Konstanz University (e.g. Jaeger, 2002a; Kempf, 2002, 70; chapter 3, 35; 2005).

contain the least amount of peace journalism. There is no indication in audience research that consumers of mainstream media would prefer peace journalism to traditional news (see Bird, 2000, 31; Tai & Chang, 2002, 262). On the other hand, peace journalism is already present – in the outfit of "good journalism" – in many quality news outlets, many of which are public broadcasting organizations (e.g. BBC, ARD, and NPR). Those who seek this kind of conflict coverage can obtain it by means of their selective media use. People who are interested in bombastic, sensational and sketchy conflict coverage will continue to avoid peace journalism and tune in media outlets which serve their preferences appropriately.

The conduct of peace journalism does also become difficult, if not impossible, when applied in certain conflict constellations. For one thing, journalists reporting on conflicts in their neighborhoods do often belong to one of the groups involved in the violence. In these cases it is difficult to remain impartial and to deliver a balanced and comprehensive account of the conflict. Some of us may remember the clashes between religious groups in Indonesia's province Maluku in 1999. Shortly after the province capital Ambon fell into two territories controlled by either Christian or Muslim militias, there was no way for Muslim journalists to enter Christian territory, and vice versa. The only daily newspaper *Suara Maluku* became biased against the Muslim population as its office was located in Christian territory (Hanitzsch, 2004d, 483). In such a situation of hatred, reporter may risk their lives if they try to give both sides equal say. In the midst of an unfolding conflict, journalists and their media organizations can often enough hardly build a bridge between enemies.

The role of the audience is even more important in this respect. It is hard to convince people of the virtue of peace journalism once they engage in a conflict in which their elementary interests, or even their existence, are at stake. When in 1997 and 1998 two newspapers in Northern Ireland, the unionist *News Letter* and the nationalist *Irish News*, published joint editorials as an effort to reconcile the opposed groups for the annual Orange Order parade, many subscribers felt betrayed and indicated that they would terminate their subscriptions (Fawcett, 2002, 216).

In addition to this, there seems to be a tendency among some peace journalism advocates to overestimate the power of journalism. In one of his recent publications Galtung (2002, 260) claims that with more peace journalism, "the conflict in and over Northern Ireland would have entered a more peaceful phase long ago". I believe this is an overly optimistic view. Although journalism does undeniably have an impact on the people, only rarely can journalists move beyond the cultural consensus of their societies in which they live and work. And contrary to what is commonly believed, the influence journalists and the media have on political leaders and decision makers tends to be limited (Jakobsen, 2000; Wolfsfeld, 2004).

Wolfsfeld (2004, 33), who hypothesizes a circular relationship between politics and the media, rightly sees the importance of the media in the fact that they *amplify* the impact of political events. Additionally, as public relations is becoming increasingly professionalized and utilized, participants in stories grow to be "media-savvy" (Lynch, 1998, 64), which means they anticipate the workings of journalism in order to get their message through the highly routinized processes of news making.

## Conclusion

There is something that makes me suspect that peace journalism is rather mistitled a concept, as it obviously misleads people to conclude that its very intention is the advocacy of peace. Luostarinen (2002a, 283) argues that it "is not even necessary to give such journalism a name like 'peace journalism'". Many of the principles of peace journalism are the very essence of excellence in journalism and are deeply embedded in good and many-sided journalism: to make conflicts appear transparent through background information, to give voice to the views of all rivaling parties, to expose lies, cover-up attempts and culprits on all sides and to report on the atrocities of war and the suffering of civilians. It seems that peace journalism oftentimes reinvents the wheel to the extent that it repeats a "classic" debate on quality in journalism that has a long tradition in communication and media research.

Critics may argue that compliance with the values of good journalism is often missing in day-to-day war reporting, but the failures of corporate journalism cannot be overcome by an individualistic and voluntaristic conceptualization of news making. To have any impact on the way the news is being made, and the critical discussion thereof, the advocates of peace journalism must address the structural constraints of news production. The discussion of peace journalism, and particularly of its practical implications, must be tied to the realm of journalism studies where it resonates with ongoing efforts to promote excellence in journalism.

At the same time, there are many elements of peace journalism which do not fit the functionality of journalism and the logic of news production. There are some people who opt for an interventionist mode of peace journalism that regards itself as a vehicle for the advocacy of peace and non-violent conflict resolution (e.g. Becker, 2002, 14). These activists may consider using another field of public communication that, by definition, intends to serve a particular cause: public relations. In order to facilitate peace and non-violent conflict resolution by means of public communication, a concept "Peace PR" seems much more appropriate, but for some reason it has not been developed. "Peace PR" can effectively unfold its pub-

lic potential if the communicated message "sits consistently with the values and imperatives of those who produce news" (Spencer, 2003, 64).

The inherent logic of news production is another limitation of peace journalism. First, it is an unwarranted assumption that, given the salience and importance of news values in public communication, that peace journalism will prevail in a commercial media system that is driven by market forces. Second, because of their specific functionality, some media (e.g. public broadcasting: BBC, ARD, NPR) are more than others (e.g. yellow press: *The Sun* or *Bild*) sympathetic to the ideas of peace journalism. Third, it is difficult, if not impossible, to implement the values of peace journalism in traditional news formats where space and time constraints do not allow a detailed elaboration of backgrounds and causes of violence as well as its consequences. Fourth, and last, the demand for complexity reduction leads to the use of highly standardized narrative schemes which are often not compatible to the demands of peace journalism.

Critics may complain that I tend to take the media structures and routines for granted and treat them as if they were unable to change. This might be true, but the fact of the matter is that media structures and professional routines cannot be modified from the position of the individual journalist. Quite on the contrary: Cultures must change! Although there are, and will always be, a number of committed journalists who have gained prominence (e.g. Seymour Hersh), they tend to be the exception from the rule and, as such, have only limited power to change the system from within.

A peaceful culture is the *precondition* of peace journalism, rather than its outcome. In a culture in which a life has virtually no meaning and violence seems an appropriate measure of conflict resolution, peace journalism is not likely to evolve. While media critics continue to repeat their mantra-like question of why journalism serves society as poorly as it currently does, I think it is time to turn the question around. We should rather ask: What kind of society do we live in that allows and creates a sort of journalism that has no sense of peace?



## **Part III**

### **Peace journalism responds**



## Peace journalism and its discontents

Jake Lynch

### Introduction

Journalists often dislike peace journalism because it is 'too critical'; or rather, many of them dislike the critical self-awareness of journalistic structure and agency inscribed in peace journalism analysis and methods (Loyn, 2003 and 2007a, chapter 4 in this volume; Phillips, 2006). This, I will argue in this paper, is tantamount to a rejection of some key propositions from scholarship on journalism and communications, established by researchers over several decades; chiefly, the structure of foreign news as mapped by Galtung & Ruge (1965). When journalists enter debates about journalism, therefore, the onus is on them to explain why and on what grounds they reject these propositions.

When journalists dismiss peace journalism they tend to champion notions of 'truth' and 'objectivity', as if in counter-position (Loyn, chapter 4). I will argue that this rhetoric falls short of the real distinctions in the debate over peace journalism, and conceals unexamined prejudices about 'right' and 'wrong'.

Academic writers (such as Hanitzsch, 2004a and 2007b), on the other hand, often dislike peace journalism because it is 'not critical enough'; resting, as it does, on normative judgements about the representation of conflict which it uses to suggest that peace journalism is better than war journalism – *as journalism*. I will argue that any meaningful debate about journalism must include some effort to set out the basis on which some forms of representation should be preferred to others.

Then there is the question of journalistic agency. Implicit in most writing about peace journalism is the suggestion that journalists – acting individually and/or collectively – can decide to make some degree of difference to their journalism (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, 227-231), and that this will, in turn, make a difference to the train of events and processes on which they are reporting (216-218). Academic hackles tend to rise at this, and I will consider the conceptual framework within which journalism about conflict can be considered, in order to allow for journalistic agency and creativity, and to map the effects journalism can have on the course of conflicts.

Most journalistic work is governed by convention, of course – speed is of the essence, so it would be impossible to formulate responses to breaking news, from first principles, starting afresh every time. Responses harden into conventions in a process governed by structural factors arising from the economic and political interests of the news industry. Notice – 'governed', not 'determined'. I will argue that journalists' own self-awareness and efforts at reform can combine with mobilisations in civil society to challenge and supplement conventions; and that ideas from peace journalism, whether named as such or not, can help.

Lastly, where scholars of communications consider the role of media in conflict, they are often let down by applying an understanding of key concepts – from Peace and Conflict Studies rather than their own subject – which is inadequate, and therefore invalidates their conclusions (Hanitzsch, 2007b; Wolfsfeld, 2004). Peace journalism, I shall argue, effectively bridges the gap between these disciplines. Therein lies its novelty and utility for media researchers.

### **David Loyn (and feathered friend)**

David Loyn is a brave and talented reporter, well experienced in many of the world's trouble spots. He is also a fierce foe of peace journalism. David and I have debated these issues several times down the years, both in print and in person. I repeat here what I have said to him on other platforms – in many respects, much of his own reporting *is* peace journalism. He complains (Loyn, chapter 4, 54) that I propose "highly prescriptive rules [that] inhibit good journalism". One of my purposes here is to suggest that peace journalism as I have defined it – "creat[ing] opportunities for society at large to consider and to value non-violent responses to conflict" (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, 5) – is more inclusive than he allows.

Where we differ in this debate is chiefly in the lack of critical awareness Loyn brings to bear on journalism in general and his refusal to acknowledge the structural characteristics of news representations of conflict in particular. He concedes that objectivity may be "chimerical"; "anyone who has ever interviewed two observers of the same incident knows that there is no perfect account". He proposes, in other words, that 'imperfections' in journalism can be *explained* by the variance between any two accounts of the same event – as if that is, as it were, 'all there is to it'.

This is an approach to these issues that I have characterised, jocosely, as typical of "Otto the Objective Ostrich" (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, 195). Loyn (chapter 4, 61) objects to this treatment, but I maintain it is justified. Consider – media studies of the early post-war period gave us the now familiar propositions of gatekeeper theory. Journalists report the facts, and good ones set out to do so truthfully. But 'the truth' and 'the facts', whatever one thinks of the epistemological basis for

such concepts, are, by their very nature, larger categories than 'the news'. Some process of *framing* is inevitable in journalism – some facts are allowed through the gate, others kept out.

Then came *The Structure of Foreign News* (Galtung & Ruge, 1965), which proposed that, far from being made at random, gatekeeping decisions on particular stories can be shown to be taking place according to discernible patterns. The bits left out of the picture are always, or usually, the same bits, or the same kinds of bits. News is, in other words, a *systematic* process. It inhabits and upholds its own set of conventions for representing the world around us, and much – arguably all – subsequent serious research has tended to look for evidence of these conventions and what they are doing *to* the facts as they are being represented.

According to Loyn, the patterns discerned by researchers can be wholly explained by the fact that "reporters share a language and certain assumptions with their audience" (chapter 4, 58). This shows perhaps most clearly the weakness of any argument about journalism which does not attend to 'Galtung-Ruge' and its implications – it precludes any real engagement with propaganda, and consideration of how and why it works. Indeed, in Loyn's latest article (chapter 4), the word propaganda does not even occur, save in quotes from me.

Propaganda sets out precisely to penetrate and transform shared language and assumptions. It does ideological work, in the Gramscian sense of ideology as a set of ideas and symbols made to appear natural, or 'common sense' (Gramsci, 1971). Meaningful discussion of the role of media in conflict is impossible without considering propaganda, and to form a useful understanding of propaganda it is essential that these categories be seen as dynamic – the site of constant construction and contestation – rather than as givens, as Loyn apparently does. Hence the ostrich metaphor – his account, and other, similar criticisms of peace journalism by western-employed professional journalists, effectively ignore four decades of scholarship and research. In the face of unpalatable ideas, they prefer to bury their heads in the sand.

This gap in understanding also explains persistent misinterpretations of the real dividing lines in this debate. There is no dispute over a journalist's duty to "truthfulness", as Loyn misleadingly suggests. Reporters should report, as accurately and fully as they can, the facts they encounter. Where peace journalism goes further is to call on them to consider how these particular facts, as distinct from a practically infinite number of others 'out there', come to meet them; and how they, the reporters, come to meet these particular facts. If it's always the same facts, or the same kinds of facts, what consequences follow, for the nature of representation produced? How does that representation affect the understanding developed by readers and audiences, and their responses? And how do those

responses, or assumptions about them, feed in to the actions and motivations of parties to conflict? These are the real questions in the peace journalism debate.

### Conventionalism and realism

Loyn (chapter 4, 57) tells us that Thomas Nagel, the New York University law and philosophy professor, "proves that there is such a thing as objectivity". It's a bold claim – so let's take a closer look. The example Loyn cites is about the physics of light, as opposed to the mere perception of colour – "one objective, the other subjective". But the wave model, which he regards as proven fact, is actually a way of *describing the behaviour* of light. For some purposes, notably in astronomy, it has to be supplemented with a particle model if observable phenomena are to be fully explained.

Nagel gives a definition of objectivity as a pursuit, rather than a state of grace: "In pursuing objectivity we alter our relation to the world, increasing the correctness of certain of our representations of it by compensating for the peculiarities of our point of view" (Nagel, 1986, 90).

This shows what is wrong with claims for objectivity, even in this attenuated form, when put forward in counter-position to peace journalism. Nagel's version falls short of the real dividing lines in the debate because it does not specify what we are to use to compensate for the peculiarities – other points of view? If so, which ones? Actually, he tells us, points of view can be measured, not just against each other – a process he calls "human objectivity" – but against an *external reality* whose existence we can intuit, even if it cannot be conceptualised in the (present) structures of human understanding:

"There may be aspects of reality beyond its reach [the reach of 'human objectivity'] because they are altogether beyond our capacity to form conceptions of the world" (1986, 91).

Loyn, for his part, intuits a metaphysical Truth – going so far as to quote Christ's testimony in his trial – as a transcendental signifier to anchor his pursuit of truthfulness. Thus anchored, he suggests, we can be content with the truth of a news story as "quotidian ... 'true' in the sense of not being 'false'".

And here is the crux – where Loyn commends "truthfulness" as a goal of journalism, as opposed to falsity, there is no difference between us – how could there be? And where he does succeed in delineating a difference between us, it depends on intuiting the numinosity of a pre-ordained order, which the tenacious reporter can *reveal*, without, therefore, needing to consider the conventions of his or her reporting or their theoretical construction.

This epistemological stance lends a strong moral flavour to Loyn's strictures, notably when he comes to consider media responses to the 'Kosovo crisis' of 1998-

99, an example discussed at length by Lynch & McGoldrick (2005, 98-106). It leads him to describe our account as, quite simply, "wrong".

We criticise the dominance in media representations of war propaganda, emanating from privileged sources in western governments, swinging public opinion in their respective countries behind a policy of violence. In other words, we assume sources are active – "trying to create a reality that does not yet exist" (183). Loyn, on the other hand, typifies what we characterise as the journalist's working assumption that sources are passive, "revealing a reality that already exists" (183). This is, of course, convenient for the authors of propaganda, and there is no shortage of research that says so:

"The media are subject [in the build-up to war] to massive propaganda from the parties involved, and are often without their own knowledge representing the necessary link between the propaganda machinery and the audience. If they are not aware of this potential role themselves, the danger of playing a role as a catalyst for propaganda will be even greater" (Hojjer et al., 2002, 4).

We ourselves argue: "Journalism needs some workable form of reflexivity, analysing and addressing its own role in shaping discussions and creating realities. Without this, it is fated to collude and conceal" (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, xvi).

### **Kosovo reconsidered**

Was journalism colluding, then, in the Kosovo case, and what, if anything, was it concealing? Loyn states (chapter 4, 62), as a fact, that the build-up to the bombing of Yugoslavia was a

"sequence of Serb atrocity and world reaction ratcheting up towards war in 1999".

Nato's 'Operation Allied Force' (OAF) was, in these terms, the crucial act in a drama of intervention, with the international community riding reluctantly to the rescue of a beleaguered minority, as a reaction when all else had failed.

As it is, Loyn himself allows that Nato countries already had forces on the ground, well before the onset of bombing, "making contact with the KLA [Kosovo Liberation Army] and yes, surprise, surprise, possibly giving them military assistance" (64).

In our account, we quote an episode of the BBC's own *Panorama* programme (BBC, 2000) which showed how KLA activities at this time, the latter part of 1998, brought about a decisive escalation in the conflict. At that stage, a ceasefire agreement was in place, brokered by the so-called 'Contact Group' of the US, Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia, and policed by the Kosovo Verification Mission, sent in under the aegis of the Organisation for Security Cooperation in Europe.

Perhaps the most widely quoted history of the period – at least in English – is by a journalist, Tim Judah, who points out the crucial flaw in the KVM:

"The KLA were not party to it, and, as far as they were concerned, not bound by it either. As the Serbs pulled back, the KLA followed in their wake, reoccupying positions they had withdrawn from during the summer... [the ceasefire gave the KLA] a reprieve, time to reorganise and rearm, and, as they told anyone who cared to listen, time to prepare for their spring offensive" (Judah, 2002, 189).

Loyn attributes the KLA's sudden ascendancy as recognised representatives of the Albanian-speaking Kosovar people to the weakness of Ibrahim Rugova, then leader of the main political party, the LDK (Democratic League of Kosovo). Judah explains it as a rather more sinister process, taking place over the winter of 1998-99:

"The KLA was also seeking to stamp its authority on areas that it controlled and to make sure the LDK understood Mao's dictum that power grows from the barrel of a gun. LDK activists were arrested and according to one UN report, the activity of KLA 'tribunals' suggested 'a pattern of arbitrary arrests and executions'" (190-1).

The Panorama programme, titled 'Moral Combat', presented, in essence, a picture of a civil conflict exacerbated by interventions on the part of the international community that were, at best, bumbling and ineffective (OAFish, perhaps) and, at worst, geared towards provoking armed confrontation. Far from appearing "a rather curious essay" as Loyn claims (chapter 4, 63), this version of events has steadily gained in salience, especially as the political future of the province has remained clouded in uncertainty, through a period of UN-sponsored negotiations, and fraught with the potential for causing more trouble in future.

There is an intriguing congruity between Loyn's favoured mode of analysis, and the approach to conflict issues at a political and diplomatic level in western capitals, especially London. He is typical of many professional journalists, working in those capitals, in refusing to acknowledge the conventions they apply whenever they observe the world around them. (Actually, he goes further than most, albeit writing them off as no more than the inevitable divergence between any two accounts of the same event.)

This fits, as if naturally, with the representation of conflict by politicians and diplomats as a drama of intervention, whether in process or in prospect. What is missing, from both, is any sense that the world we encounter is partly of our own making – evident in recent cases from the '7/7' London bombings (discussed in Lynch, 2006b) to Iran's supposed 'nuclear ambitions' (discussed in Lynch, 2006a).

In Kosovo, the KLA, emerging strengthened from the internationally brokered ceasefire period, resumed its attacks on Serb targets from more advanced positions and with far more effective firepower – thanks to weapons bought with money channelled through German bank accounts – and tactics, thanks to training by



the CIA. (The Americans, Judah observes wryly, were the only nation who refused to "fold in" their on-the-ground observers to the KVM.)

The Yugoslav Army rumbled back into the province and began striking, with its trademark lack of discrimination, at Albanian villages in territory the KLA had taken over, in the meantime, from the LDK. The die was cast for war: Judah quotes James Rubin, then spokesman at the US State Department, briefing reporters in February, 1999:

"All of the officials who have worked on this have made it very clear that in order to move towards military action, it has to be clear that the Serbs were responsible" (2002, 212).

Judah goes on to detail the gyrations of Rubin's boss, then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, in setting the bar in negotiations low enough for the KLA to sign up to an agreement, involving an implicit promise of independence and an agreement that they could keep their weapons; which simultaneously set it too high for any Serb representative to surmount.

Why should the US wish to bring about such an outcome, to move towards military action? The answer would take too long to rehearse in full, but see, for instance, the notorious *Defense Planning Guidance*, drawn up for the Pentagon by a senior official, Paul Wolfowitz, in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall and 'Operation Desert Storm' to expel the Saddam Hussein regime from Kuwait (New York Times, 1992). America's top strategic priority, according to this paper, was to maintain "the sense that the world order is ultimately backed by the US". In Europe, this meant:

"A substantial American presence in Europe and continued cohesion within the Western alliance remains vital ... we must seek to prevent the emergence of European-only security arrangements which would undermine NATO".

The Rubin press briefing describes the moment Kosovo ceased to be viewed as an international political problem, and started to be viewed as an international military one. If the former, who better to deal with it than the world's foremost international political organization, the European Union? If the latter, who better than the world's foremost military organization, Nato? The main difference between them? US leadership of the latter, but not the former.

The account I give here, in short, re-inscribes the degree of self-interest and complicity by elements of the 'international community', which is written out by formulations such as that served up by David Loyn, of Serb atrocities followed by world reaction. Such is the collusion and concealment that is inevitable in journalism compiled without reflexivity. As well as being the handmaiden of propaganda, it provides the opportunity and incentive for more.

## Realism(s)

In epistemological terms, the Loyn view of news, and the official British view of international conflict, would be well described by what Nagel calls "normative realism":

"The view that propositions about what gives us reasons for action can be true or false independently of how things appear to us; and that we can hope to discover the truth by transcending the appearances and subjecting them to critical assessment" (1986, 139).

In scholarly circles, Nagel has tended to attract more critics than supporters, and one of them, Richard Rorty, takes issue with precisely this habit of remitting the discovery of truth to vaguely defined processes like "critical assessment" without clarifying the basis upon which any such assessment would take place. Rorty accuses Nagel of what is, in effect, a category error; presenting his intuitions, that there must be some reality beyond the scope of our structures of understanding, as evidence for its existence:

"Of course we have such intuitions. How could we escape having them? We have been educated within an intellectual tradition build around such claims" (1982, xxix).

So, is there anything in the centre, at the root of our perceptions, an underlying reality that is hard and fast? Or do familiar gravitational metaphors such as these – favoured by both Loyn and Nagel – actually mislead us into preferring one representation to another, when in fact both have equal claims on our attention?

This is, in essence, the complaint put forward by Thomas Hanitzsch, in his critique of peace journalism:

"The news is 'a representation of the world, and all representations are selective' (Schudson, 2003, 33) ... To say that reality can be 'misrepresented', for instance by drawing on an 'incomplete' factual basis (Kempf, 2006, 5), assumes that there is a proper and 'true' version of reality. However, every representation is inevitably biased, and any 'correspondence' between an objective reality and its representation(s) is hardly possible" (2007b, 5).

Where Loyn takes a realist view, and finds peace journalism over-critical, Hanitzsch takes a conventionalist view, according to which, peace journalism is not critical enough. His phrase, "hardly possible" does allow a little wiggle room, however, and he makes the sensible suggestion that "standpoint epistemology" may be worth further consideration in the search for an "epistemological foundation" for peace journalism.

On Hanitzsch's account, standpoint epistemology is, indeed, as its name implies, the exact opposite of Nagel's view from nowhere. Far from calling on us to "transcend" our point of view, or compensate for it, this takes standpoints from which dominant representations can be inspected from the outside. It "holds that less powerful and marginalized members of society enjoy a certain epistemic privilege to see social reality differently from those who dominate society". There are, in

other words, intelligible power relations built in to the acts of representation and understanding, even before they take place.

So far, so promising, especially as it meshes with Stuart Hall's important concept of decoding (Hall, 1980) – that the meanings of media messages are made, at least partly, at the point of reception, in a process influenced chiefly by the socio-economic position of the reader or viewer. A form of journalism that deliberately sought out perspectives from the disadvantaged margins and elevated them into the news could encourage, in Hall's terms, "negotiated" and "oppositional" readings of dominant ideological constructs, thus correcting for some of the effects of journalistic convention.

Hanitzsch leaves it there, as an interesting thread to pull, which it certainly could be. He has not, apparently, read any of my own later material on peace journalism (such as Lynch, 2006a) – the most recent reference is to a short piece published on the Open Democracy website in 2003, my initial response to David Loyn.

If he had, he would have seen that I have been suggesting a second version of realism – critical realism – as another candidate to be the epistemological foundation of peace journalism. Critical realism has been defined thus:

"A way of describing the process of 'knowing' that acknowledges the reality of the thing known, as something other than the knower (hence 'realism'), while also acknowledging that the only access we have to this reality lies along the spiralling path of appropriate dialogue or conversation between the knower and the thing known (hence 'critical')" (Wright, 1996, 35-36).

Critical realism begins with the advantage of having been devised explicitly to reconcile arguments in social science which are closely analogous to the ones Loyn and Hanitzsch put forward in their papers:

"On the one hand those who advocated a human and social science which should – after the pattern of the natural sciences – try to ascertain general laws by applying and developing abstract theoretical models; a nomothetic approach. On the other hand, their critics who held that social science should describe empirical reality in all its complexity and diversity; an idiographic approach" (Danermark et al., 2002, 3).

To open consideration of its claims, I will first examine a useful account, by Gilles Gauthier, a French-Canadian scholar, of 'A realist point of view on news journalism' (2005).

This suggests that, at the root of any news story, lurks some 'brute fact', which should be seen as above, behind and beyond the conventions of reporting:

"News always regards a state of affairs that logically precedes it or, in more general terms, information always formally emerges from a necessarily prior reality" (53).

Gauthier readily concedes that most news is based on socially constructed realities, but "the social reality on which the news is based is constructed from a reality that is given, rather than constructed" (53-4).

It is when he comes to consider a real news story that Gauthier comes unstuck, however. The example he uses, as a 'given' reality, or 'brute fact', is the selection of John Kerry as the Democratic nominee for the US presidential election, in 2004. And yet it could be argued that an expectation of the way Kerry's candidacy would be treated by journalists was built in to the calculations of party delegates even as they voted for him.

For many, the turning point in the primaries was 'Howard Dean's primal scream', the former Vermont Governor's rallying call to supporters in the room following his defeat at the Iowa caucus. According to eyewitness reports, Dean's behaviour seemed unexceptionable in the context of an emotional party rally – it was the merciless glare of the TV cameras, framed on the candidate's own head and shoulders, which effectively stripped it of context and made it seem excessive and odd.

What followed was a burst of war journalism – a demolition job on the only candidate who set out both to oppose the war in Iraq and to bypass traditional fundraising mechanisms (USA Today, 2004). The Dean campaign sagged and Kerry was left with a clear run to the nomination. So it was, above all, a media representation that tipped the balance in Kerry's favour by removing his main rival, making this 'brute fact' actually very highly mediated, even as it occurred.

In critical realist terms, Democratic Party members possessed causal powers; their selection process, resulting in the emergence of a nominee, is a mechanism. With Kerry's victory, this mechanism produced an event. But as this mechanism was in motion, and the event occurring, on what critical realism calls the social stratum of reality, others were working on different strata, notably the psychological.

In making their choice, Democrats imagined a sequence of future events – Kerry is received by the media as a credible President-in-waiting; media reporting influences voter reaction in the country; Kerry wins election. Their calculations about likely media responses were based, not unreasonably, on their experience of past media behaviour – an effect we have called a "feedback loop of cause and effect" (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, 216).

In the context of this debate, critical realism's notion of a stratified reality provides us with a useful – because non-gravitational – spatial metaphor. It models journalism, in this case journalism about the race for the Democratic Party nomination for the Presidency, as both cause, on the psychological stratum, and, simultaneously, effect, on the social stratum.

This may get us off the horns of a dilemma. We do not have to claim that journalism 'reflects' a logically prior reality, avoiding ire from the likes of Hanitzsch; but it also keeps us on the right side of Loyn with his demand that "reporters need to preserve their position as observers not players" (chapter 4, 55). Peace journalism

does not call on them to 'cross a line' or *set out* to involve themselves, merely to allow for their journalism as both cause and effect, based on their observer status.

This is what Rorty calls a "pragmatic" position:

"Truth is not the sort of thing one should expect to have a philosophically interesting theory about" (1982, xiii);

"[The pragmatist] drops the notion of truth as correspondence to reality altogether, and says that modern science does not enable us to cope because it corresponds, it just plain enables us to cope" (xvii).

Such levity draws disapproval from Danermark et al.:

"The researchers who adopt this position, what do they think they are doing when they carry out their research? If we were to take this kind of relativism seriously, the consequence would be that we would have to regard all scientific argumentation as completely meaningless" (2002, 17).

However, they reassure us that:

"The criticism of 'naïve objectivism' need not lead to such conclusions. Critical realism bears this criticism in mind at the same time as it tries to maintain the positive claims to a useful and liberating knowledge, which was the basic motivation for the Enlightenment project and for modern science. Realism maintains that reality exists independently of our knowledge of it. And even if this knowledge is always fallible, yet all knowledge is not *equally* fallible" (17) (emphasis added).

If we are concerned to bear down on the fallibility of journalism, to improve it, then we need to look at the terms of what Wright calls the dialogue or conversation between the knower and the thing known – which means reflexivity – and decide what forms of knowledge are likely to prove less fallible, in a given case – what I have called "anchorage" (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, xvii):

"When covering conflicts, we can tread down to find solid ground beneath our feet, by studying and applying what is known and has been observed about conflict, drawing on the overlapping fields of Conflict Analysis and Peace Research. We can use this knowledge to help us decide for ourselves what is important, and to identify what is missing from what we are told by interested parties".

### **Conflict analysis and peace research**

*The Structure of Foreign News* (Galtung & Ruge, 1965) identified five key factors of newsworthiness in the coverage of international conflict in the Norwegian press:

- Threshold: A big story is one that has an extreme effect on a large number of people.
- Frequency: Events that occur suddenly and fit well with the news organization's schedule.

- Negativity: Bad news is more exciting than good news.
- Unexpectedness: If an event is out of the ordinary it will have a greater effect.
- Unambiguity: Events whose implications are clear make for better copy.

Johan Galtung later adapted this basic insight to propose a "four-factor news communication model". Negative events, befalling elite individuals in elite countries, were top stories. Positive processes, benefiting non-elite groups in non-elite countries, were non-stories (Galtung, 1998b). A classic example – a friend on the London *Guardian* newspaper had spent weeks compiling a feature on efforts to alleviate the growing literacy crisis in sub-Saharan Africa. It was pulled at the last minute in favour of musings on the just-announced divorce of Hollywood stars Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman.

Peace journalism can be understood as a further adaptation, so war journalism is

- Violence/war-orientated
- Propaganda-orientated
- Elite-orientated
- Victory-orientated

And peace journalism itself is therefore

- Peace/conflict-orientated
- Truth-orientated
- People-orientated
- Solution-orientated

These categories appear with brief notes in a table Galtung himself drew up in 1997 (see chapter 2, 22; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, 6). One of the most important distinctions between them is that war journalism represents conflict as confined to "closed space, closed time; causes and exits in arena".

This clearly makes it receptive to propaganda from western governments who either do not perceive, or will not acknowledge, their own complicity in a sequence of cause and effect – the problem (Saddam Hussein, for instance) is located in the conflict arena (Iraq), so that is where the solution is to be found (removing him from power; later, capturing him, then trying, convicting and executing him). It also makes it inaccurate, when compared with the insights gleaned by researchers in the field of Peace and Conflict Studies.

Any journalist knows a news story is supposed to answer six basic questions – who, what, where, when, why and how. When covering conflicts, these correspond roughly to what peace researchers call 'conflict dynamics'. According to one of them, Diana Francis, any statement of the dynamics of a conflict must identify "its history, recent causes and internal composition – the different parties, the nature of their involvement, their perspectives, positions and motivations, and the

different relationships between them in terms of power, allegiance and interest" (Francis, 2002, 28).

By this yardstick, peace journalism, with its preparedness to encompass a broader range of parties, across the conflict formation, is clearly more accurate than war journalism, and preferable as a form of representation. Think back to the build-up to war in Iraq, and news in the aggressor countries, chiefly the US and UK. The small amount of reporting that included America's appetite for oil, and the long-standing policy of successive US governments to secure control over access to global supplies, gave a more accurate representation of conflict dynamics than the majority of reporting that omitted these factors.

Why should this *be* the yardstick? What has the field of Peace and Conflict Studies to commend it, that journalistic representations of conflict should be found wanting, when weighed against it? Its insights have been assembled under the normal safeguards of academic rigour in social science: openness about – and preparedness to justify – starting assumptions for both observation and interpretation; and peer review. Built into social science, moreover, is an allowance for the participant-observer – as soon as you start to observe something, you cannot avoid changing it. In all these respects, there is reflexivity – preferable to the largely unexamined conventions of news.

Peace and Conflict Studies is further distinguished, in terms of content, by acknowledging the potential for the creative transformation of conflicts, and by the insight most readily associated with the Australian peace researcher, John Burton, that behaviour in conflicts cannot be explained solely in terms of power – power gradients, or the struggle for power. There is an irreducible role for human needs (Burton, 1993). In all these respects, it offers accounts of *relationships* in conflict that journalism generally ignores – and, without which, the representations it makes are bound to be distorted.

Another prominent peace researcher, John Paul Lederach, has commented:

"I have not experienced any situation of conflict, no matter how protracted or severe, from Central America to the Philippines to the Horn of Africa, where there have not been people who had a vision for peace, emerging often from their own experience of pain. Far too often, however, these same people are overlooked and disempowered either because they do not represent 'official' power, whether on the side of government or the various militias, or because they are written off as biased and too personally affected by the conflict" (1997, 94).

Despite what Loyn says, they are often overlooked by journalists, too, because they do not represent official sources. Their absence makes news representations, in many cases, misrepresentations – leaving an impression that the hardened positions of leaders on either side are unchallenged within their respective communities, when experience shows that such challenges are always present, and indeed may constitute the first stirrings of change. On this count, too, journalism

about conflict would be improved – made more accurate, or less fallible – by attending to the insights of conflict analysis and peace research.

Hanitzsch does not, apparently, set much store by this. In the absence of any informed consideration of issues in Peace and Conflict Studies, his paper unwittingly takes positions and mistakes them for fixed parameters, thus invalidating some of his conclusions.

From the outset, we find him representing conflict very much in the war journalism mode:

"High-intensity conflicts have, for the most part, shown a regular increase from seven to 38 during the last 60 years. The large number of ongoing conflicts, part of which are carried out with a massive amount of violence, prevent entire regions (eg sub-Saharan Africa) from political democratization and socio-economic development. In addition, at least after Munich 1972 and even more so with September 11, 2001, terrorism has entered the picture" (2007b, 2).

He apparently discounts state terrorism; he fails to discriminate between different kinds of democratization and socio-economic development, thereby ignoring the catastrophic effects of attempts to impose these, on terms defined by and congenial to outsiders, for instance in Rwanda; and he confines conflicts to their respective arenas (sub-Saharan Africa).

His figures come from the Heidelberg Institute – an august body, to be sure, but it is odd, and surely, in the context of this debate, unjustified, to quote their findings without any comparative or critical commentary on what they decided to look for, and how. For comparison, the Liu Institute's inaugural *Human Security Report* found that the country involved in the highest number of international armed conflicts of any in the world, between 1946 and 2003, was Britain, with 21; France came next on 19 – the US third with 16; the overall number of armed conflicts had steadily fallen since the end of the Cold War (Liu, 2005). The same phenomenon can be sliced very differently, and the basis on which we decide to do so begs to be discussed.

Hanitzsch's lack of critical engagement with issues in conflict and peace most clearly invalidates his conclusions when he comes to consider Gadi Wolfsfeld's study of Israeli media representations of the so-called Oslo "peace process". I have inserted the caveats as a corrective to Hanitzsch's own apparently unquestioning acceptance of the official US/Israeli narrative of these events. He quotes Wolfsfeld's well-known thesis that there is an inherent tension between news values and peace:

"A peace process is complicated; journalists demand simplicity. A peace process takes time to unfold and develop; journalists demand immediate results. Most of a peace process is marked by dull, tedious negotiations; journalists require drama. A successful peace process leads to a reduction in tensions; journalists focus on conflict. Many of the significant devel-



opments within a peace process must take place in secret behind closed doors; journalists demand information and action" (Wolfsfeld, 2004, 67).

A study by Leah Mandelzis also identifies problems, *vis-à-vis* the prospect of peace, caused by media response, but diagnoses them very differently. She interviews Ron Pundak, now Director General of the Peres Centre for Peace and one of those involved in the original 'track two' pathfinding talks leading up to the Oslo Accord. In the first months after Oslo, he tells her, the Israeli media suffered from a "euphoria syndrome" in which the use of terms such as "peace process" and "peace agreements" created an unrealistic discourse:

"We did not sign any peace agreement. The Declaration of Principles was the threshold into which the political negotiations were channelled and no more than that. The Israeli public discourse was surrounded by 'peace with the Palestinians' as a result of the media discourse. It could not be peace when the occupation did not end and siege and oppression continued. The subsequent dissonance was due to the gap between the high expectations created by the media [and the reality]."

"Although the media cannot be blamed by itself (sic) – the government created these euphoric hopes and expectations – but the media inflamed these emotions and exaggerated without analysing the procedures themselves. The media created a euphoria on the one hand, and misunderstanding of a security horizon in a political agreement, on the other hand" (Mandelzis, 2006).

Shinar diagnoses a mismatch between the nature of the conflict – "cultural conflict ... characterized by exclusivity, depth, duration, totality and global nature" (2003, 2) – and the nature of the 'solution' offered by such a political agreement:

"The optimism of the agreements, and the less euphoric reality of ongoing violence, did not signify conventional post-war peacemaking. They represent, at best, a changing pattern in the relations of long-standing warring parties" (4).

The problem was not so much the supposedly universal journalist's appetite for drama and novelty, but a failure by Israeli media, at a particular historical moment, to reach out to sources such as the Palestinian poor, on the receiving end of occupation, siege and oppression. Illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian territory doubled during the years of the Oslo process (1993-2000) – the biggest single underlying cause of the subsequent Intifada, according to the Mitchell Commission charged by the Clinton White House to investigate what had happened, and why. It said:

"The GOI [Government of Israel] should also give careful consideration to whether settlements that are focal points for substantial friction are valuable bargaining chips for future negotiations or provocations likely to preclude the onset of productive talks" (Mitchell, 2001).

Such considerations are glossed over in Wolfsfeld's own account of what caused the Oslo process to break down:

"There was quite a bit of cooperation between the two sides and a certain amount of progress was made over the years. Nevertheless each step towards a final settlement became increasingly painful and frustrating for both parties" (182).

On the Palestinian side, mainstream media lost credibility and confidence because their efforts to report on the reality staring their readers in the face – the new settlement activity gobbling up more and more of their land – brought harsh repressive measures from the Palestinian Authority, especially after a Presidential Decree forbidding 'incitement', in 1998:

"[Since] The Presidential Decree... there has clearly been an increase in violations and abuses against journalists who write about, meet with or show interest in the opposition" (Siksik, 1999, 40).

If journalists on either side had paid more attention to conflict issues and their effect on human needs, their reporting would have been more accurate. This would have meant bringing readers and audiences 'bad news' in the form of drawing attention to continuing settlement-building, but it would potentially have been more conducive to peace, ultimately, by problematizing this phenomenon and (thereby) incentivizing an effective political response.

### **Engendering peace journalism**

Why didn't they, then? Hanitzsch is right to draw attention to the "many structural constraints which shape and limit the work of journalists" (2007b, 5). For Palestinian reporters, covering opposition perspectives on settlement building – perhaps as evidence that the 'peace process' was being misrepresented by officialdom, for its own purposes – risked sanctions and reprisals. Wolfsfeld mentions some of the difficulties for those Israeli journalists who did try to include more Palestinian sources in their coverage – the relative inaccessibility of professional spokespeople for the Palestinian National Authority, compared with the Israeli government, for instance (2004, 110-111).

Lynch & McGoldrick (2005) discuss several conventions of journalistic 'objectivity', which predispose the majority of news coverage towards the war journalism end of the spectrum – a bias in favour of event over process, in favour of official sources and in favour of dualism as a template for conflicts (chapter 7).

Hanitzsch complains that calling for more peace journalism, in the face of this, amounts to "an overly individualistic and voluntaristic perspective". The narrow conceptual horizons of Loyn's essay – which, I have suggested, actually goes further than many are prepared to – points up the unexplored scope for encouraging reporters and their editors to reflect critically on their work, and for the provision of safe and welcoming spaces for them to do so. At the moment, a lack of reflex-

ivity on the part of individual journalists acts as a kind of 'force multiplier' for the structural factors Hanitzsch sees as fixed limits to the potential for change.

Then there is evidence that peace journalism is by no means absent from conflict coverage. Ting Lee and Maslog (2005) studied conflict coverage in the Asian press and put the proportion of peace journalism as high as 58%, in one newspaper in Sri Lanka. Lynch (2006a) carried out an empirical content analysis on UK press coverage of the 'Iran nuclear crisis' over a five-month period from mid-2005, finding that the overall 'peace journalism quotient' was about 15%, although some important publications, notably the *Financial Times* (22%), had more.

The latter study concentrated on one prime analytical factor from the peace journalism schema – whether conflict is represented as confined to the conflict arena, in the present day, or whether, on the other hand, it is shown in "open space, open time". Why?

"The distinctions [used for the study] *do* have a strong claim to be considered the important ones when reporting conflict because they foreground the key framing issues in war propaganda. They effectively map out the contested territory" (Lynch, 2006b).

Conflict reporting does not have to include all the elements called for in the Galtung table if it is to be regarded as peace journalism – different analytical factors, in different situations, will describe the main ideational content. If peace journalism is about creating opportunities for society to consider and to value non-violent conflict responses, then that ought to be enough.

## Media activism

It means that peace journalism is possible, and realistic, here and now, for professional journalists, and it can become the focus of media activism. This is not a concept that would make much sense to Hanitzsch, to judge from some of his claims, chiefly:

"A peaceful culture is a *precondition* of peace journalism, rather than its outcome" (2007b, 7).

Implicit in this is a rather idiosyncratic definition of culture. There are many – from Matthew Arnold's "right knowing and right doing" to this from Jeff Lewis:

"Culture is the assemblage of imaginings and meanings that may be consonant, disjunctive, overlapping, contentious, continuous or discontinuous... these experiences of imagining and meaning-making are intensified through the proliferation of mass media images and information" (2002, 15).

They are separated by a century and a half; one is simple, the other, sophisticated and complex, but both allow for the essential element that Hanitzsch appears to neglect – that of culture as a site of contestation. Hanitzsch relies instead on structural functionalist theories, notably from Durkheim – focussed, as they are, on

questions of societal order and cohesiveness, and tending to relegate or ignore considerations about how power is exercised within societies, and, crucially, resisted. If Galtung-Ruge would be top of Loyn's remedial reading list, then one could recommend Hanitzsch browse in Foucault, to ponder such insights as:

"Power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategic situation in a particular society" (1977, 93).

"Domination [is not] that solid and global kind of domination that one person exercises over others, or one group over another, but the manifold forms of domination that can be exercised within society" (96).

Pedeltz (1995, 5) is one of many writers to see, in Foucault's concept of power as a "productive network", held together by rewards and incentives as well as possible punishments, a key to understanding the pressures and influences on journalists and their work. Power is being exercised, in other words, to inculcate norms of right knowing and doing into all forms of cultural production, including journalism, all the time; it saturates all social interactions to maintain patterns of dominance, or hegemony; and power is meaningless unless it is relational. Power, to *be* power, requires resistance.

Such is the theoretical framework within which the concept of media activism has started to attract more scholarly attention, particularly in relation to social movement theory. Struggles over media representation take manifold forms, which Anabel McGoldrick and I have categorised into "campaigning *through* the media" and "campaigning *on* the media" (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2007, 1).

Movements may either set out explicitly to achieve changes in media representation, in other words, or they may turn to the media as a 'lever to pull', in service of their cause – only to find that the routines and conventions of news make it impervious to their message. Hackett and Carroll find "most plausible" the proposition that media activism represents "a nexus – a point of articulation between movements, transforming and lending coherence to the broad field of movement activism as a counter-hegemonic formation" (2006, 199).

It may be true, as Tehranian has argued, that "structural pluralism [in media] may be considered a *sine qua non* of content pluralism" (2002, 58), but, mapped on to this understanding of cultural struggle and social movement, it should be clear that one good way to protect structural pluralism, and campaign for more, is to argue that the content we get shows the inadequacies of existing structures and points up the need for reform.

My own media activism has mostly aimed at effecting change in what Hackett and Carroll categorise as the "system" field rather than the "lifeworld", not least in working with professional journalists to encourage critical self-reflection and equip

them with theoretical tools and insights to inspect from the outside, as it were, the structural characteristics of their representations of conflict.

Hackett and Carroll comment:

"We ought not to dismiss journalists as potential allies. Aspects of their material and cultural conditions militate against activism... Still, journalists will mobilize under certain conditions: if they develop connections (ideological and/or personal) with social movements... [or] if their professional status and ideals are blatantly violated" (2006, 201).

One project, called Reporting the World, attempted to provide these conditions, taking the form of a series of seminars in London, the transcripts of which are still posted on the project's website [www.reportingtheworld.org.uk](http://www.reportingtheworld.org.uk)

The first of these seminars, in March, 2001, was called to discuss reporting of the conflict involving Israel and the Palestinians, and the first speaker was Tim Llewellyn, a former Middle East Correspondent for the BBC. His opening statement lamented the distortions to BBC and other coverage arising from the application of 'balance' – especially as the situation was, essentially, characterised by the very lack of balance between an occupier and an occupied people.

At the same time, researchers were finding widespread wrong-headedness, among samples of British television viewers, about the basic facts of the conflict, with the pattern of misunderstanding almost exactly matching what the same team identified as missing elements from the story as habitually presented in mainstream media:

"Viewers are extraordinarily confused. Many believed that the Palestinians were occupying the occupied territories or that it was basically a border dispute between two countries who were trying to grab a piece of land which separated them. The great bulk of those we interviewed had no idea where the Palestinian refugees had come from – some suggested Afghanistan, Iraq or Kosovo" (Philo, 2004).

How does this square with Hall's notion of decoding? Does it, indeed, exemplify the complaint from Hanitzsch, that audiences are modelled as a "passive mass" (2007b, 6)? Not necessarily. For audiences to produce oppositional or negotiated readings of media messages assumes that they have enough directly relevant personal or social experience against which to measure them.

It is easy to see how this capacity may be widespread, in the case of stories about, say, labour laws, rental prices or unusual weather conditions. It is likely to be less widespread in stories about shadowy global menaces like 'terrorism' or 'weapons of mass destruction', so public reliance on media representations is greater. Indeed, the incursion by international conflict into the news agenda is often seen as a means of asserting control over it – so, the attacks on the US on '9/11' became a "good day to bury bad news", according to one UK government press officer. At such times, "the BBC turns into the Ministry of Information", said another contrib-

utor to Reporting the World debates, Tim Gopsill, editor of the National Union of Journalists' monthly magazine, *The Journalist*.

The chief researcher in the study on Middle East reporting, Professor Greg Philo of Glasgow University Media Group, later gave evidence to an independent panel set up to advise the BBC Governors. Among its conclusions:

"BBC output does not consistently give a full and fair account of the conflict. In some ways the picture is incomplete and, in that sense, misleading" (BBC, 2006a, 4).

Elaborating on this criticism, the report echoed the complaint of Tim Llewellyn, five years earlier:

"One side is wholly under the occupation of the other and, however reluctantly, necessarily endures the indignities of dependence. As some of our witnesses noted, this fact itself poses a challenge to a media organisation like the BBC committed, as our terms of reference make clear, to fairness, impartiality and balance. (While fairness and impartiality are legal requirements, balance is a concept adopted by the BBC in seeking to give effect to them.) These objectives, especially balance, work most naturally where the parties to a dispute are on an equal footing. Indeed, without care, a formulaic application of these doctrines, and in particular that of balance, to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could produce coverage which misleads from the outset" (11).

The decision by the Governors to commission their own independent study came in response to a multi-dimensional campaign, waged over several years by media activists from various backgrounds, to trigger corrective mechanisms provided for, at least notionally, under structural pluralism – specifically, the unique governance system of the BBC.

It drew on the insights of peace journalism in mapping out the ideational content of coverage of a vitally important, current story about conflict – the crucial issue, in this case, being, as Lynch & McGoldrick put it:

"AVOID only reporting the violent acts and describing 'the horror'.

If you exclude everything else you suggest that the only explanation for violence is previous violence (revenge); the only remedy, more violence (coercion/punishment).

INSTEAD *show how people have been blocked and frustrated* or deprived in everyday life as a way of explaining how the conditions for violence are being produced" (2005, 29).

The episode shows, perhaps, the potential of these ideas for mobilizing social resources in furtherance of changes to journalistic representations to make them more accurate and more useful, bringing them more into line with well-established expectations that journalism will play a civic role in democracy.

Whether it will have any lasting effect on BBC or other reporting of the conflict is not yet determined, but the team that carried out the main research on the corporation's output, an exercise in quantitative and qualitative content analysis, did hint at a change which they attributed to the very prospect of coming under scrutiny organised under these specific headings:

"The BBC's Board of Governors announced publicly in September 2005 that it was to undertake an impartiality review with respect to the Corporation's coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As such we must consider whether the performance of journalists and editors changed in light of their awareness that their coverage was being scrutinised ... Given the sensitivity of the subject and the timing of the review in the run-up to Charter Review, it is conceivable that the impartiality review may have had some effect on some of the BBC coverage" (Appendix D).

The corporation's Head of News, Helen Boaden, commented, in an internal publication:

"There was some praise for what we do but also much criticism – not least that we fail to give enough context and history to this highly charged story and that we neglect the Palestinian narrative ... In our response, we've tried to come up with practical ways of remedying our weaknesses and building on our strengths" (BBC, 2006b).

As one who was employed, on a regular freelance basis, as a BBC presenter (news anchor) and reporter up to the end of 2006, I can offer a further general impression, that audiences became much more likely to see or hear about the day-to-day experiences of the Palestinian population as they struggled with life under military occupation, through and beyond the review period. There had, in other words, been an increase in peace journalism.

## **In defense of peace journalism: A rejoinder**

Samuel Peleg

### **I. Introduction**

Peace journalism has taken a lot of heat recently from researchers and practitioners alike. Though some of the criticism bears merit, one might suspect that to a larger degree, it is the "new-kid-on-the-block" syndrome, which carries the brunt of this attack. In order to be accepted as one of the guys, the newcomer must suffer the taunts and hecklings of the old guard just to prove him worthy of their confidence. Peace journalism is undergoing a protracted right-of-passage ceremony, and it isn't pretty. In this article, I will refer to two of the most prominent critics of Peace journalism – Thomas Hanitzsch, of the IPMZ at Zurich university and BBC correspondent David Loyn. They are united in their disrespect for the burgeoning orientation journalism may take and they don't spare any description to disparage it. They do, however, differ in their emphases and nuances, and some of their concerns have strength that deserves careful and comprehensive response.

### **II. Objectivity and other alternatives**

Hanitzsch and Loyn's disapproval of peace journalism can be collapsed into two major claims: that it is incompatible with the true nature of journalism and that it is redundant because it really means good or better journalism. Each of these claims rests on several, more specific, contentions regarding this new perspective on the conduct of journalism.

The former cluster is an assault on the very essence of peace journalism which I will respond to in a more thorough and systematic fashion. The latter is more delicately expounded, and to it I will relate more briefly toward the end of my rejoinder. In this rebuttal paper, I will take issue with some of Hanitzsch and Loyn's claims with a constructive mindset in order to encourage a productive and beneficial brainstorming of sorts rather than being querulous and argumentative.

Journalism, according to Hanitzsch (2004a), ventures to "facilitate a common, socially binding reference necessary for the co-orientation of the social universe through providing information of immediate topicality" (p. 192). Loyn passionately



declares that reporters' sole purpose is "to be witnesses to the truth" and such commitment can only be kept by adhering to objectivity, which is "the only sacred goal we have" (2003, 4). Such an admirable goal is feasible if and when reporters "preserve their position as observers not players" (2007a, 3; chapter 4 in this volume, 55) and if they heed the "only guiding lights of good reporting", which are, in addition to objectivity fairness and balance (op. cit, 2003, 1). These are highly determined and staunchly held views about the nature of correspondence and the precepts of authentic journalistic coverage. They are advanced by an experienced reporter and a knowledgeable analyst of journalistic theories. However, strong-mindedness should not be substituted for single-mindedness. When a definition relies on essentially contested concepts such as truth, objectivity and co-orientation, it is bound to have alternative or complementary means of interpretation, thus rendering the definitive statements "the only way" or "the only guiding light" in a rather dubious light.

The concept of objectivity has always been somewhat slippery, and it is mainly evoked when it is perceived to be absent. Few reporters could attest to total neutrality or impartiality. At best, journalists will admit a measure of detachment from their own personal biases in practicing their craft. The critical sociologist Michael Schudson claims that "the belief in objectivity is a faith in 'facts,' a distrust in 'values,' and a commitment to their segregation" (1978). This fascination with gathering and reporting hard and raw data sanctifies the *what is* and foregoes the *what if*. This inclination for emphasizing eyewitness accounts of events and validating facts through a variety of sources to establish a balanced picture of what happened echoes the traditional role of journalism as the *fourth estate*: telling the story independently of the other estates, or authorities, namely, government, religion and business. Unlike the latter three which promote biased narratives of reality, the fourth estate--the press, stands firm in its impartial and unyielding account of the real world. This idea dates back to Thomas Carlyle, when he wrote (1841):

„The affairs of the nation were there deliberated and decided; what we were to do as a nation. But does not, though the name Parliament subsists, the parliamentary debate go on now, everywhere and at all times, in a far more comprehensive way, out of Parliament altogether? Burke said there were Three Estates in Parliament; but, in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a *Fourth Estate* more important far than they all. It is not a figure of speech, or a witty saying; it is a literal fact, – very momentous to us in these times. Literature is our Parliament too. Printing, which comes necessarily out of Writing, I say often, is equivalent to Democracy: invent Writing, Democracy is inevitable. Writing brings Printing; brings universal everyday extempore Printing, as we see at present."

This is surely a noble idea but completely unsustainable. Objectivity on an issue, certainly significant and noteworthy enough to be mentioned on the news, denotes more unawareness or even ignorance than a predisposition. A more realistic depiction of the spirit of journalism maintains that objectivity is simply untenable

and that journalists should aspire for something like a neutral perspective on any controversial issue. As such, they should carefully study and then report the viewpoints of both sides. It does not mean that the journalist has no stand in the conflict, only that his or her personal opinion does not interfere nor misrepresent the professional conduct of reporting an event "as it is". Unlike objectivity that boasts no opinion and no judgment, neutrality is an opinion restrained and judgment reserved.

Peace journalism asserts that a more appropriate standard for good journalism should be *fairness* and *accuracy*. Within such orientation, taking sides on an issue is permitted as long as the side taken presented accurately and the other side is given a fair chance to respond. Hence, the improbable attempt at objectivity is replaced by a balanced and evenhanded account, which encourages fairness. Peace journalism, in its emphasis on presenting all sides of a conflict and in its endeavor to contextualize a controversy, accomplishes these measures without compromising the thoroughness of investigation or the accuracy of coverage. In this manner, another possible understanding of what true journalism may be is exposed.

Loyn praises objectivity and truth as the compass for journalists. Reporters need only to witness the truth, he declares, and must always be observers, not players. However, this persistent assertion runs into trouble when posited within the context of some vexing analogies from the recent past. Let us assume for a moment, that the conflict covered is the Second World War and the diligent reporter is dispatched to the Auschwitz death camp. There, beside the gas chambers, he objectively and assiduously illustrates what he sees. The situation is awfully real and horrifically true. The reporter keenly observes what is transpiring before his eyes. Is this good journalism, or is it callousness, collaborating with evil or even betrayal? Is this genuine reality or media reality, to use Baudrillard's intriguing distinction (1995)? Is this even a conceivable scenario, that journalism can maintain its regular routine of coverage and observation under the most atrocious circumstances? Does good journalism require aloofness in order to produce proficient reporting?

This position can be considered excessive and unwarranted. The Holocaust was unique and immeasurably ghastly and evil, and thus it is disadvantageous to use it as a basis for any counterclaim. But my point is deliberately blunt and unequivocal in order to demonstrate how futile and vain objectivity and neutrality may turn out to be. It does not have to be the most calamitous example of the past to spell out the risks of being mere spectators under any circumstances, as daily reports from Darfour, the Congo, Rwanda and Iraq remind us. Similarly, regarding news accounts about AIDS, or cancer, lethal drugs or hideous crimes; do they too stand the test of being conveyed to the public "objectively"? Is it unprofessional to report a major breakthrough in the research of a deadly disease with a distinct

supportive slant and emotional relief? Is it dishonorable to firmly take sides against genocide and ethnic cleansing? Is it amateurish to passionately promote awareness against massive raping and barbarism? Do these instances permanently and undeniably belong within the category Hanitzsch characterizes as public relations? His logic is that peace journalism is public relations and not real journalism because "it advocates and promotes a certain way of action", or particular perspectives, as Loyn calls it. This "certain way of action" is actually survival and abolition of war and destruction. Such an accusation is akin to blaming doctors or researchers seeking to cure heart disease for engaging in public relations since they aim to advance a certain way of action to prevent heart failure. Does the necessity of peace truly require that it be "defined by a client or host organization" in order to be presented in a favorable way? Is writing a non vehement description of war akin to promoting anyone's outside agenda? Defenders of the current conduct of journalism might at times muddle the priority scale of the human agent: first there is the family man and the society member who shoulders the human and civil duty to undercut and defame war and violence, the way he may with any other menace which threatens his community; then comes the reporter, who aspires for excellence in his trade. The consecration of the objectivity totem reminds me of Klaus Mann's riveting and disturbing novel, *Mephisto*, a story of an actor who abandons his conscience and continues to act and ingratiate himself with the Nazi party so as to improve his job and social status. When confronted with criticism, he responds: "What do you want from me, I am only an actor!". This is not to say that a comparison can be made between journalists and collaborators with demonic regimes, but only to demonstrate that in covering dire situations such as war, objectivity may sometimes lead us astray despite our good intentions.

Hanitzsch makes an interesting point concerning the viability of objectivity: in close-knit conflicts such as neighborhood quarrels, "it is difficult to remain impartial and to deliver a balanced and comprehensive account of the conflict" (2007b, 6). I firmly agree with this notion; it is almost impossible to be objective in environments of intimate conflicts, especially deep-rooted ones, fed by unsatisfied basic needs (Burton, 1990; Peleg, 1999). But in today's world, where rampant national, religious and ethnic rivalries are as bonding, obligating and committing as any family feud, such a distinction is no longer valid. In such a struggle-laden reality, peace journalism is not a luxurious delusion but a concrete inevitability.

### III. The nature of true reporting

Another attempt to disqualify peace journalism is by claiming its lack of epistemological base. Hanitzsch approaches this issue from several directions, albeit inconsistently. First (2004), peace journalism has a naïve epistemological perspective, then it matured to epistemological realism, since it assumes there is a true and

proper version of reality and accordingly, peace journalism attacks conventional journalism as "misrepresenting reality" by showing only partial facts (2007, 5). Finally, Hanitzsch admits, peace journalism has no epistemology at all and its proponents need to define it. I concur with Hanitzsch that news does not mirror reality, and that it is based on "cognition and contingent (re)construction of reality" (*ibid.*). However, this does not necessarily mean that there is indeed an immaculate version of reality, only a more considerate and fair-minded one: A version which, in probabilistic and not absolute terms, contains the vagaries of war and diverts the relish of conflict into thoughtful and trustworthy channels to cope with human differences. This, in my book, is a dignified epistemological heritage to pursue.

Hanitzsch identifies overemphasis on individualism and voluntarism as a major weakness of peace journalism. He is convinced that if such prominence is given to the reporter to change her worldview and professional orientation, than it surely must transpire at the expense of the environment, that is the structural constraints in which the journalist must operate. News coverage cannot ignore its sustaining surroundings and must be responsive to organizational, logistic and economic pressures and conditions. Individual correspondents do not work in a vacuum and cannot alone improve the world or even their immediate vicinity. Although they seem plausible, such allegations misfire: Peace journalism aims at individuals as agents of change and as harbingers of an innovative mind-set toward the ethics and practice of journalism. The goal is to constantly expand this orientation and render it commonplace rather than a passing fad of a handful of eccentrics. By so doing, peace journalism is thoroughly cognizant of the structural confines of the journalistic setting and one of its foremost challenges, as I perceive it, is to mitigate and tone down the effects of structuralism. Perhaps Shinar's question of whether "structural reform is a prerequisite for the successful implementation of Peace journalism" (2007) should be posited as a guiding principle or a working hypothesis rather than a mere speculation to fend off the assertion that "the structure is the message" (Tehrani, 2002; Hackett, 2006). The structure occasionally manacles the message, and the message must break free. The skills of peace journalism are indeed earmarked for the individual reporter but are relentlessly in tune with the changing environmental circumstances and consequently provide an opportunity for reform and improvement. Diligent dissemination and adherence to the principles of peace journalism may tame the environment, and making it more congenial to journalists. At a later stage, the individual effort can be aggregated into groups and ultimately into larger communities and societies, fanning public opinion and public debates (Freedman, 2003, 3), and eventually turning into a new culture of journalism. Though the above might be perceived as a linear sequence, whereby structural change stipulates the successful work of the individual reporter, this is not the intention. Basically, the environment and the agent co-change together and affect each other at the pro-

cess. This is truly a dialectical and a cyclical progression of mutual adjustment between a reformed structural conditions and improved journalistic skills.

This leads me to grapple with the seemingly affirmed notion that peace journalism is utterly incompatible with the character of reporting (Wolsfeld, 1997, Fawcett, 2002) or as Loyn ardently proclaims "reporting and peacemaking are different roles" (2007a, 3; chapter 4 in this volume, 55) and the subsequent critique that advocates of the new paradigm "overestimate the power of journalism" (Hanitzsch, 2007b, 6). Though I agree with both contentions, this is precisely the *raison d'être* that propels peace journalism. Conventional reporting, with its emphasis on conflict and violence, its event-focus rather than process-focus and its preoccupation with winners and losers, is irreconcilable with the demands of conflict de-escalation (Kempf, 2003; chapter 3 in this volume). If journalism is to remain simply a channel to convey information and updates through the eyes of detached though highly professional reporters, it will indeed be overrated by those who expect more. To expect more is to comprehend journalism as a dynamic and creative opportunity to change things for the better, not by an elitist group of writers who know best but by the people themselves. The public will be able to participate, to become aware of issues and dilemmas, to weigh and assess them and make choices for the benefit of all when it is presented with a broad, fair and evenhanded picture. This is the vision and the responsibility of peace journalism: not allow market structure or culture restrictions foil journalistic missions and to raise the bar in terms of accuracy and integrity.

#### **IV. Journalism and conflict**

The importance of such a task is heightened in times of conflict, when old war-prone and propaganda-prone journalism rejoices the most and marvels at the drama and sensationalism accrued. Peace journalism is capable of becoming a third side to facilitate communication in times when lack of confidence and mistrust are rampant, and to ease tensions between rivals. Preventing conflict from escalating and diverting it from a destructive to a constructive path (Pearce and Littlejohn, 1997; Kriesberg, 1998) is not merely a journalist's job, but rather, everyone's job. Journalists may potentially employ their aptitude to help contain escalation processes better than an average person due to the nature and expediency of their occupation. Their accessibility to the scene, their research into the background of a given conflict, motivation of actors, decision-making procedures and accumulative and comparative experience from other similar developments enrich their abilities to cope with such dire circumstances (Carruthers, 2000; Dor, 2001). This is where peace journalism steps in: Reporters who unreservedly uphold transparency, balance and sensitized thoroughness in covering disputes, do have the po-

tential to change the course and intensity of events, and this is a power of journalism to be reckoned with.

In order to elucidate how peace journalism can actually contribute to de-escalation, it should be anchored to precepts of conflict theory (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, 33). Every conflict has a conflict environment within which it is nurtured and growing. In his classic spatial model of conflict escalation, E.E. Schattschneider demonstrated that every fight consists of those who are directly involved and the audience of spectators around them. The spectators, writes Schattschneider, are "an integral part of the situation for, as likely as not, the audience *determines* the outcome of the fight" (1960, 2, emphasis in the original). Bringing the audience in is the obligation of reporters. They supply the news from the front, or the inner circle, and they inform the readers, listeners and spectators. The more comprehensive the information about the conflict, the more knowledgeable the audience becomes. But it has to be knowledge about the *conflict* as a whole: its roots, background, participants, their positions, interests, fears, and hopes. This is not advocacy, intervention or attachment. This is certainly not being subjected to an "external" agenda. This is pure and full-fledge reporting with, yes, a normative intention to encumber the evil spirit of war. When reports play down the aura of winning in battle and the glorification of combat; when stories from the front are less exalting in their adoration of audacity and triumph; when news accounts concentrate on suffering and pain rather than annihilation, the expectant audience receives a different picture of the situation and diverse data are then collected in the process of evaluating a conflict. Positions may shift and stands reconsidered as a result of these new insights and the conflict may loose its supporting fuel if the attentive public (Rosenau, 1974) becomes less enthusiastic and less encouraging toward the direct contestants. As a result, adds Schattschneider, "the bystanders are a part of the calculus of all conflicts" (ibid., 4) and contentions expire or prosper according to the ability to sway the opinion of the audience. The route of conflict is determined by the involvement of the critical mass, those bystanders, when *they take sides and interfere*. But by so doing, they cease to be outside actors and become, sometimes very vehemently and assiduously, insiders. This analysis does not minimize the role of the original actors, who incited and mobilized the audience to begin with. The journalists are not outsiders here but go-betweens. They carry the messages of the inciters and if they don't exercise discretion (or professionalism) they become collaborators to the inflammation.

This is what Mitchell (1981), Azar (1984), Burton (1990), Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall (2005) and others refer to when they elaborate on the cognitive dimension of conflict. This is the most crucial aspect of conflict, whereby images, labels, frames and prejudice are created and aggregated (Peleg, 1999, 2002, 2006; Pruitt & Kim, 2004). The cognitive or attitudinal dimension of conflict sustains the behavioral dimension and stimulates the violence associated with it.

Peace journalism, when it is methodically and systematically adopted, can rise to this virtuous undertaking. It can mobilize the critical mass to replace the ecstasy of combat with the harmony of concord. Thus, the answer to the initial accusation that peace-making is at odds with the nature of journalism, is that the two can be brought together, or at least the current gap can be attenuated, by modifying the latter in order to better accommodate the former. After all, journalism is about supplying us with proper reports; peace-making is about being able to read such reports in the first place.

The latter point leads me to the cause-and-effect problem, which both Loyn and Hanitzsch address. The two critics join one another in claiming that peace journalism's crusade against conventional reporting is substantially flawed since its causal sequence is wrong: it is not omitted coverage that elicits popular propensity towards war, but a war and violence-prone culture that inspire selective writing. Consequently, the proponents of the "new orthodoxy", as Loyn calls them, should redirect their attempts at changing the world to their societies rather than their fellow reporters. Hanitzsch argues that "a peaceful culture is the *precondition* of peace journalism rather than its outcome" (2004a, 200) (original emphasis). This is an interesting claim which deflects the onus of social accountability and commitment from the agent to the environment. I agree that a belligerent and masochistic political culture, which extols aggression and worships power, inspires a certain kind of journalism coverage. However, I feel more comfortable with a cyclical rather than a linear causation: a quarrelsome culture is reflected in a confrontational and aggressive press while argumentative journalistic ethic stirs conflictual attitudes among readers. Hence, both agent and surroundings are 'culprits' in fomenting a climate of contentiousness. The remedy, according to peace journalism, is attending both wings of the equation: improve journalistic principles and amend social standards and cultural norms. Social and cultural values are not constants; they are dynamic, malleable and amenable to change. In previous centuries cultural icons were philosophers, poets and heroes. They were role models to emulate and revere. They were the ones who coined new phrases, dressed in the latest fashion and furnished innovative ideas and observations. They set the pace and direction of inventive style and ultimately, paved the way for changes in and of culture. In today's world, cultural promoters are PR experts, advertising wizards and journalists. They are the inventors and disseminators of catch phrases, moods and mind-sets. We live in a communication age, where public spaces are being created in communicational interfaces such as websites, chat rooms, talk shows and news magazines. In these open arenas, journalists who are equipped with the talents of rhetoric, writing and persuasion enjoy a huge advantage. They build a reputation of adroit and competent public figures, which are to be trusted and followed. Thus, when Hanitzsch indicates that "to adhere to the peace journalism philosophy means to divert political responsibilities from politicians and policy

makers to journalists" (2004, 204) he is correct, save for one small though crucial nuance: it is not to journalists that responsibility is conveyed but to the population at large. Journalists are the go-betweens who empower their constituencies – the readers, by supplying them with the knowledge to choose and check their elected leaders. This is the democratic, participatory and deliberative face of peace journalism.

## **V. Journalism – more than an economic venture**

The detractors of peace journalism unwittingly belittle the capabilities of reporters in the communication age. A statement such as "journalists demand simplicity" is especially demoralizing. Why should reporters settle for basic, uncomplicated and unsophisticated descriptions in their work, only to gratify what is perceived to be a low threshold of readers' satisfaction? Even if supposedly the current situation and the attention span of the average news consumer is meagre. Why should journalists adjust themselves to such dismal banalities rather than challenge and hopefully bring about a blessed change in reading habits? This is a rather bleak discernment of human potential, which rests, I am afraid, on the unabashed capitulation to the idol of profit and the abandonment of journalism as the vanguard of social transformation. Peace journalism gives more credit to journalists and their trade. They are sufficiently competent to become agents of change by delivering a full and honest picture of what takes place in the world; an account which is unbound by patriotism, prejudice, injustice, and chauvinism.

Hanitzsch protests "why should journalism ignore its audiences? What is the big deal if the media disregard their audiences' interests and, thus, put at risk their economic existence?" (2004a, 199). If journalism is purely business, an income source, and nothing more, then he is correct. No laborer should jeopardize his or her livelihood. But if journalism is stripped of all other values except economic ones, then reporters need not be bothered with "non-financially viable" issues such as truth, honesty and fairness. Journalism is a communication channel between writers and readers (Peleg, 2003). However, the influence and adaptation efforts along such a channel are reciprocal: reporters may well heed public atmosphere but they should also endeavor to stir, alter or calm it. Journalists must not enslave themselves to the ever changing moods of their prospective audience because they might lose their integrity in the process and become reporting chameleons. On this point, I tend to concur with Loyn, when he argues: "to help the language of reporting, there is a constant if unspoken dialogue between reporter and reader: shared assumptions that make it easier to report some stories than others" (2007, 4). Nevertheless, by admitting this, Loyn digresses from his initial criteria of truth seeking and "what happens" as the gateways to professional coverage. A reporter might run into an ethical dilemma when she encounters a story



which rings true but incongruent with the public spirit or with the contemporary *volonté des tous*; should she dispatch the report or not? Peace journalism is more qualified to handle such a dilemma since it relies more on engaging the audience and providing the readers with the fullest extent of information rather than satisfying its audience with selective but propitious facts.

In the social movements literature the term *frame resonance* is used to indicate the attempts of social leaders to reframe their messages to fit the cultural norms and values of their constituencies so that they would resonate with their prospective followers (Snow & Benford, 1988; Oliver & Johnston, 2000; Westby, 2002). But as much as affinity and understanding between reporters and their readers are important, this is not meant to be a spineless maneuvering to satisfy all readers at a whim, not even "shared language and assumptions", as Loyn sees it. Adjusting worldviews, mindsets, idioms, and images, even words, to establish a flowing and understandable communication between senders and receivers, coders and decoders of messages, both sides must be creative and inventive: the reporter by offering the fullest range of information possible, and the reader by exercising a thoughtful and prudent discretion. Regrettably, this is not the setting of the purely commercial journalism world where the reader is king. In the desired alternative world of journalism, the reporter partakes in shaping and reshaping the readers' menu for choice by expanding, not acknowledging, horizons. Peace journalism, which does not placate or courts the public taste, fits right in there. It challenges the conventional wisdom and defies the "taken-for-granted", which conflict and war are especially fraught with. "Impartiality lies in diversity", emphasizes Lynch (2003, 3) and peace journalism is the quintessential pursuit of obtaining and maintaining diversity in the coverage of news.

Contrary to Hanitzsch and Loyn's observation that the media has little or no political influence, a growing body of research literature from Lippmann to Postman attests that the potential power of various media channels in molding and affecting opinions can be remarkable (Lippmann, 1925; Wagner, 1983; Postman, 1985). Iyengar and Kinder for instance, conclude in an elaborate experiment that "television news does indeed influence the priorities the American public assigns to national problems ... *by calling attention to some matters while ignoring others, television news influences the standards by which governments, presidents, policies and candidates for public office are judged*" (1987, 63, emphasis in the original). If this is a viable scenario then surely the orientation of normative journalistic work ethos must be attentively practiced for the benefit of a more knowledgeable, and eventually, better society.

## VI. The most challenging and the least concerning

The most challenging criticism of peace journalism in my opinion is the assertion that peace journalism uses a wholesale approach in condemning conventional reporting. The advocates of the new philosophy generalize and oversimplify their analysis of current coverage of conflicts when they lump all media channels into a single "war-prone" bracket. Similarly, they relate to news consumers as "a passive mass that needs to be enlightened" (Hanitzsch, 2007b, 6). This is an insightful and valuable comment. In my sense, peace journalism is certainly at fault here but I would attribute it to the fervor of youth and to the sweeping, all encompassing observations of inexperience. I do believe, however, that despite the diversity of media outlets, the tendency to describe strife and contention in news coverage is overdramatic and sensational. However, were there only one media outlet to broadcast the conventional war narrative, the emergence of peace journalism would nonetheless have been worthwhile. As for capturing the audience as an inert mass and thus, denigrating readers' capacity to independently form their own positions, I would argue that peace journalism is far more gracious than any other journalistic orientation in supplying readers with the opportunity to formulate their own stands on current affairs. The approach of peace journalism is geared toward the stimulation and maximization of readers' judgment ability and prudence. By challenging routine coverage methods and by providing the broadest possible range of accounts, peace journalism writers entrust the onus of interpretation to their readers. By doing so they do not treat the audience as a passive monolith, but rather, supply an elementary and essential commodity for all readers – the apathetic, the ignorant, the news addicts and the media-savvy, to be used however they see fit. In summation, peace journalism is about supplying background for questions rather than furnishing answers.

The second type of criticism is shorter and gentler. It perceives peace journalism not as an aberration but as a lost and misguided child, needing to be redirected home. Here, the spirit of criticism is softened to "if you can't beat them, join *us*", that is, if you cannot get rid of the new trend, try to incorporate it into the current paradigm. Hanitzsch acknowledges at some point the merits of peace journalism but adds that it is "already present – in the outfit of 'good journalism'" (ibid.) and therefore, he concludes, we don't really need it. According to him, it essentially boils down to the old discourse about quality in journalism. It is basically an internal debate or kind of a "domestic" affair. This urge to adopt peace journalism is in actuality an attempt to ignore its innovative principles and to preempt the fundamental challenge it presents to conventional journalism. Peace journalism is not merely *good* journalism; it is *different* journalism and a departure from the traditional way of covering news stories, particularly conflict and violence, not only in nuances and emphases but in substance. Peace journalism is not to report what *is seen* but to report what *can be seen*; not simply to reflect reality but to explore

reality and unearth what is not ostensibly reflective; to wisely utilize structural and organizational imperatives and to be subdued by them; to regard and cultivate readers' interests but not to be manipulated by them. This is the profound shift in the nature of journalism that the new philosophy offers. For those who were raised on the precepts of standard prototype reporting, some of these novelties may be difficult to accept. By their nature and putative accomplishments, the virtues of peace journalism can certainly be classified as good journalism. However, this is true since peace journalism escapes the confines of the old doctrine – not because it is a more elaborate version of what used to be.

## VII. Conclusion

Some fractions of the criticism still baffle me. For example, when Loyn (2003) declares that "news is what's happening and we should report it with imagination and skepticism, full stop", I fail to understand why imagination is needed. If his version of good journalism is merely reporting what is seen, isn't imagination superfluous? In Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, "the lunatic, the lover and the poet are of imagination all compact". It seems to me that these characteristics would not suit Loyn's devoted reporter. Furthermore, when he writes that "we do not seek out peace-makers unless they are actually successful" (*ibid.*), does he mean that when negotiations fail, or when diplomats disagree, they are not news worthy? As I recall, some famous breakdowns of negotiations or cessations of talks, such as between the Israelis and Palestinians at Camp David in 2000 or regression in cease-fire talks between American and Viet-Cong representatives during the Paris peace process in 1968, were highly dramatic and heightened ratings when they occurred. The peace-makers involved in such unsuccessful attempts were vehemently sought by conventional reporters for interviews and photos.

Less puzzling though disturbing and alarming is the insinuation that peace journalism might "bring memories of authoritarian regimes" in its aspiration for more social responsibility (Hanitzsch, 2004a). Though I don't see this as fair criticism, I don't suspect any malice either. The social responsibility associated with sinister political systems is really an alias for obedience and submission. It is a pretense of social order which is imposed from above and an excuse to execute the most horrendous deeds in the name of political conscientiousness. Peace journalism is diametrically opposite: its social responsibility is a bottom-up one and is built on public awareness and people's deliberation. In the same vain, when Hanitzsch hypothesizes whether reporters that incite or stir violence should be silenced "in the name of social stability" (*ibid.*, 202), he must be aware that, first, incitement and agitation entail by law punitive acts and second, peace journalism abhors censorship. It is the absolute embodiment of information flow and full disclosure.

The fact that few Seymour Hershs have become famous does not prove that an alternative way to report wars is not feasible; it does mean, however, that much effort still needs to be invested in ameliorating the dominant beliefs about the nature and promise of journalism. When Loyn admonishes that advocates of peace journalism cannot see that insisting on objectivity is "a useful vaccine against the relativism of attached journalism", he fails to see that peace journalism is a more powerful immunization, capable of inoculating the entire body against the absolutism of mayhem and destruction.

Peace journalism has a normative special agenda in the same way that the aspiration for secured and harmonious life is a human normative agenda. Destructive conflict and wars are a threat to all human kind. The cynical few who make fortunes from bloodshed should not be perceived as a legitimate "other party", which does not get a fair share in news coverage. Peace journalism is a tool to bolster the joint effort to expose violence and fighting for what they are and to align people across borders, cultures and loyalties in a common crusade to diminish the exultation of war.

**Part IV**  
**Counterpleas**



## Good journalism or peace journalism?

Counterplea by David Loyn

In *Peace journalism and its discontents* Jake Lynch (2007, chapter 6 in this volume) makes an important point in suggesting that the conventions of news reporting are not set down in stone, but are 'governed by structural factors arising from the economic and political interests of the news industry'.

We can change them and should examine them; I reject his charge that journalists such as myself dislike 'critical self-awareness'. If anything, journalistic self-examination is a growth industry in Britain, with the new Reuters-inspired institute at Oxford, the BBC College of Journalism, and intelligent and thoughtful practical inquiry now commonplace in fora such as the Frontline Club and Guardian Newsroom. The BBC's searching internal inquiries into Impartiality, Trust, and the specific review into coverage of Israel/Palestine, are all parts of a more rigorous approach to the craft – questioning received wisdom and conventional approaches.

Samuel Peleg's *Rejoinder* singles out as peace journalists 'Reporters who unreservedly uphold transparency, balance and sensitized thoroughness in covering disputes.' (Peleg, 2007, 4; chapter 7 in this volume, 109) I have met many reporters who do that without his peace journalism label. But in the same paragraph he puts himself firmly on the other side of the fence from me by saying that 'Preventing conflict ... is not merely a journalist's job, but rather, everyone's job.' No it is not. There are a variety of occupations in which 'preventing conflict' is not a priority. We might argue over what were legitimate uses of military power, ie *intensifying* conflict, but the swift surgical intervention in Sierra Leone by a combination of British troops and mercenaries certainly transformed that country for the better.

By saying that my job is not about preventing conflict, I am not trying to invoke the Nuremberg defence of 'only obeying orders' but a far more subtle call to the real role of our real functions and role. The reference to the Nazi era is first cited by Peleg (chapter 7, 107) in what he assumes to be a horrifying challenge to journalists to consider what it might have been like to report on Auschwitz. He does not give us enough information about the hypothesis of his case study to answer his shocked rhetorical questions about how normal journalism could have taken

place. His appeal to Baudrillard's analysis of the TV war in the Gulf is entirely bogus, since Auschwitz took place in a time of total war, not as an armchair diversion. And who is his hypothetical reporter – a Nazi, a German working in the underground, or a foreigner? If it was the latter, then this reporting might have shortened the war, since at the time the full horror of the death camps was not public knowledge in Britain. If it was a reporter coming in with the liberation forces, then yes, 'good journalism' does require 'aloofness' in Peleg's definition. Consider how Richard Dimbleby, who went on to become the most prominent British broadcast journalist of his generation, reported the discovery of another death camp at Bergen-Belsen:

Here over an acre of ground lay dead and dying people. You could not see which was which ... The living lay with their heads against the corpses and around them moved the awful, ghostly procession of emaciated, aimless people, with nothing to do and with no hope of life, unable to move out of your way, unable to look at the terrible sights around them ... Babies had been born here, tiny wizened things that could not live ... A mother, driven mad, screamed at a British sentry to give her milk for her child, and thrust the tiny mite into his arms, then ran off, crying terribly. He opened the bundle and found the baby had been dead for days.

Peleg, like so many advocates of peace journalism, constantly wants the world to be better than it is, and so he shoots the messenger, the bearer of bad news. In criticising Hanitzch and myself, he compares reporters to doctors. In this analysis peace journalism is 'actually survival and abolition of war and destruction.' (Peleg, chapter 7, 107) So who could be against it?

But what if military intervention were the justifiable and best option? Peleg imposes an entirely pacifist construct onto journalism, making peace journalism more than the 'new-kid-on-the-block' (ibid., 104), and turning it into a revolutionary position, always taking sides against military intervention.

In his paper Lynch writes approvingly of my own journalism, and I suspect that there is much more that unites us than divides us, in our desired outcome of the kind of journalism that we would like to see, in particular in seeking sources that are outside the official government machine.

We would certainly stand on the same side against for example, the facile certainties of *Fox News*, or the uncritical media hysteria this summer over the loss of the English toddler Madeleine McCann. We would also I suspect share concern over the lack of discernment in most of the British and American media in the run-up to the Iraq war in 2002/3. This led to more searching inquests in US newsrooms than in Britain, where the titanic struggle between the BBC and the government during the Gilligan affair obstructed other self-examination.

There are lots of things wrong in journalism, but in agreeing that there may be problems, we do not agree over a solution. In my initial paper in this dialogue,



*'Good journalism or peace journalism?'* I engaged in some analysis of the philosophical underpinning of journalistic tools such as objectivity. In this brief response, I intend to remain on much more practical ground.

Peleg (chapter 7, 105) believes that the concept of objectivity 'is mainly evoked when it is perceived to be absent.' I disagree profoundly. I celebrate it since as a tool it gives me protection against the relativism of peace journalism. Peleg (*ibid.*, 113) accuses me of believing that the media has 'little or no political influence.' I have never said this. The media has enormous influence, so should be really careful about its methods.

The biggest problem with peace journalism is where it puts the reporter. It demands engagement as a participant, rather than recognising that while of course there is no such thing as a transparent observer, the implied contract with the audience is that the standpoint of the reporter is at least an *attempt* to be an observer; we are not there to make peace. This is the crucial difference between the Lynch analysis and my own. He constantly characterises my approach as pretending that there are 'facts' waiting around to be uncovered, 'intuiting the numinosity of a pre-ordained order, which the tenacious reporter can *reveal* (his italics).' My own experience in the field is quite unlike this caricature.

Reporting news is about addressing the complications of a messy, visceral world and constructing a narrative, telling stories, not 'searching under stones.' This may involve shining a light on some dark places, where the peace/solution-oriented seeker for conflict resolution would want to 'frame' the situation in a different way. But if people are out to kill each other then, as journalists, we are not there to stop them.

This is an organic process on shifting sands where we need constantly to examine preconceptions. In my paper I quoted approvingly for example the suggestion made by Professor Jean Seaton in *Carnage and the Media* that the way we report violence is highly stylised, with its own agreed iconography. This kind of examination of the conventions around reporting is welcome. It is a dynamic process, and there are few certainties.

But while I believe that practising journalists are open to probing inquiries about our methods and conventions, I stand accused of ignoring the Galtung analysis, relied on by Lynch. This hypothesis posits that journalists systematically select some gatekeepers and screen out others, in order to prioritise 'negative events, befalling elite individuals in elite countries'. I do not ignore it: rather I reject its practical relevance, and in particular the prescriptive tone that Galtung adopts in order to try to get us to change our ways.

Lynch (chapter 6, 94) fails to throw off my charge of prescription, when he outlines a set of rules that need to be followed. These encourage journalists to seek

peace, solutions, and people, (over violence, victory, and elites). The rules also claim the high ground of 'truth' contrasted with 'propaganda'.

The conclusion that normal journalistic practice (condemned as 'war journalism') is 'elite-orientated', while peace journalism is 'people-orientated' is a throwback to the academic arguments that used to take place between bourgeois and Marxist views of history. Peace journalism demands more of an examination of movements and processes than power. I am not sure it would sell many newspapers.

If all Lynch were saying was that there are some western governments who deliberately skew the case for war, then no one could have any argument with him. As reporters we can and do question and challenge their assumptions, and report those who do so. But power lies in the hands of those a democratic society has elected to hold it.

He goes on to accuse journalists of assuming that 'sources are passive, "revealing a reality that already exists"'. This is, of course, convenient for the authors of propaganda' (Lynch, chapter 6, 87). I do not believe that journalists assume any such thing. When conflict is looming, of course politicians 'spin' the war. But if reporters saw it differently we would not stop the war. And Britain has the most confrontational media environment in the world, aided by a certain irreverence on the part of journalists, the physical design of the House of Commons, and the adversarial criminal court system. Testing arguments in public is part of the culture, so that rather than an assumption that sources are 'revealing a reality', there is often an assumption of mendacity. This assumption was characterised by the reported comments of a prominent TV presenter that before every interview with a politician he is thinking: 'Why is the lying bastard lying to me today?' Peleg condemns this as part of the problem. He wants a 'less belligerent and masochistic political culture' (Peleg, chapter 7, 111) – as meaningful as a Bedouin wanting less sand.

Lynch criticises journalists for ignoring the wider context in the run-up to the Iraq war, because of their 'war journalism' mindset, so they were 'receptive to propaganda from western governments who either do not perceive, or will not acknowledge, their own complicity in a sequence of cause and effect – the problem (Saddam Hussein, for instance) is located in the conflict arena (Iraq), so that is where the solution is to be found (removing him from power; later, capturing him, then trying, convicting and executing him).' (Lynch, chapter 6, 94)

This is simply not what happened. From early 2002, a year before the invasion of Iraq, there was little else going on in parts of the British government other than planning the war. We know from the leaked 'Downing Street memo' (<http://www.downingstreetmemo.com>) that with or without the UN, Tony Blair had decided to back the US with British forces, and we know from more recent American interviews that he turned down a specific offer on the eve of the war from Presi-

dent Bush to hold British troops back; Bush knew of his domestic political problems, but Blair wanted to join the war.

It may be the business of 'researchers in the field of peace and conflict studies', cited by Lynch (chapter 6, 94), to see all this in a holistic comprehensive way, and to want to find another way out. It was the responsibility of the British news media though to report what was going on, and what was going on then was an unstoppable ratchet towards a major war. There is a continuing confusion with him and Peleg over the function of journalism.

There had been a significant amount of reporting in previous years about the arming of Saddam Hussein, in particular leading to the 'Supergun' affair, when Conservative government ministers in the early 90s were found to be encouraging British businesses to sell arms parts to Saddam Hussein against UN sanctions. But by 2002/3 the story was the war; the how/when/where questions were paramount. Other views were widely reported – the biggest rally in British history, matched in anti-war marches across the world, the polls showing strong opposition to the war, the reservations of some in the military – but the story was the war. The peace/truth/people/solution narrative demanded by Lynch was the business of those trying to stop the war. But reporting demanded other priorities. I have already conceded that British journalism should have carried out more searching inquiries into uncritical reporting of the WMD reports, but this is a small concern compared to the demands made by Lynch.

In another specific case study in his paper Lynch (chapter 6, 88) comes back to the BBC Panorama programme *Moral Combat* that he has praised before. My principle objection to this programme was not, as he supposed, its historical narrative of how a coalition of the willing, outside the normal apparatus of NATO, the UN or EU, went to war. My objection was that it painted the Serbs as victims, and the Albanians as killers.

The course of the unfolding war in 1998/9 in Kosovo is becoming one of the most hotly contested periods of recent history. The international community did not, as he records, ride 'reluctantly to the rescue of a beleaguered minority'. They rode *enthusiastically*, at least in Blair's case, to the aid of what was a *majority* in that clearly defined region. As in Iraq, there was a clear decision to prepare for military action, not as a last resort, but as a new kind of foreign engagement – using armed force for moral causes – outlined by Blair in his Chicago speech, on the fiftieth anniversary of NATO, even while the war was still being fought (<http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page1297.asp>).

The conflict was part of a move by Blair's then new Labour government. He did not want another Bosnia, and was responsive to Kosovar views that they had been left out of the Dayton agreement. Other European countries were less enthusias-

tic, but were drawn along by British rhetoric. I remember a cartoon in a German newspaper showing Blair wearing an old British 'Tommy' helmet, jumping forward out a trench trying to lead other European leaders cowering behind him.

The war was not prosecuted quickly, because the Americans did not want to commit ground troops, and Serb and Yugoslav forces were competent at hiding from air raids, as they intensified the forced movement of Albanian-origin Kosovars from their homes. But that there would be foreign intervention was inevitable as early as September 1998, several months before the date Lynch chooses. I know this from intelligence sources I met on the ground in Kosovo then.

As a reporter with some acquaintance with this sequence of events, I have never taken a public stance on whether this was a 'good' or 'bad' intervention. But I do know how my reports were used: videos of casualties were copied, ferried to Washington, and significantly shortened the period before NATO bombing began (Loyn, 2005, 308) Lynch chooses to attack this military intervention in his paper, seeing as a 'civil conflict exacerbated by interventions on the part of the international community that were, at best, bumbling and ineffective,' although he has no sources for his claim that this 'version of events has steadily gained in salience.' (Lynch, chapter 6, 88)

Lynch has a selective memory too when it comes to examining the 7/7 bombings. He accuses journalists of fitting in with a narrative drawn up by politicians and diplomats that 'that the world we encounter is not of our making' (Lynch, chapter 6, 88). He must have been watching different programmes and reading different newspapers than me. There was widespread reporting about the impact of Iraq on home-grown terrorism, and the risks of allowing segregated communities to develop in Britain.

Lynch concludes with an exposition of reporting in Israel/Palestine. He misunderstands the reasons for the BBC's internal review into reporting, and does not take account of the background context. This is the hardest story to report in the world, partly because of the huge lobbies that all sides can mobilise internationally.

These lobbies are not evenly balanced. Israel is a recognised state, with a democratic system, and the considerable acts of violence of its forces have an international legitimacy that is lacking from the violent acts of Palestinians.

The international Israeli lobby is well-financed, organised and highly motivated, putting significant pressure on news organisations worldwide to reflect its narrative of the situation. It has disproportionate influence in particular on US policy makers. The Palestinian cause on the other hand, although it has huge international support, is divided, and easy to demonise, particularly after acts of terror inside and outside Israel itself. The divisions between Fatah and Hamas have complicated this situation even more.

The internal BBC review was set up in this context, following academic research showing, for example, as I quoted in my initial paper, that the audience misunderstand who are the 'occupiers' and who the 'occupied'. It was not set up with the peace journalism remedy or construct in mind, but to redeploy traditional journalistic tools in a place where the dominant narrative is too easily hijacked by the most articulate, English-speaking side.

I have engaged in this debate not only because I am concerned about peace journalism muddying the waters of critical analysis of journalism, but also because it is important to keep this door open. Like any other field of human endeavour, journalism needs to look over its shoulder constantly at other ways of doing things, and in particular be aware of the best academic research. Even journalists such as myself, with the 'narrow conceptual horizons' ascribed to me by Lynch, can see that there is something superficially attractive about a campaign to give democratic space to peacemakers.

But artificially clearing this space is editorially suspect. Peacemakers need to fight for the right to be heard as much as any other voices in the raucous market place of news. Yes, Galtung has a point in saying that they are systematically excluded. But then they have not faced the hurdles of winning votes. A democratic system does tend, for very good and proper reasons, to report more on those who have power to change lives than those who do not. It is the responsibility of journalism to reflect the voices of the powerless, but on their own merits, because they are contribute to a better understanding of the world, not because the reporter takes a position promoting their views. Lynch's challenge to me to follow the Galtung hypothesis is based on the belief that Galtung's *weltanschauung* has been 'established' – another closed, concluded, concrete word.

The problem with the peace journalism prescriptions and rules is that they actually *exclude* constructive engagement in the kind of research and insights that Lynch promotes. The closed nature of the Lynch response, leaving him in what he might call a 'feedback loop', seems to put peace journalism far outside the daily practice of journalism. His desire to look at this scientifically further alienates him from practical dialogue with practising journalists. His own research into British media, about Iran in a period in 2005, finds that the 'overall peace journalism quotient was about 15%, although some important publications, notably the *Financial Times* (22%), had more' (Lynch, chapter 6, 99). This is not empirical research, but self-serving analysis setting its own goalposts.

Similarly Lynch chooses to say that much of my own daily reporting is 'peace journalism.' I reject this for the simple reason, as stated above, that I see peace journalism as coming from one standpoint. It was not my *intention* to commit peace journalism, and that is the key difference. I have met enough lunatics, (although perhaps not enough lovers and poets) in working as a reporter, and absolutely fail

to see why Peleg believes that somehow my approach would exclude them. He goes on to deride my belief that we give attention to peacemakers only when they are 'successful.' I agree entirely with this textual criticism, since it is obvious that we report high-profile peacemaking disasters as well. I want to replace it with 'significant'. We report 'significant' peace initiatives, not insignificant ones. The point is that we do not go out *looking for* peacemakers. We go out to find out what is going on, engaging curiosity, and listening to poets, lovers and lunatics as well as everyone else, sifting for the flecks of gold that make the fragile narrative of a single news story on a single day. And yes, we try to report what *can be seen* as well as what is seen, not simply reflecting reality but exploring reality, not being subdued by organizational imperatives, regarding and not being manipulating readers' interests – all demands made by Peleg of journalism. The difference between me and him is this: he wants to make peace; as a reporter I want to give him and every other viewer, reader and listener the material he needs to do that. But if I am *partial*, taking sides, then my reporting is suspect, and nowadays my perspectives are competing with lunatics, lovers and poets, not just in the field, but in the blogosphere. The only USP of conventional 'mainstream media' is impartiality, and we kick out the props from under us if we lose that.

I think it is all more complicated, and not so certain. In the 24/7 environment with the internet screaming for attention alongside other output, trusted journalists standing on agreed ground are soon going to be at a real premium. We face the challenges of globalisation, climate change, poverty, the compelling new thesis from Naomi Klein (2007) that capitalism thrives on disaster, and US threats to Iran (making conflict a fact all the way from the Mediterranean to the Indus). This world requires far more robust tools than those offered by peace journalism.

## **It should be fair to criticize even noble ideas**

Counterplea by Thomas Hanitzsch

There was this chat that I had in my office just a few days ago. We talked about things we write or would like to write about. When I mentioned that I had published some two or three papers critical of peace journalism, one of my colleagues, quite astonished, spontaneously said: "How could you dare to criticize such a good thing?" – It was this very moment when I realized that criticizing a noble idea may sometimes turn out to be not very pleasant.

When Wilhelm Kempf invited me to participate in this special issue of *communication & conflict online*, I looked forward to an interesting and stimulating debate. I always thought of critique and critical scrutiny as something good and useful because it helps to improve theory and practice. This is particularly relevant in the context of this debate, as the impetus of peace journalism is clearly a critical one.

However, if a progressive movement starts to treat its critics unfairly and disrespectfully, then it runs the danger of turning into a self-contained and totalitarian ideology. The language of Samuel Peleg's (2007; chapter 7 in this volume, 104f.) rejoinder is quite revealing to this fact: He sees critics that are "united in their disrespect" for peace journalism attempting to "disqualify" it by "misfiring allegations", which he, in turn, perceives as an "attack" and "assault" on the very essence of peace journalism.

After all, I think it should be legitimate to criticize even a noble idea without moving on the path of the dark side of the Force or being seen as the Darth Vader of the peace journalism universe. In the introduction to his response paper, however, Peleg (ibid.) laments that peace journalism has taken a lot of "heat" from researchers and practitioners, then he goes on with unfounded accusations such as the one that suggests that I "disrespect" peace journalism and "don't spare any description to disparage it."

This is, of course, absurd. I have never said or done anything that comes even close to this. As a citizen, I actually like peace journalism very much, but as a journalist and communication scholar, I believe it does not work in its presented form, at least under the circumstances of modern news production. In this short paper I will, therefore, briefly respond to Jake Lynch (2007; chapter 6 in this volume) and

Samuel Peleg (chapter 7); and I shall focus my response on their contributions to this special issue.

### **Jake Lynch: Discontent with discontents**

Jake Lynch is an experienced and distinguished reporter who has thoughtfully analyzed the role of journalists in covering conflict and war. He is a good writer and a critical mind; and he very deliberately makes his case for the need of peace journalism. The epistemological approach he favors, critical realism and its notion of stratified reality, is certainly one way to go in conflict reporting and, thus, makes perfectly sense to me. In its most elaborated form, critical realism, according to Bhaskar (1997), assumes three domains of reality: the domain of the real, domain of the actual and domain of the empirical. In the production of news, events fall in the domain of the actual and perceived events in the domain of the empirical (Lau 2004). Yet interestingly, this strand in epistemology holds that critical realism is the *natural* way of knowing, which means that journalists can hardly escape from it. If that is true, then critical realism applies to any kind of reporting, which makes it far less peculiar to the reporting of peace and war.

Standpoint epistemology, the approach that I suggested, and critical realism are not mutually exclusive. In Bhaskar's philosophical approach, standpoint epistemology would fit in domain of the empirical. This would have substantial implications for peace journalists: Any perception of reality would then rest on the values of peace and peaceful conflict resolution – as opposed to an emphasis on conflict and war in traditional mainstream journalism. Standpoint epistemology, therefore, takes into account the normative impetus of peace journalism as outlined by Lynch (chapter 6, 83) who argues that "some forms of representation should be preferred to others."

In a subsequent section of his paper, Lynch discusses the tenets and basic values of peace journalism with reference to his distinction between war journalism and peace journalism. In his adaptation of Galtung's work, he sees war journalism as orientated toward violence, war, propaganda, elites and victories, while peace journalism emphasizes peace, conflict, truth, the people and solutions. However, such a distinction, useful as it may seem in theory, is far too simplistic to capture the complex picture of journalistic news production. Furthermore, the expectation that any coverage of conflicts should identify its "history, recent causes and internal composition – the different parties, the nature of their involvement, their perspectives, positions and motivations, and the different relationships between them in terms of power, allegiance and interest" (Francis, quoted in Lynch, chapter 6, 95) is so obviously taken out of the context of news making. The downsizing of editorial staff and cutback of resources allocated to reporting has become quite



pervasive in corporate journalism. Additionally, in many western countries, most notably the United States, growing clientelism and commercialization accounts for much of the shrinking autonomy of journalists.

Only a few privileged journalists would ever have the chance to keep up with the demands of conflict researchers; and Jake Lynch was clearly one of them. BBC reporters are, by and large and compared to their colleagues in other news organizations, quite fortunately equipped with editorial resources, including personnel, time and equipment. This is clearly one of the reasons why the BBC continues to be the flagship of good journalism. In stark contrast to this, most reporters on this planet simply don't have the time, equipment and autonomy to do what Galtung and peace researchers expect them to do.

Still discussing insights from peace research and conflict analysis, Lynch (chapter 6, 96) then criticizes me for my "lack of critical engagement with issues in conflict and peace." He finds it "odd" to quote the Heidelberg Institute, one of the most reputable institutions in the field of conflict research. What was meant as a brief and illustrative snapshot of a world of conflict and war became, in Lynch's response paper, elevated to an "unjustified" and insufficient conflict analysis. It is safe to say that such criticism is rather unfair.

In a similar vein, Lynch's (chapter 6, 99) discomfort with my "idiosyncratic definition of culture" implicit (sic!) in my writing is also a rather pretextual charge. In my initial article, I did not intend to suggest any particular definition of culture here, although journalistic cultures actually constitute the focus of my research (e.g. Hanitzsch 2006; 2007a, chapter 5 in this volume). I simply think that this debate is certainly not the place to struggle over definitions of culture, which is one of the most contested areas in the social sciences and humanities. Given the ever growing number of definitions, the British sociologist Margaret Archer (1996, 2) once noticed that "[w]hat culture is and what culture does are issues bogged down in a conceptual morass from which no adequate sociology of culture has been able to emerge." While Lynch's own understanding of culture – one that relates to power, struggle and contestation – generally makes sense, it is certainly not *per se* superior to other views.

### **Samuel Peleg: The peace activist**

Samuel Peleg is not only a professor for political communications and political violence but also a long time peace activist. After his military service as a tank commander in the Israeli Army, he became a driving force in the peace movement, most notably in *Peace Now* and *One Voice*. In his response to my initial article, it is rather the peace activist that speaks out, and not the scholar. I wouldn't have any problem with this, if Peleg's rejoinder had cited me correctly.

In his response paper, Peleg (chapter 7, 104f.) suggests that I allegedly argued that peace journalism is "incompatible with the true nature of journalism". The truth is, I have never written anything like this. I am not sure what the "true nature" of journalism is; and it would be odd to use such an essentialist concept in the analysis of human-made news production. What I actually proposed was an analytical distinction between journalism and other modes of public communication, including public relations, advertising and entertainment. Within the subfield of journalism, one can still find a notable diversity in professional ideologies and practices, from the objective just-the-facts reporting to advocacy journalism.

Peleg (*ibid.*, 107) obviously misinterpreted this approach by claiming: "His logic is that peace journalism is public relations and not real journalism because 'it advocates and promotes a certain way of action'." This is clearly a misleading interpretation of what I actually wrote. My contention was that public relations is different from journalism because its communication goals usually originate from the outside, whereas in journalism, communication goals are defined by the journalists themselves and their news organizations. In my view, journalists can clearly have and promote a personal agenda, which becomes manifest most notably in commentary and advocacy journalism. I have not suggested that it would be "dishonorable" to take sides against genocide and ethnic cleansing or that it would be "amateurish" to passionately promote awareness against massive raping and barbarism. But we are in trouble when it is the journalist who identifies the victim and the perpetrator, good and evil, and when it is the journalist who decides if a "genocide" – a massively misused concept – is taking place.

To confound my analytical definition of journalism with any "consecration of the objectivity totem" (Peleg, *ibid.*) is certainly unfair; and to evoke Mephisto and the Nazis in this context is clearly bizarre. In my critique of peace journalism, I was never referring to objectivity and objective reporting as a proper alternative. I agree with Peleg that the concept of objectivity has always been somewhat slippery and that few reporters could attest to total neutrality and impartiality. However, his critique is dishonest as he limits the concept to a metaphysical understanding of objectivity as an unattainable ideal. The view of objectivity as a method, on the other hand, is based on the procedural aspects of news production by referring to traditional standards of good journalism such as accuracy, balance, fairness and reliability (Lichtenberg, 2000; Ward, 1998). Framed in such a procedural perspective, objectivity is clearly possible and highly desirable.

Peleg (chapter 7, 107) also suggests that my critical assessment of the epistemological foundation of peace journalism is inconsistent: "First (2004), peace journalism has a naïve epistemological perspective, then it matured to epistemological realism, since it assumes there is a true and proper version of reality and accordingly, peace journalism attacks conventional journalism as 'misrepresenting reali-

ty' by showing only partial facts (2007, 5). Finally, Hanitzch [sic!] admits, peace journalism has no epistemology at all and its proponents need to define it."

This reading of my critique is rather dubious. As a matter of fact, I argued that *some* advocates of peace journalism subscribe to a naïve epistemological view on media coverage and that peace journalism as an analytical concept seems to be *prone* to epistemological realism. Then I moved on by contending that peace journalism may still have to *define* its epistemological foundation. This is not the same as to say that peace journalism has no epistemology at all. Journalism is "intimately bound up with claims to knowledge and truth" (Ekström 2002, 260); and there can hardly be any dispute over the fact that epistemology underpins *all* approaches to news making.

## Conclusion

After all, the major disagreement between Lynch and Peleg and me is related to the much larger question of peace journalism's power to fight against deeply engrained standards of reporting as well as the organizational and institutional imperatives of news production. Peleg (chapter 7, 108) writes that peace journalism "aims at individuals as agents of change and as harbingers of an innovative mindset ... By so doing, peace journalism is thoroughly cognizant of the structural confines of the journalistic setting and one of its foremost challenges ... is to mitigate and tone down the effects of structuralism." Judging from a thorough review of the literature in the field of journalism studies and from my own experience as a journalist, and having done extensive research myself, I am far less optimistic than Lynch and Peleg.

Like it or not, peace journalism stands at odds with the market-driven demands of commercial news production. Corporate journalism needs to "sell" content to an audience that is as large as possible, while at the same time, low budgets for news production degrade journalism's capability to enlighten society. In other media venues, most notably in public broadcasting and quality newspapers, progressive journalism already found its place, although it may not be called peace reporting but good or high-quality journalism.

In this respect, Peleg (chapter 7, 106) makes an interesting argument: "Peace journalism asserts that a more appropriate standard for good journalism should be *fairness* and *accuracy*." In contrast to Peleg, I argue that exactly these values belong, in a procedural sense, to the basic and long-standing tenets of good journalism. How can peace journalists "hijack" these elementary values of good journalism and still claim that peace journalism is different?

I believe it would be much more acceptable for many reporters in the field if the peace journalism discourse is rather framed as part of the debate over the nor-

mative base of good journalism. Suggesting that peace journalism is something fundamentally different would mean to reach only a very small number of journalists who happen to cover conflict and war. However successful peace journalism will become in the future, these few reporters will never reach a critical mass that is needed to change the basic essentials and workings of corporate journalism. Hence, if Lynch argues that the fact that audiences became much more knowledgeable of the Palestinian conflict indicates an increase in peace journalism, I would answer that this is a promising sign of proliferating good journalism.

## **It seems that we are captured in the heat of combat**

Counterplea by Samuel Peleg

If we are to believe dialectics, then the meeting between the thesis of conventional journalism and the antithesis of peace journalism should create a constructive fusion that will produce in turn, a more lucid, more invigorated and more updated synthesis of journalism. This blessed blending could enjoy the premise of the "old" and the promise of the "new". In the current head-bashing between Loyn and Hanitzsch on the one side and Lynch and me on the other (chapters 4–7 in this volume), it seems that we are captured in the heat of combat rather than enjoying the excitement of the blending.

Part of the sparks flare from seemingly uncalled for personal allusions and remarks. They do not serve each of us right. For example, Hanitzsch (2007c; chapter 9 in this volume) protests my language of using words like "attack" and "assault" in criticizing Loyn's and his articles on peace journalism. These nouns were used figuratively to denote eight or nine objections advanced by the two authors against peace journalism using among others concepts such as irrelevant, miscalculated, naive and lacking an epistemological basis. The reference to assault was not meant in the moral sense of the "dark side" against the "good guys" but was raised to indicate the totality of criticism, which was directed not only at implications and practices of the new theory but also at its very essence and *raison d'être*.

When Hanitzsch (chapter 9, 129) is uncomfortable with my observations he indicates that "This is the peace activist (in Peleg) that speaks out and not the scholar" as if to suggest that peace activists cannot really engage in analytical and methodical erudite debates perhaps because they are preoccupied rubbing shoulders with sweaty companions in town squares and check-posts. In my case at least, being an activist has made me a better scholar and being a scholar has made me a better activist. But this cco debate is not really about me or anybody else of the discussants in this interesting, but occasionally frustrating, deliberation. It is about a new and imperative idea's right to exist. The history of ideas is fraught with such arguments and dispute about the necessity of innovations. The fault-lines were usually drawn between the advocates of change and the guard-

ians of the familiar, or as Charles Tilly (1978) calls them – the challengers and the incumbents.

Inundating the discussion with disagreeable adjectives such as "bizarre", "dubious" and "dishonest" with regard to my rejoinder, cannot cloud sincere and profound doubts I raised concerning Hanitzsch's approach to peace journalism. But as *soft answer turneth away wrath* (proverbs 15:1) I will do my best to grapple with the Loyn and Hanitzsch response in a mild and evenhanded manner.

If Hanitzsch is so sensitive to being cited correctly, as indeed he should be, he will probably notice that my point about the true nature of journalism (Peleg, chapter 7, 104) was not a quotation of his words but the general impression that emerges out of his and Loyn's initial articles, and I gather several statements to back this impression up. When he writes, for example, that the journalism quadrant in his model is based on the professionalism mode, which "emphasizes objectivity, neutrality and detachment" (Hanitzsch, chapter 5, 74), it reflects a lot of what Hanitzsch believes journalism should be in a quite essentialist manner, despite his claim that he is not "sure what the true nature of journalism is" (Hanitzsch, chapter 9, 130). Moreover, if he doesn't have a view of the true nature of journalism, how come he is so certain about the meaning of "good journalism"?

Hanitzsch's analytical distinction of various types of public communication, helpful and intriguing in its own right, still pushes peace journalism out of the box that designates journalism toward the PR box especially when "journalists start to actively engage in conflict resolution" (Hanitzsch, chapter 5, 74). So it is indeed a certain way of action which sets peace journalists apart from actual journalists, for a lack of a better word. Conversely to his claim, I interpreted Hanitzsch's writing quite accurately: he certainly accredits the distinction between journalism and PR to what he terms communication goals, but he also adds the activism factor to accentuate the difference. This additional factor is precisely where peace journalism (of the "interventionist" kind) fails to make the grade, according to Hanitzsch's analysis.

David Loyn flatly rejects my comment that conflict prevention is everyone's job. Perhaps I was too general, and thus let me rephrase my statement: preventing conflicts is *everyone who can's* job; and journalists, with their potential to influence public opinion, certainly can. Journalists are what Gamson and Modigliani (1987) call "political sponsors" – they update their readers' political agenda, stimulate their worldview and inspire opinions and values. As such they can contribute a great deal to the contraction of conflict by shrinking public support to leaders and initiatives which espouse belligerent tendencies.

Objectivity keeps surfacing as a tender bone of contention between exponents and antagonists of peace journalism. Hanitzsch contests my defiance of objectivity

as the centerpiece for good journalism by admitting that he never regarded it as a proper alternative. However, in every description he supplies of professional journalism, objectivity primes. My examples of Mephisto and Auschwitz may have been staggering, as I myself clearly stated, but they were deliberately chosen to hone the point of how the seemingly naïve façade of objectivity can turn sour in the most extreme cases. I, deplorably but emphatically, disagree with Loyn's assertion that my reference to Baudrillard's analysis was bogus. To far too many people in the world, Auschwitz had definitely been an armchair diversion. To numerous onlookers, the death camps were never actually a part of the Second World War but a sinister and clandestine undercurrent concealed by the glorified blaze of battle and the mundane technocratic machinery of evil (Arendt, 1965). In such a context, I certainly hope Loyn will be more congenial to my theoretical reference.

Loyn (2007b, 1; chapter 8 in this volume, 120) comes to grips with my fictitious Auschwitz report by dissecting it to details: "And who is his hypothetical reporter – a Nazi, a German working in the underground, or a foreigner? If it was the latter, then this reporting might have shortened the war, since at the time the full horror of the death camps was not public knowledge in Britain". But this comment is utterly irrelevant: none of these putative reporters (except, of course, the first option Loyn raises, a Nazi, perhaps someone like the bureaucratic genius Adolph Eichmann, who was "just doing his job". He could have, no doubt, dispatched a brilliant dispassionate and impartial report of a body count) could have been "neutral and objective" in such unbearable circumstances. One simply cannot describe carnage of innocent human beings and remain detached and remote. Worse yet is to camouflage such aloofness as being a professional etiquette: this is making a mockery of the quintessence of morality. By using the honorable Richard Dimbleby's famous Bergen-Belsen description as an example, Loyn inadvertently validates my point: this is a touching and mesmerizing illustration of a keen observer, a cry out against brutality and pointless massacre in a dignified, non tempestuous manner. In other words, this is peace journalism at its best.

Loyn characterizes me and many advocates of peace journalism, who I am proud to be associated with, as constantly wanting the world to be better than it is. I passionately admit to that burden and I think it is a noble one, to reiterate Hantitzsch's terminology. Peace journalism is not about shooting the messengers (was that pun intended? We are talking *peace* journalism ...) but about sending a message to the shooters that their deeds will not be glorified nor rewarded.

I honestly don't understand the distinction between metaphysical and procedural perceptions of objectivity: the latter is a corollary of the former and is guided by it. No one acts objectively unless he or she believes in the merits of objectivism as a goal and as a principle. One does not posit objectivism at the core of journal-

ism if one perceives objectivism as a mere procedure. Even more puzzling is Hanitzsch's (chapter 9, 130) concern of "the journalist who identifies the victim and the perpetrator, good and evil, and when it is the journalist decides if a 'genocide' ... is taking place". Who then, should identify and decide: the readers? An international tribunal? If reporters cannot be trusted of being able to distinguish right from wrong, how can they be entrusted with deciding between factual and fictional and having their goals internally defined, as belonging to the journalism quadrant requires? And besides, how complicated is it to identify a genocide when coming across one? I think Hanitzsch's worry, in this respect at least, is exaggerated.

The insistence on peace journalism being principally an updated version of good journalism, and therefore, it is redundant at best and bogus and a "hijacker of good journalism's values" at worse, is erroneous. Peace journalism is not simply good journalism in other words. It is based on a unique and innovative premise that conflicts can be avoided, de-escalated and even resolved by a prudent, profoundly analyzed and fairly written journalistic coverage. In Loyn and Hanitzsch's opinion, this is out of the reporter's jurisdiction. Perhaps the distinction should be stated as the difference between how conflict reports should be written and how they should be read. Peace journalism is geared toward demystifying the mystic of violent conflicts and it operates under the onus of profound social responsibility. It does not advocate peace or conflict resolution, but it is certainly inspired by their prospects. And this is by far a different creature than "good journalism": If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, you can be reasonably sure it is a duck and not merely a fine specimen of the birds' family of Anatidae.



## A reply to the replies

Counterplea by Jake Lynch

David Loyn is right to say that his and my journalistic desiderata would substantially overlap. I have commented that his own reporting could, in many cases, be called peace journalism. He suggests, instead, that the "key difference" between us is that "it was not [his] *intention* to commit peace journalism" (2007b, 4; chapter 8 in this volume, 125; emphasis in the original). Boiled down, then, his objections can be seen to rest on an intentionalist fallacy. I reckon peace journalism is better understood as a response to a condition we inhabit.

Consider – few of us, indeed, would set out to 'commit' post-modernism, when deciding to wear 'classic' clothing or listen to 'retro' music, but, in so doing, we are preferring referentiality to originality – a response to the post-modern condition, finding ourselves surrounded by a deep stack of archived narratives and images, endlessly reproduced and disseminated.

It means our lived experience of meaning-making is highly textual, or inter-textual. *The Da Vinci Code*, for instance, appeals to us because it resonates with this experience, by blurring the boundaries of fact and fiction, and by drawing our attention to competing narratives and inconvenient details, which, once retrieved from the margins, threaten to unravel the whole. It plays with modes of reading familiar to us from many contexts; modes we would recognise, in the writings of Jacques Derrida, as deconstruction. While the world's beaches, in 2004, were knee-deep in copies of Dan Brown's best-seller, however, I have yet to see *Of Grammatology* propped open on a deckchair.

Peace journalism became thinkable in the previous condition, the one we look back on as late modernity, with its key critical discourse of structuralism – the insight that, when we observe and represent the outside world, the patterns we discern are structured by the conventions we apply – even if, once again, most of us are unaware of it. Thomas Kuhn published *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* in 1962; the English translation of *Structural Anthropology*, by Claude Levi-Strauss, appeared in 1963 and the *Journal of Peace Research* featured Galtung and Ruge's 'Structure of Foreign News' in 1965.

The acts of observation and representation – the work journalists do – had effectively been problematised. Research on the news, in the fields of Communication and Peace and Conflict Studies, became dominated by identification and discussion, based on such methods as content analysis and subject interviews, of conventions operating on the selection of stories, sourcing, narrative structure and so on.

Later, the concept of representation was itself further opened up – 'decentred', to use an idiom from the new critical discourse of post-structuralism – by reception theory, a contribution from exponents of Cultural Studies, notably Stuart Hall (1980). Journalists both 'decode' texts and images, in Hall's words, and 're-encode' them. Editors and reporters may produce negotiated, or even oppositional readings – of corporate press releases, say, or war propaganda. The tension at the centre of journalistic work is between such readings and the effect of conventions governing what can be said, by whom, how, where and when.

The debate over peace journalism picks up on a pervasive sense of paradigm shift, that these conventions have been exposed – the tide of critical awareness has risen high enough to float them off what I have called "sedimented layers of tradition, assumption and definition" (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, xxi) and break them loose from their moorings.

### **Alignment and after**

The gravitational pull behind the tide – to continue the metaphor – is coming from equal or greater shifts in social, political and economic conditions, shifts underway at least since the end of the Cold War.

How come? News has traditionally been aligned with nation. The commodification of news, enabled by the invention of the rotary printing press in 1843, both accompanied and reinforced the construction of imagined communities. "Print-language is what invents nationalism", in Anderson's words (1991, 134). News about conflict is, traditionally, organised around this alignment to a greater extent than any other – hence the old US newspaper maxim, "One dead American equals 10 dead Israelis equals 100 dead Russians equals 1,000 dead Africans" (Steyn, 2004).

The Cold War held this alignment in place, within the context of larger alignments. As late as 1995, a newsflow study of 44 countries found the United States far and away the biggest focus of international news, with France, the UK, Russia and China trailing in its wake (Wu, 2004, 107). The fact that Rwanda registers nowhere in this study – based, as it was, on data collected within a year of the catastrophic genocide that left up to a million dead – is as good a starting point as any to con-

sider the larger context within which journalistic conventions for the reporting of conflict have come under such sustained scrutiny and criticism.

In brief – Rwanda came to represent a failure of global governance, since the head of the UN military mission there, Canadian General Romeo Dallaire, passed on explicit warnings about the bloodshed to come, months in advance, with an application for a modest number of reinforcements to forestall widescale violence. The reaction? His pleas were rejected, the mission drawn down and Rwandans abandoned to their fate.

The Canadian government convened the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, whose final report, *The Responsibility to Protect*, enshrined the concept of 'humanitarian intervention', up to and including military action, to protect human rights. It quickly became the orthodox view. The head of the UN Department of Peacekeeping at the time of the Rwandan genocide, Kofi Annan, had by now become Secretary-General, and his millennium report, *We the Peoples*, heralded "a more human-centred approach to security as *opposed to the traditional state-centred approach*" (my italics) (UN, 2000).

In other words, human rights – a definitively internationalist concept, belonging to all nations and none – was now to be the paramount analytical factor in international assessments of conflicts and crises. Some influential figures in the journalistic community congratulated themselves on having helped to bring this about. Roy Gutman of *Newsday* identified "the glare of media attention ... and public outcry" as having been instrumental in triggering intervention to prevent "savagery" in former Yugoslavia (Gutman & Rieff, 2000).

*The Responsibility to Protect* appears to promote the obligation to respond to what it calls "conscience-shocking situations" above even the need to obtain legal cover – and how is our conscience to be shocked, if events such as those in Rwanda drop off the edges of the news agenda? They did so, remember, because the authorities in the nation states that dominate international news flow – the US and UK – had no interest in drawing attention to it. Indeed, as Linda Melvern has shown, in a memorable piece of investigative journalism, they conspired, in closed session of the UN Security Council, to prevent the word, 'genocide' from being used in official communiqués (Melvern, 2006).

The 'hierarchy of death', a phenomenon of the alignment of news with nation, and the underpinning, in turn, for pervasive journalistic conventions of sourcing and framing in representations of the world around us, was now at odds, more clearly than before, with the job many journalists – like David Loyn – aspire to do, and with what I have called "time-honoured expectations" that journalism will provide "a reliable account of what is really going on" (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, xv).

## The journalism of attachment

Into this context was inserted the concept of 'the journalism of attachment', which Hanitzsch has characterized as: "belong[ing] to the broad area of political public relations as it clearly has the intention to alter attitudes and behaviours of the audiences" (2004a, 193).

This is a little unfair, but there is a problem with journalists becoming what one critic called "Solomons of the cyber-age" and framing stories about conflict solely in terms of human rights abuses; not necessarily because of what Hanitzsch, too, reads as intentionality, but perhaps merely by the act of framing. Entman puts it well:

"To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, *in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation*" (emphasis added) (1993, 51-52).

The point is, as Chandler (2002) shows, expectations that allegations of human rights abuse will be met with military intervention can be responsible for prolonging wars – the pursuit of positive peace can imperil negative peace.

Then, appeals to human rights were instrumentalised, in political public relations, to sway publics behind military interventions in Yugoslavia – the Kosovo case – and Iraq. Yes, Iraq. British Prime Minister Tony Blair intoned, on the day of the worldwide anti-war marches in February, 2003:

"The moral case against war has a moral answer: it is the moral case for removing Saddam. It is not the reason we act. That must be according to the UN mandate on weapons of mass destruction. But it is the reason, frankly, why if we do have to act, we should do so with a clear conscience".

This new line, accompanied by (yet another) 'dossier', this time from the UK Foreign Office, titled, *Saddam Hussein: crimes and human rights abuses*, proved effective in turning public opinion – and parliamentary opinion – and attaining the majorities in both which sent Britain to war.

One of Blair's earlier speeches, in Chicago, set out what he called "the doctrine of international community". That was in April, 1999, as the bombs were actually dropping on Yugoslavian territory, in Nato's 'Operation Allied Force', and it anticipated the arguments put forward two years later in *The Responsibility to Protect*. However, as I have argued, in this series of exchanges and elsewhere, neither OAF nor 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' met the criteria set out in that document as 'precautionary principles', particularly these:

- Right intention: The primary purpose of the intervention, whatever other motives intervening states may have, must be to halt or avert human suffering...
- Last resort: Military intervention can only be justified when every non-military

option for the prevention or peaceful resolution of the crisis has been explored, with reasonable grounds for believing lesser measures would not have succeeded.

- Proportional means: The scale, duration and intensity of the planned military intervention should be the minimum necessary to secure the defined human protection objective.
- Reasonable prospects: There must be a reasonable chance of success in halting or averting the suffering which has justified the intervention, with the consequences of action not likely to be worse than the consequences of inaction.

In this condition, 'human rights' cannot, on their own, offer what I have called "a vantage point from which to observe and report" (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, 222). Peace journalism is a fuller and more coherent response to the 'post-aligned' condition we now inhabit. It permits the inspection from the outside of a human rights discourse that can lend itself – and has lent itself – to campaigns to mobilise populations for violent responses to conflict.

In so doing, it creates opportunities for society at large to consider and to value non-violent responses. Note – opportunities. If society at large does not take those opportunities, or if people do consider non-violent responses, weigh them in the balance, and decide that, after all, they prefer violent ones, so be it. What we can say is that the effect of journalistic conventions on news representations of conflict is such as to constrict those opportunities. Peace journalism is not about promoting peace – it's about giving peace a chance.

## Determinism

Time for the pendulum to swing back a little. If the case for peace journalism should not be interpreted as a form of intentionalism, then neither should it be seen as deterministic. To catch the distinctions, our theoretical net needs to be finer than that which Hanitzsch weaves out of his structural-functionalist threads. It is not that we can judge, finally, which is the 'best' or 'true' definition of culture; rather, to hold a meaningful conversation about peace journalism, we need to conceptualise culture in such a way as to foreground the contestability of cultural practices like journalistic representations and conventions.

The condition we're in *contains* this contestation; without it, we would be in a different condition. Loyn is right to observe that news about conflict is now *increasingly* contestable, viewed as a subject for critical examination, rather than a given. Indeed, I lay claim to a modest share of the credit for that, as a co-founder and director of Reporting the World. It's a shame he attended only our first, rather callow effort; by the end, the level of discussion (as recorded in Lynch, 2004) was much higher.

As a response to what I could call this 'post-aligned' condition, peace journalism is present, and rising. Loyn may dislike the findings of my own study, operationalising peace journalism as a set of evaluative criteria for content analysis (Lynch, 2006a), but he should be aware that there are others out there (such as Lee & Maslog, 2005 and Lee et al., 2006) and more are coming (Hackett, 2007, to name but one).

Some of what is being measured may indeed be the result of editors and reporters adopting deliberate strategies to supplement conventions which they see as predisposing the news towards a form we could recognize as war journalism. Some of them may even call it peace journalism; but that should not be seen as a requirement to practise it, or for the rest of us to describe it as such.

## **Part V**

### **Synthesis**





## **Peace journalism: A tightrope walk between advocacy journalism and constructive conflict coverage**

Wilhelm Kempf

Toward the end of the last millennium, peace researchers, journalists and media people began to think about how the potential of the media could be used not only to fuel conflicts, but rather to encourage peaceful conflict settlement and serve as mediators of peace-building and reconciliation processes.

What was initially still an academic project quickly developed into a movement that united under the slogan of "peace journalism" in part quite heterogeneous efforts. And as any movement, it brought about its critics as well: media researchers and journalists who regard the peace journalism movement as an assault on the integrity of journalism and its professional norms.

The present paper takes up the arguments of some of the most prominent opponents and adherents of the peace journalism project and presents a point of view, under which they can be reconciled. If peace journalism is understood the right way, it is not an antipode of good journalism but its necessary prerequisite.

### **1. Journalism or public relations?**

The term peace journalism combines two elements that are difficult to harmonize: *peace* and *journalism*.

Journalism is a form of public communication that is subject to professional norms. Because of these norms it differs from other types of public communication, for example, Public Relations.

The professional norms of good journalism include in particular the following: truthfulness, objectivity, neutrality and detachment. For Public Relations these norms are at best irrelevant. The only thing that matters is success. And this success is measured in terms of achieving specific communication aims which are externally "defined by a client, host organization or particular groups of stakeholders" (Hanitzsch, 2007a, 2; chapter 5 in this volume, 73). Typical aims are,

e.g., to convince the public of the attractiveness of a product, of the justice of one's own political goals or also of the wrongfulness of a political opponent.

Good journalism differs from Public Relations precisely because it does not aim to influence the public, but rather pursues only the goal of reporting truthfully about reality. As David Loyn, a BBC correspondent and prominent critic of peace journalism, has maintained: "Our task is always to seek to find out what is going on, not carrying any other baggage" (Loyn, 2003).

Good journalism has just one aim: to represent reality accurately. The other characteristics of good journalism – objectivity, neutrality and detachment – are means to reach this aim (Loyn, 2007a; chapter 4 in this volume).

Peace journalism combines journalism with peace as an external aim. It understands itself as "a normative mode of responsible and conscientious media coverage of conflict *that aims at* contributing to peacemaking, peacekeeping, and changing the attitudes of media owners, advertisers, professionals, and audiences towards war and peace" (Shinar, 2007, 2).

A goal conflict arises out of this that arouses concern that peace journalism "could compromise the integrity of journalists and confuse their role as neutral disseminators of facts" (Loyn, 2003).

This concern is all the more justified because some supporters of peace journalism seem all too inclined to underrate values like objectivity, neutrality and detachment (e.g., Mc Goldrick, 2006; Peleg, 2007; chapter 7 in this volume) and to lump peace journalism together with other terms (e.g., Shinar, 2007, 4) "that refer to advocacy models of reporting – such as the 'journalism of attachment' (Bell, 1997), 'victim journalism' (Hume, 1997), 'justice journalism' (Messman, 2001), and 'engaged journalism' (Lynch, 2003)." According to Lynch & McGoldrick (2005, quoted in McGoldrick, 2006, 4), "peace journalism is when editors and reporters make choices – of what stories to report, and how to report them".

The two together, disregarding the tools of good journalism and understanding peace journalism as a form of advocacy journalism, create a dangerous mix which is prone to abuse the noble goal of peace as a legitimization for biased coverage. Journalism of this kind "will not stand neutrally between good and evil, right and wrong, the victim and the oppressor" (Bell, 1997, 8). Where this can ultimately lead has been shown in a fateful manner by the journalism of attachment. When journalists go on a "crusade against conventional reporting" (Peleg, chapter 7, 111), they all too easily become recruits for the propaganda war (ASPR, 2003). But peace propaganda is nothing other than propaganda either, and a peace journalism that crosses the border to propaganda does not deserve to bear the name of journalism. According to a proposal by Thomas Hanitzsch (chapter 5), it ought to be banished to the domain of Public Relations.

A peace journalism that deserves the name is only conceivable as good journalism and requires more than just good will and a moral impetus.

## **2. Journalistic responsibility**

Impartiality and objectivity are indispensable tools of good journalism, and David Loyn (chapter 4, 59) is right when he concludes that the reporter's tools need to be sharpened, not altered: "Rather than disregard the concept, it is more fruitful to consider the structures that support better or worse practice" (Seaton, 2005, 198).

As soon as we call for better practice, however, it turns out that truth or truthfulness are not values in themselves. The striving for truth in particular meets an obvious practical need. Truthfulness makes it possible to add to our knowledge stock the experiences of others as guides for our own actions. Since we draw on them all the time, reliance on the assertions of others is an indispensable element of our own everyday life practice. That is, there is a justified interest in being sure that only statements will be made that can be defended in every case (and not just to uncritical or uninformed opponents) (cf. Kambartel, 1968).

This applies in particular to the assertions of journalism, and even more so to conflict journalism. War and peace are events of existential significance that no one can disregard.

When Jörg Becker (2002) maintains that the media have a political obligation to participate in and stand up for peace of their own accord, this is not just the opinion of a German political scientist, but rather the consensus of the legal framework and codes of conduct established by international and national law, trade unions and responsible media institutions.

Art. 3 of the 1978 UNESCO Media Declaration, for instance, states that, "the mass media have an important contribution to make to the strengthening of peace and international understanding and in countering racialism, apartheid and incitement to war" (UNESCO, 1979, 102). Also the numerous ethical codes for journalists that apply in almost all the countries of the world give expression to similar self-imposed obligations and contain the obligation to act for peace and against any kind of war propaganda (cf. Becker, 2004).

David Loyn also honors these codes of conduct for providing a framework which enables journalists to engage in robust skeptical inquiry, but also to comply with libel laws and remain on the right side of civilized discourse.

Even if he fears that "highly prescriptive rules" might "inhibit good journalism," Loyn (chapter 4, 54) has thereby approached a perspective that sees no insurmountable conflicts between objectivity and normativity. And with the insight that

"a side-effect of my reporting may be that it makes conflict resolution harder or easier," Loyn (chapter 4, 67) comes closer to peace journalism than he thinks.

Journalists are responsible for the way, for *how* they report; and even the creation of "opportunities for society at large to consider and to value non-violent responses to conflict," as called for by Lynch & McGoldrick (2005, quoted in McGoldrick, 2006, 4), is not an external goal imposed on journalism from outside. The obligation to create these opportunities results directly from the role assigned to journalism in democratic societies.

In that Loyn regards the above-named "side-effects" of journalistic work as mere 'collateral damage' which is to be investigated later, "after our reporting" (chapter 4, 67), he thereby not only distances himself from the concept of – however understood – peace journalism, but rather also attacks the model of good journalism that he intends to defend against it.

Of course professional journalists do not set out to reduce conflict. They seek to present accurate and impartial news coverage. But it is often through good reporting that conflict is reduced (Howard, 2003), and what is demanded is no more than responsible journalism. Without responsibility, good journalism is inconceivable.

Thus we replace David Loyn's (chapter 4) provocative dichotomy of "good journalism *or* peace journalism" with the normative formula "good journalism = responsible journalism = peace journalism."

### **3. War discourse vs. peace discourse**

Implying that both good journalism and peace journalism need a more sophisticated approach, this formula is no less provocative. Indeed, the idea behind this formula has inspired the work of generations of media researchers and journalists who have criticized the media for falling into the propaganda trap.

David Loyn has a point when he argues that journalistic practices which commit themselves to the adoption of particular perspectives are bound to be less objective than others. But the proximity of mainstream conflict coverage and war propaganda shows that it is not peace journalism which is tied to the adoption of a particular perspective, but on the contrary: the traditional tools of journalism are not sufficient to guarantee good journalism. While "reporters live in a social context and share a language and certain assumptions with their audience" (Loyn, chapter 4, 58), "propaganda sets out precisely to penetrate and transform shared language and assumptions" (Lynch, 2007, 3; chapter 6 in this volume, 85).

While in principle conflict is open to interpretation as either a competitive (win-lose) or a cooperative (win-win) process (Deutsch, 1973), conventional war discourse, as initiated by political and military elites and adopted by mainstream journalism and its public, is all about the questions: "Who is the aggressor?" and "How can he be stopped?"

Whether deliberately or not, by adopting this particular perspective, societal discourse reduces conflict to a zero-sum game and becomes a motor of conflict escalation (ASPR, 2003).

Only if it goes beyond such win-lose scenarios can journalism contribute to the transformation of war discourse into a more constructive form of discourse which is guided by questions like: "What is the problem?" and "How can it be resolved?" Broadening the perspective on conflict and opening it to peaceful alternatives, therefore, is the very essence of *de-escalation oriented conflict coverage*, which I have suggested as a first step of peace journalism (chapter 3, 44).

This is neither a highly prescriptive rule which might inhibit good journalism, nor does it imply that we should adopt a particular perspective. On the contrary, it is a rule which only forbids the unacceptable. It is a rule which enjoins journalists to not limit their perspective to that of the war-making elites. It is a rule which prohibits volunteering on the propaganda front.

If this is how we understand it, peace journalism is not an antipode, but rather a necessary prerequisite of good journalism.

If this is what we aim at, we must make clear, however, that our understanding of peace journalism is completely different from the way some of its adherents and critics have interpreted Galtung's demand that journalists should become active participants, playing a part in the complex 'cat's cradle' that makes up a conflict.

David Loyn (cf. chapter 4) is right when he states that reporting and peacemaking are different roles, and that peacemaking is simply not the journalist's role. In addition, it cannot be the function of journalism to mediate between conflict parties, to sit down at a negotiating table with them and moderate their disputes (Kempf & Jaeger, 2005).

Journalism and the media do, however, play an essential role in the societal construction of reality that can be fulfilled in different ways: Through the type of news coverage chosen they can give an impetus either to the escalation or to the de-escalation of conflicts.

So viewed, journalism also does not have to be first an active participant playing a part in the complex 'cat's cradle' that makes up a conflict. It already is and always will be. What peace journalism demands of it is merely to assume responsibility for *how* it fulfills this role.

#### 4. New wine in old bottles?

Already Gjeltén (2001) pointed out that there is no necessity for journalists to place their professional abilities in the service of either conflict resolution or prevention: They must simply do their work better – in the frame of the traditional standards of their profession. But if peace journalism is nothing other than good journalism, isn't this just old wine in new bottles, as Thomas Hanitzsch (chapter 5) has criticized? *No, it is not*. For the fulfillment of these standards presupposes specific conflict competencies, and whether journalists possess or acquire these competencies should not be left to chance (Kempf & Jaeger, 2005).

To study the conditions and possibilities under which journalists *can* actually perform their work better, even in war and crisis situations, and to provide the necessary competencies: this is how I understand the program of peace journalism.

David Loyn (cf. chapter 4) also claims that journalists need methods for a more complex understanding of context and would be more likely to be accurate and impartial if they, and their editors, had an understanding of their own psychology and blind spots, and of the psychology of the news story and its actors.

Journalists are themselves members of society and are subject not only to certain institutional pressures (Bläsi, 2006), but also to the same social-psychological mechanisms as other people, particularly to the competitive misperceptions (Deutsch, 1973) which, so to speak, adjust automatically with their own involvement in escalating conflict (Kempf, 2002; ASPR, 2003).

Although Thomas Hanitzsch (chapter 5) is right in claiming that there are manifold nuances in the media, it cannot be ignored that typical mainstream coverage reduces conflicts to force and violence. It contains little knowledge of the dynamics of conflict and no ideas for alternatives to violence. Even journalists who feel committed to traditional standards of truth and objectivity tend to paint pictures in black and white, often reducing conflicts to simple antagonisms in order to make news stories more exciting, and the conflict more understandable for their public.

Intractable conflicts are demanding, stressful, painful, exhausting and costly in both human and material terms. This requires that societal members develop conditions to facilitate successful coping. One aspect of the conditions provided by war culture is a psychological infrastructure that consists, for example, of commitment to one's own side and its leadership, the maintenance of its objectives, high motivation to contribute, perseverance and readiness for personal sacrifice (Bartal, 1998).

All these mechanisms lend plausibility to an escalation-prone misrepresentation of reality which is typical of mainstream conflict coverage and requires special efforts to overcome.

Thomas Hanitzsch (2004a, 205) also agrees: "What we need is more quality in journalism." Nothing needs to be added to this other than that it is precisely in conflict coverage that this quality does not establish itself on its own. Professional norms are necessary, but not sufficient to guarantee good journalism and a more constructive mode of conflict coverage (Shinar, 2007). In order to produce good journalism, journalists need knowledge, competencies and qualifications that go beyond traditional journalistic training and enable them to counteract the escalation-prone misperceptions of reality I mentioned before.

## 5. Misrepresentation of reality?

While truthfulness is a shared goal which unites most adherents (e.g., Lynch, chapter 6) and critics (e.g., Loyn, chapter 4) of peace journalism, it has been challenged by Thomas Hanitzsch (chapter 5), who insists that any objections to a 'media-biased reality' miss the point.

Hanitzsch's arguments are inconsistent and contradictory, however. While he originally held that the version of reality constructed by war reporting is as compatible with classical standards of truth as countless other versions (Hanitzsch, 2004b, 185), he now draws on Schudson (2003) and claims that "every representation of the world is inevitably biased" (Hanitzsch, chapter 5, 75).

The only thing consistent in Hanitzsch's arguments is that he uses the social construction of reality as grounds to dispute the right to any critique of the media.

But can subjective realities – and particularly the *one* version of reality which is constructed by war reporting – really not be criticized? Can we really not speak meaningfully of misrepresenting reality?

As I have shown elsewhere (Kempf, 2006a), Hanitzsch's argumentation is based on a large number of methodological errors: It is based on an inadequate and logically incorrect understanding of truth and reality, and on a lack of differentiation between facts and meanings, between truth and beliefs, and between objective and subjective realities.

In particular, it is wrong to label the reality constructed by the media as true or false *per se*. The media construction of reality is a matter of meaning-making, and a dispute about its adequacy can only be a dispute which relates it to something outside itself: the facts upon which it rests, the goals it serves and/or the rules it follows.

Only the first of these criteria, the factual basis of media-constructed reality, has to do with truthfulness and objectivity. And as far as facts are concerned, Hanitzsch (chapter 5) is right that media accounts of the facts can be substantiated

in everyday journalism only through their coherence with other facts, that is, with what we already know. But this is just as little a counter-argument as the circumstance that we base our constructions of reality on a factual foundation which always remains incomplete.

To criticize the media because they do not possess pure and complete truth would be quite naïve. But this is not the point when Galtung (1998a, chapter 2 in this volume; 2002) criticizes the media for reducing conflict to a zero-sum game, or when Jake Lynch (chapter 6) asserts that journalism needs some practical way to analyze and address its own role in creating realities, etc.

What peace journalism criticizes about the media is, to be sure, that specific facts are systematically concealed. But even here the critique is not primarily of the facts themselves, but rather of the escalation potential that unfolds from ascribing meanings that translate the mix of reported and suppressed facts into a comprehensible narrative.

Conflict is an interactive process, and like all human actions it involves (at least) three different kinds of reality. There is one party's subjective reality and the subjective reality of an opponent. While both these realities can only be assessed from within the respective party's perspective, the third kind of reality can only be assessed from an external perspective and shows how subjective realities interact with each other.

In order to evaluate the escalation or de-escalation potential of the conflict parties' reality constructions, an external perspective is needed. And from this external perspective, we may well criticize some reality constructions as biased toward promoting conflict and appreciate others as more balanced and open-minded.

When Thomas Hanitzsch (chapter 5) claims that such an external perspective is neither needed nor possible, he is thereby not just throwing overboard the claim to deliver a balanced and comprehensive account of conflict. He is also depriving editors of any basis upon which they could fulfill their role to make a judgement without siding with one particular version of reality (Loyn, chapter 4). Not just peace journalism, but any type of good journalism is thereby rejected.

## **6. Naïve and illusory?**

In order to support his rejection, Hanitzsch (chapter 5, 75) imputes to peace journalism an "overly individualistic and voluntaristic perspective, which seems to suggest that journalists only need to change their attitudes and behaviors, and as a result they will produce conflict coverage that embraces the values of peace journalism."



There are in fact many structural constraints which shape and limit the work of journalists: constant time pressure, chronic lack of space, limited budget, censorship and disinformation, editorial staff expectations, the needs of the public, the laws of the market, etc. On the basis of a systematic analysis of the process of producing conflict coverage and a great number of expert interviews with experienced conflict reporters from radio, television and the print media, Burkhard Bläsi (2004, 2005, 2006) has dealt in great detail with this and studied the suitability of peace journalistic models for practice. Constructive conflict coverage proves accordingly to have future prospects that can, however, only gain broader influence through permanent changes in specific journalistic routines, attitudes and competencies.

Robert Hackett (2006) has also thought critically about the prospects of realizing the principles of peace journalism in practice. His theoretical study considers three conceptual frameworks for analyzing the relationship between journalism and other relations and institutions of power in order to identify the tasks, challenges and potential strategies for the peace journalism movement: Herman & Chomsky's (1988) propaganda model, Shoemaker & Reese's (1996) hierarchy of influences model and Pierre Bourdieu's (1998) notion of journalism as a field. According to Hackett's analysis, the barriers to peace journalism include the difficulties of constructing 'peace' as a compelling narrative, the national basis (and biases) of much of the world's news media and their publics, the ideological and structural links between media corporations and states, and the embeddedness of dominant media and states in relations of inequality. Nonetheless, he concludes that there are many niches in the system where it is possible to practice and find a constituency for different and experimental forms of journalism.

Peace journalism is not as naïve as Hanitzsch assumes. But Hanitzsch has taken account neither of the work of Bläsi and Hackett nor of the basic research on the acceptance and effects of peace journalism.

One of his chief arguments is that "the mainstream media can ill afford to abandon news values, as this would jeopardize the economic base on which they are forced to operate." This is a serious argument, and peace journalistic basic research has been working on this already for some time – not only theoretically, but also with a range of empirical and experimental studies. Even if a final assessment can still not be made, it appears that Hanitzsch's recommendation of holding to traditional news factors is based, on the one side, on an inaccurate portrayal of news factors as absolute and, on the other side, on a naturalistic error.

Recent studies of news coverage on the Middle East conflict during the Israeli-Palestinian peace process (Annabring, 2000; ASPR, 2003) and of German press coverage of France after the Second World War (Jaeger, 2003, 2004a, 2005) have

shown that news factors are not rigid entities, but rather are dealt with by the media in quite flexible ways.

Beyond this, it is logically inadmissible to infer from the way media news coverage *is* that this is what the media public *wants*. Even if one thinks that news factors are "selection structures of public communication whose scope includes not only journalism, but also its public" (Hanitzsch, 2004b, 188), this cannot obscure the fact that news factors theory was only derived from the content analytic study of media news coverage and not, for example, from a study of public preferences.

Recent studies show, however, that the public is much less oriented in its preferences to news factors like simplification, negativism and personalization than is commonly assumed. Thus Wolling (2002) found that information quality is an essential factor for the evaluation of news coverage programs, and as Eilders (1997) has shown, the better they are already informed, the less readers orient themselves to traditional news factors.

As experimental studies have demonstrated (Bläsi et al., 2005; Jackson, 2006; Kempf, 2005, 2006b; Möckel, 2007; Schaefer, 2006; Sparr, 2004, Spohrs, 2006), traditional escalation-oriented conflict coverage is in fact not better suited to awakening reader interest, but rather de-escalation oriented peace journalism has the same potential. De-escalation oriented coverage is not only perceived by recipients as more balanced, it also awakens greater interest in further information.

Not only the media, but also the public are much more flexible than news factors theory claims, and peace journalism *does* have a public. Recipients are also more competent and more interested in differentiated conflict representation than is commonly assumed.

The economic pressures that confront peace journalism result less from the dependence of the media on their public than from their dependence on advertising revenue and the pressure on media concerns to harmonize their reportage with the interests and ideologies of economic, political and military elites (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Hanitzsch (chapter 5, 80) is thus not entirely mistaken in fearing that "a peaceful culture is the *precondition* of peace journalism rather than its outcome." A peace journalism that goes beyond de-escalation oriented conflict coverage can probably only be employed comprehensively when peace is actually on the political agenda.

This is also one of the reasons why peace journalism should be thought of as a two-step process, as I have proposed in ASPR (2003, 115ff.; see chapter 3 in this volume).

In the first step, during the hot phase of a conflict, a limitation to *de-escalation oriented conflict coverage* is appropriate. Here there is a need first of all for ob-

jective, distanced and respectful reportage which is fair to all sides, does not further heat up the conflict, but rather takes a critical distance from war supporters of every stripe and makes the public aware of what a high price a violent solution to the conflict will entail for all participants.

Proposing solutions, however, does not appear to be appropriate in this phase. At this point in time there is an especially high risk that reportage will be unreflectively rejected as unreliable or as hostile propaganda. Therefore the primary aim in this phase can only be, first of all, to find a way out of a fixation on force and mutual destruction, to open the public's eyes to a detached standpoint and to deconstruct the polarization of the conflict parties.

Only in a second step can we proceed to *solution oriented conflict coverage*. Here the focus is placed on a construction process following the deconstruction stage, in order to work toward reconciling the opponents and to search for ways they can co-operatively resolve their differences.

A consensus favoring this step is, however, only possible when the hot phase of the conflict is over and every voice calling for moderation is not automatically perceived as hostile. Accordingly, however, it is urgently necessary that the phase of working through the conflict and achieving reconciliation must be introduced and supported – among other things by conflict reportage that actively searches for peaceful alternatives and actors and dedicates itself to the question of how peace processes can be introduced and peace consolidated.

Only as a consistent minority position can solution-oriented conflict coverage make a contribution already during war to a step-wise deconstruction of war discourse.

## **7. Conclusions**

In conclusion, it can be maintained that there are definite chances for the practical implementation of the peace journalistic program, and it can make an urgently needed contribution to assuring the quality of conflict and crisis journalism. That in the foreseeable future peace journalism will remain in a minority position need not represent an obstacle. Even from this position it can contribute to structuring media discourse on conflicts in a more transparent and balanced way and to protecting conflict coverage from the fateful propaganda traps into which traditional war reporting seems to be continually falling (Jaeger, 2002).

As preconditions for this I see only two things: First, there is a need for a further intensification of basic peace journalistic research and the critical examination of so many myths which journalism shares with media studies. News factors and public preferences are, for one thing, two different things which must be kept sep-

arate; good journalism is not a description of the current state of conflict coverage, but is, in contrast, only practiced by relatively few journalists, and the professional norms and tools of journalism are, of course, indispensable, but not sufficient to ensure good journalism.

Second, however, caution is imperative, so that the critique of the journalistic mainstream does not throw the baby out with the bath-water. Thus it is not only appropriate, but also urgently necessary to question the conventional journalistic understanding of objectivity (see McGoldrick, 2006), to free it of its inadequacies and constructively further develop it. To radically turn away from the call for objectivity, as suggested by Lynch & McGoldrick (2005) or Hackett (2006), not only endangers the acceptance of the peace journalistic project in the journalistic community, however, but also twists peace journalism into a form of advocacy journalism, which leads directly to PR and propaganda and can squander the trust bonus which its recipients grant to peace journalism.

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**Dov Shinar & Wilhelm Kempf (eds.)****Peace Journalism: The State of the Art**

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€ 34,80. ISBN 978-3-936014-12-9.

The book is a critical exploration of peace journalism, a mode of coverage that proposes alternatives to the preference of war in the media professional culture. Originally published electronically, and now offered in print, it features information, ideas and methods on peace journalism to be used by journalists, instructors, students and the general public.

Written by some of the most prominent media researchers and practitioners, active in the Peace Journalism International Group of the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research, the book tackles some of the most salient and controversial issues in the conceptual, professional and educational areas and includes an uncommon interaction of applied and theoretical work; explorations of the expressions of peace journalism in text, discourse, and image; and analyses of cases such as Northern Ireland, the Basque country, Israel-Palestine, the Oslo peace process, the coverage of the Mohammed cartoons, and events in the Iraq War.

With contributions by Annabel McGoldrick (War journalism and "objectivity"); Samuel Peleg (Peace journalism and conflict theory); Susan Dente Ross: ((De)Constructing conflict); Robert A. Hackett (Is peace journalism possible?); Lea Mandelzis (Representations of peace in news discourse); Rune Ottosen (Emphasizing images in peace journalism); Wilhelm Kempf (De-escalation oriented post-war-coverage); Jake Lynch (A course in peace journalism); Bev Keever (De-escalating the language of killing); Dov Shinar (Peace journalism: The state of the art).

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