

Peace Journalism and Conflict Reporting: The Case of Pakistani Media

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ABSTRACT

This paper assesses the role of Pakistani media in covering conflicts based on peace journalism ideas. Media spreads candid information and swaps opinions that could bend public opinion toward peaceful resolution of conflict. Peace journalism has the quality to escalate and de-escalate conflicts. The current work talks about the hopeless situation that averts productive analysis and healthy discussion on the peace process. Media conceals resolves and, triggers the conflict. This survey study adopts the five point Likert scale item, correlation matrix and ANOVA tests. Media influences the policy makers for peace and brings hidden stories in front of audiences.

KEY WORDS: Peace journalism, peace processes, capacity building, and conflict reporting.

Introduction

Peace journalism is the new conception of shaping news of truth. Good quality journalism shapes facts rather than propaganda. Peace journalism uncovers the dark side of the picture and tells all angles of lie. Media performs a crucial role in the promotion of peace and those who run the media shape stories of good and bad images. It is like a normative theory which hypothesizes the issues of peace keeping and peace building. It can be made to operate the cognitive level of people and modify their attitude towards peace process. Negative minded journalists frame news in terms of tension creation. The issues of judiciary¹, Governor Raj in

Punjab² and the long march³ in Pakistan have been presented with partiality. No doubt, peace journalism has the quality to escalate and de-escalate conflicts. It is the foremost duty of the reporters and editors to adopt a balance stance during conflict and take on board all stakeholders. Peace journalism requires professional values and neutrality, and detachment is the pre-requisite of actualization.

Galtung (2002:5) defines that peace journalism stands for truth as opposed to propaganda and lies. It is not “investigative journalism” in the sense of only revealing lies on “our” side. The aspect of truth in peace journalism holds for all sides by exploring the formation of conflict and giving voice to all. Shinar (2006) defines peace journalism as a “good journalism”, Lych and McGoldrick (2005) name it “accurate journalism”, “post realistic journalism” and “conflict analysis journalism”, Kempf (2003) terms “de-escalation oriented conflict reporting”, and Bandakov (2006) and Shinar (2007) entitles “responsible journalism.”

Media emphasize the profits that peace can acquire and can enhance the validity of factions or leaders working for peace. On the other hand, the media also serves as disparaging agent in a peace process, and chooses to pessimistically report on the pressures and hazards linked with negotiation. Pakistan has been facing increasing political conflicts arising from tensions between the government and Taliban, political organizations and establishment and, between the pressure groups. It has had grave consequences for the economic and social positions of communities, and the country as a whole. Due to insecurity and threats from both the military, and Taliban, significant amount of population living in Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA)⁴ are forced to migrate to other parts of the country.

Journalists form opinions and beliefs based on their understanding. Media proprietors have economic benefits; they want to trade their chronicles and programs to the public who will buy their newspapers or watch their programs. Increasing corporate control over media in some countries also plays a role in controlling the types of stories that get covered and the way these stories are framed.

The marginalize population is suffering from this vulnerable state of affairs. On one hand, they are in continuous fear of being abducted or forced to join the militant groups; on the other hand, the army with distrust of being mixed up with inhabitants equally harasses the marginalized population. To save themselves from these circumstances, these populations are becoming more vulnerable to violence and resentment.

In these situations media’s portrayal has also been too provocative. Peace journalism, which is missing in Pakistani perspective can resolve conflicts and return peace in the country. Instead of blaming media only, we should also think of threats the journalists have to face. The soldiers do not want their news to be published and vice versa. The media personnel so far have not been able to approach the incident area. Sometimes, journalists ask for the news with the

security force. This has restricted the press freedom. The press freedom has to be restored.

Journalistic field and journalists

The journalistic field is a breathing space of cultural production which is shaped and sustained by the constraints, priorities and working routines of journalistic profession, and it is this space which creates and enforces on the public a very meticulous visualization of the political field, a vision that is stuck in the awful composition of the journalistic field and in journalists particular interests produced in and by that field. Leaks provide the 'dark information' which attract journalists and provide them with the means to create special stories and so remain ahead of their competitors. The greater is the impression of exclusivity the more newsworthy is the story. The main intention of television news is not to inform audiences, but to keep them energized enough to carry on watching.

Literature Review

Peace journalism spotlights the structural and cultural reasons of violence before exposing a dichotomy. It explains the violence and outline conflict concerning many parties and pursuing various objectives. Peace journalism helps promote peace initiatives, from whatever quarter, and allows the reader to differentiate between stated positions and actual goals (Galtung and Vincent, 1992; Wolfsfeld, 2003; Lynch, 2005; cited in Siraj, 2008).

Journalists usually despise peace journalism as it is 'too critical'; or to a certain extent, majority of them object the decisive consciousness of journalistic work and organization ornamented in peace journalism assessment and techniques (Loyn, 2003 and 2007; Phillips, 2006). This is alike a denial of a number of proposals from studies on journalism and communications, conducted by researchers during several years; mainly, the display of overseas news as considered by Galtung and Ruge (1965). Although journalists resist peace journalism they like to promote concepts of 'truth' and 'objectivity' just to defend profession (Loyn, 2007). We differ as this notion conceals the real characteristics in the discussion over peace journalism, and hides untested chauvinism about 'true' and 'false'.

Scholastic writers (such as Hanitzsch, 2004 and 2007), in contrast, repeatedly oppose peace journalism for the reason that it is 'not critical enough'; dormant, as it does, on normative judgments regarding the depiction of conflict which it applies to advocate that peace journalism is superior than conflict reporting. We argue that any significant debate on journalism should incorporate some efforts to embark the motives about which some form of description must be chosen to

others. Then there is the subject matter of journalistic organization. Implied in a good number of writings about peace journalism is the proposition that journalists –working separately or commonly can choose to make some point of distinction to their journalism (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005).

Hackett and Carroll (2006) summarize some aspects of media sociology including media institutions and practitioners as follow:

1) *Media workers themselves*: Their professionally-related tasks and beliefs seem to have a straight effect on content, while their socio-demographic settings and their individual and opinionated viewpoints compile news in some way, particularly when persons are in authority to supersede organizational strains or practices (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996: 65).

2) *Work schedule within the newsroom on daily basis*: practice makeup journalists' production separately of their individual surroundings and standards.

3) *Imperatives of media institutions*: In business organism, the profit orientation availed by classified media corporations, integrated with their chain of command generally form content in consonance with ownership's interests.

4) *Extra-media influences*: It includes resources, advertisers, political power of governments, marketplace, and machinery.

5) *Ideology and cultural narratives*: A classification of ethics and attitudes that directs what viewers, journalists and further actors in the information organization see as 'natural' or 'obvious' and that also serves in part to sustain existing relations of supremacy. Beliefs not only shape news, it is enlarged, transformed and replicated through media contents.

Conflict is better telecasted than peace. It is packed with painted instants, holds actions and resolutions, and sends a dominant sentiment: fear. Peace is unstructured and wide-ranging. The sentiments associated with it are delicate, individual and internal. These are quite intricate to telecast (Mander, 1978: 323).

In different countries, and at the global level, support groups and associations have come up with the intention of democratizing the media, as a distinctive institutional field (McChesney, 2004).

Peace journalism attempts to depolarize the conflict by presenting the black and white of all sides, and to de-escalate by stressing peace and conflict resolution (Siraj, 2008: 199). We must glance not only at the thorny issues related to journalists performing as honest negotiators, but also their demands of 'something must be done'. What type of 'something' does compose journalists' demand? With wars being condensed to clash between the forces of good and evil. "It becomes easy to turn the West into the political savior of the 'uncivilized' world and to demand more [military] intervention against the forces of darkness," (Hume, 1997: 15). From such a viewpoint, Tumber and Prentoulis' (2003) suggestion that the events of 11 September 2001 have accelerated "a trend in which attachment and emotion eventually become fully embraced into the culture of journalism" looks like a worrying prospect.

Influence of the Media on the Peace Process

In broad-spectrum, the news media can have some contributions on any peace process. Primarily, they assist in crucial the political settings in which the peace process takes place. Next, the media has a vibrant control on the policy and approach of the stakeholders to the conflict. Third, the media has a strong impact on the approach of discourse on a peace process. Fourth, the media can strengthen or weaken public legitimacy of the stakeholders involved in the peace process. A perception of how each of these aspects interlinks to enlighten and outline the peace process is of vital significance for all news media workforce and organizations in Pakistan.

Media as Promoter of Peace

There are efforts to endorse the use of media to facilitate conflict resolution, and 'peace media.' Peace media can be defined as the use of "radio, television, and printed journalism, to promote peace, to disseminate truthful information or alternate viewpoints that could turn public sentiment for peaceful resolution of conflict, or to counter 'hate radio'". Peace media personnel are thought to be objective and impartial when describing the parties involved in the conflict, but not taking sides and submissively watchful when it come up to portraying peaceful means as the only acceptable way of resolving conflicts. Wolfsfeld (2004) maintains that media in many ways can add to restructuring the course of events in a peaceful way. For instance, media can stress the rewards of peace building, encourage individuals and groups involved in peace ideas, and balance the view of the players. Normally, however, media put across the opposing messages to the public.

Capacity Building for Media

There is a very genuine sense of desperation among those who are active in media revolution that the state of affairs in Pakistan is too complicated to revolutionize. This is regrettable, since there is substantial scope for contribution that exercises to deal with shortcomings and lacunae of the media are constant and enduring in structure. Preferably, the news media should serve as a medium in which supporters and adversaries are invited to articulate their analysis in a clear and logical manner. Although such an exemplary situation is hardly ever attained, it is essential however to find out those arrangements and procedures that avert productive condemnation and healthy discussion on the peace process. Tones (1996) emphasizes that there is a wide range of strategies to be considered under the heading of mass media.

By probing the beliefs of key protagonist the media can often ensign facades of the peace process that are essential and cannot be overlooked. Handing over a

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reporter for example, to spend some moments with the armed forces plus government officials or amongst the insurgents in the FATA could make them build new resources near to the ground, find out moderate voices, observe the inside mechanism of evolving socio-political practicalities, give point of views which are not ethnocentric in composition or content and evaluate political views that go beyond particular happenings.

5Ws for Conflict Reporting

Who: Who is affected by this conflict; that has a discrete risk in its effect? What is their connection to one another, as well as comparative power, influence, and affluence?

What: What caused the dispute; what drew it to your attention at this time? What issues do the parties need to settle?

When: When did this conflict begin; how often have the situations existed that gave rise to the clash?

Where: What physical or diplomatic influences are affected by the dispute? How this kind of thing has been gripped in other places?

Why: Why do the parties grasp the positions they do; what are the wants, interests, worries and apprehensions to be tackled?

How: How are they going to resolve this e.g. cooperation, arbitration, governmental investigation, courts, combat; what are the costs/benefits of the chosen method?

Options: What alternatives have the parties searched, how do the various choices relate to the interests acknowledged?

Common Ground: What common ground is there between the parties; what have they settled to so far?

The network does not endorse that reporters try to intervene or resolve the conflicts they are reporting on, but journalists should develop a complete perception of the conflict and their viewers in a way that mirror the reality of the conflict in all its intricacy. They spot to stories that look at the background in which the clash grew and make clear what caused by violence that might have cropped up. It recommends that reporters classify familiar ground, observe and assess any efforts made to settle the conflict as well as the superiority dynamics at play. By seriously probing parties' efforts to reconcile the dispute, journalists give their readers and viewers with a basis upon which to make an informed ruling about the parties and most likely their government representatives' measures. "Self-censorship is the primary means by which sensitive subject matter remains out of print" (Lin, 2002).

Cellular Phone, SMS, Internet and, Handy Talky

Nass and Mason (1990: 52-53) talk about various dimensions of communications technology; key characteristics comprise permanence across time, one-to-one vs. one-to-many communication and programmability and integration with computer technology. Mobile phones have very much changed access to information in Pakistan. The quick access of cellular phones has positioned it as a chief means of communication, being used in a way consistent with person to person conversation, as well as the spread of rumor and hearsay. Youths in particular take pleasure in 'sharing the hottest chitchat' with one another - a form of societal interface.

The Internet is becoming more and more popular between the customers of all sorts of groups including negative and productive mind set. The majority of the mainstream media also uses the Internet as a communication and information device. Handy-talkies are fashionable communication means for information diffusion. The country's hard landscape and restricted cellular phone coverage have made it a valuable means of communication. Members of radio associations are frequently connected to recreational radio stations like FM. It has also established to be a considerable help with field coordination requirements.

All Pakistan Newspapers Society

The creation of an association of publishers was significantly required to make easy the exchange of their views on subjects of general interest among newspaper owners. The All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) effectively gave to newspaper owners the means to watch over, defend, protect and support the rights and interests of the newspaper industry on issues directly or indirectly affecting their rights and interests. The APNS remained very enthusiastic in managing the problems faced by its members vis-à-vis the provincial and central governments relating to advertisements, clearance of dues, taxes and responsibilities and newsprint. One of the major statutes framed being the authorization of advertising agencies by the All Pakistan Newspapers Society, setting up security deposits and approval schedule to member publications within a specific period. (Hejazi, 1998).

Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists

Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) is located in **Islamabad, Pakistan**. PFUJ is arguably **South Asia's** first association representing the journalists of an entire country. To its credit, in the 50-odd years since its inception it has always stood out as a symbol of freedom of speech. The battles it waged for press freedom and for a democratic dispensation in the country will always remain etched in the collective memory of Pakistanis (Hejazi, 1998).

Objectives of the Study

- To explore that media conceals the conflict
- To know that media trigger the conflict
- To understand that media resolves the conflict

Methods

The study was conducted using survey methods. The first step of the methodology was to select the respondents. 250 journalists and members of civil society were selected from North West Frontier Province, Pakistan as the target respondents. A questionnaire was distributed to reveal information on the respondents' perception, and attitudes towards the phenomena of peace journalism. A Likert-type five point scale item⁵, correlation matrix⁶ and ANOVA⁷ test were used to indicate levels of agreement or disagreement. For data collection the judgmental method of sampling was used. The questionnaire was developed through a rigorous process of expert reviews and pretests.

Results

Results show that 70.07% respondents were found agreeing while 63.58% strongly agree with the notion that journalism can build peace in the country and peace journalism was considered to conceal the conflict. Results also illustrate the ratio of target respondents who agree (72.81%) and strongly agree (66.07%) with the perception that peace journalism resolves the conflict. Results further indicate that 73.12% respondents think that peace journalism is a conflict trigger, while 66.35% strongly support the same opinion. We have come to the conclusion that peace journalism conceals, resolves and, triggers the conflict. See table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Agreement level with media inputs to Peace Journalism

	DS	DS	N	AS	SA
Peace journalism conceals the conflict	55	33	5	66	71
	57.42	36.01	2.92	70.07	63.58
Peace journalism resolves the conflict	60	38	1	70	70
	59.67	37.42	3.03	72.81	66.07
Peace journalism triggers the conflict	62	40	3	80	55
	59.92	37.57	3.05	73.12	66.35

This table provides general descriptive information at the item level (Likert scale: 1=Disagree Strongly, 2=Disagree Slightly, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree Slightly, 5=Strongly Agree).

Correlation Matrix of Medias’ role in Peace Process

As shown in Table 1.2 the correlation matrix (1.000, .324, -.744 and, -.606=p*) that media influences the policy makers for peace and bring hidden stories in front of audiences. The role of the media is considered as gatekeeper. Media bridges the gap between enemies.

Table 1.2

	Categories	Media influence	Media brings	Media role	Media bridge	P
Correlation	Policymakers	1.000	.324	-.744	-.606	*
	Hidden stories	.324	1.000	.025	-.833	*
	Gatekeeper	-.744	.025	1.000	.056	*
	Among enemies	-.606	-.833	.056	1.000	-

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Results of analysis of variance, the sum of square (SS) 2375.2, the mean square (MS) 593.8, and the (F) ratio between MS divided within MS (21.53) depicts: “Owner of the peace journalism can influence the editorial policy”, “Lack of standardized salary rates for journalists”, “Envelope journalism”, and “Journalists are dependent on favors and bribes’ significant with $P < 0.000$. The results reject the null hypothesis that ownership of media and employees role is not significant in peace process. Media can contribute to conflict ending and can change the attitude of owners, advertisers and professionals.

Conclusion

This study concludes that journalism can build peace in the country and the media is considered a tool to conceal conflict. Majority of respondents believe that the media can resolve conflicts whereas peace journalism is measured as the conflict trigger. Media influences the policy makers for peace and brings hidden stories in front of audience.

Media plays a central role in the promotion of peace, therefore it is the prime duty of reporters and editors to adopt a balanced stance during conflict and take on board all stakeholders. Peace journalism helps bridge the gap between enemies, so peace building practitioners require understanding of the process of advocacy.

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Peace journalism necessitates professional values and neutrality, whereas a peace process aspires to encourage elements for acceptance of a national peace agreement.

An obstacle to balanced coverage is the envelope journalism that distorts the original role of a journalist. Another impediment to professional reporting is the lack of education and professionalism among media practitioners. Conceptual understanding and practical skills for objective and independent reporting have been lacking in Pakistan for over half a century with centralized state controlled media.

Given the circumstances, the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) successfully evolved a mechanism of streamlining advertisements and clearance system protecting the collective interests of its member publications, advertising agencies as well as advertisers. Credit also goes to the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists that always stood out as a symbol of freedom of speech.

Notes

1. On March 9, 2007, the current Chief Justice of Pakistan Mr. Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry was suspended by the then Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf. Musharraf also filed a Presidential reference against Chaudhry for misconduct. After his suspension, there was unrest in the country with regard to the validity of the allegations against Chaudhry. On July 20, 2007, Chaudhry was reinstated to his position as Chief Justice in a ruling by the thirteen-member bench of Pakistani Supreme Court. On Saturday, Nov 3, 2007, General Pervez Musharraf, who was the President and Chief of Army Staff of Pakistan at the time, declared a state of emergency and suspended the constitution and parliament at the same time. On 15 November *Geo News* reported that Chaudhry had ordered the Islamabad Inspector General of Police to take action against his and his family's house arrest. Just after general elections in February, on March 24, 2008, on his first day of premiership the Pakistani PM Yousaf Raza Gillani ordered Chaudhry's release from house arrest. However, he did not restore the chief justice. Later three agreements for the restoration of the judges were signed by Asif Ali Zardari, the chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party and Nawaz Sharif, the chairman of the PML-N, the chief opposition party. But the chief justice remained un-restored. This led to a revival of the lawyers' movement for the restoration of judges. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iftikhar_Muhammad_Chaudry#Controversies. Retrieved January 15, 2010.
2. Punjab Chief Minister Mian Shahbaz Sharif and his brother Mian Nawaz Sharif were declared disqualified on February 25, 2009 by Supreme Court of Pakistan for holding any public office, President Asif Ali Zardari imposed governor rule in the province for next two months. Raziq, Abdur. (2009, February 26). *Governor Raj in Punjab*. www.groundreport.com. Retrieved December 15, 2009.

3. In March 2009, the Lawyers supported by various political parties started a decisive movement to reinstate Chaudhry Iftikhar and other deposed Judges. The Lawyers' Movement announced a "long march" under the leadership of Mian Nawaz Sharif for the restoration of the judges, especially Chief Justice Iftikhar from 12 to 16 March 2009. Finally, the government reinstated Chaudhry Iftikhar and other deposed Judges on 16 March, 2009 through an executive order by the President of Pakistan.http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iftikhar_Muhammad_Chaudry#Controversies Retrieved January 15, 2010.
4. The Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) is strategically located between the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and the settled areas of NWFP. The region is controlled by the central and Federal government of Pakistan. The President of Pakistan has the authority only to implement the rules in FATA. The Jurisdiction of Supreme Court and High Court of Pakistan does not extend to FATA and Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (PATA), according to Article 247 and Article 248, of existing 1973 Constitution of Pakistan. The NWFP Provincial Assembly has no power in FATA, and can only exercise its powers in PATA that are part of NWFP. The assembly cannot implement the law directly as it can do in other parts of the province or Settled Areas of NWFP. This has created a political vacuum in FATA, Frontier Regions and PATA, which serves the interests of terrorists very well, as there is absence of various government departments like police, judiciary, local governments, and civic amenities. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Federally_Administered_Tribal_Areas. Retrieved January 15, 2010.
5. A Likert scale is a psychometric scale commonly used in questionnaires, and is the most widely used scale in survey research. When responding to a Likert questionnaire item, respondents specify their level of agreement to a statement. The scale is named after its inventor, psychologist Rensis Likert. See Likert, Rensis. (1932). A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes. *Archives of Psychology*, 40:1-55. The format of a typical five-level Likert item is: Strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Likert_scale Retrieved January 15, 2010.
6. Matrix question: A survey research in which a set of questions are listed in a compact form together and all the questions share the same answer categories. Neuman, W. L. (2006). *Social Research Methods Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches (Sixth Edition)*. USA: Pearson Education, Inc. A Correlation matrix describes correlation among M variables. The diagonal elements (correlations of variables with themselves) are always equal to 1.00. <http://www.statistics.com/resources/glossary/c/corrmatrix.php> Retrieved January 19, 2010. The correlation matrix computes the correlation coefficients of the columns of a matrix. That is, row I and column of the correlation matrix is the correlation between column I and column of the original matrix. The diagonal elements of the correlation matrix will be I since they are the correlation of a column with itself. <http://www.itl.nist.gov/div898/software/dataplot/refman2/ch4/correlat.pdf>. Retrieved January 19, 2010.

7. In statistics, analysis of variance (ANOVA) is a collection of statistical models, and their associated procedures, in which the observed variance is partitioned into components due to different explanatory variables. In its simplest form ANOVA gives a statistical test of whether the means of several groups are all equal, and therefore generalizes student's two-sample *t*-test to more than two groups. ANOVAs are extremely helpful because they possess a certain advantage over a two-sample *t*-test. Doing multiple two-sample *t*-tests would result in a largely increased chance of committing a type I error. For this reason, ANOVAs are extremely useful in comparing three or more means. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Analysis_of_variance Retrieved January 15, 2010.

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