

Peace and War Journalism: A Synoptic Review of Extant Literature

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Abstract

This article reviewed the debate on war and peace journalism and investigated empirical patterns in studies conducted in this field of research for the purpose of having an overview of areas that have been well-researched, as well as, those that are yet to be researched. Hence, the paper through a systematic and chronological review of literature examined normative studies and empirical studies conducted, as well as, methodologies and theories used in this field of research. The review of literature found that early studies that emerged on peace and war journalism were normative and ethical in nature describing what peace and war journalism is and intellectually suggesting ways it should be practised. Later, there was a move away from normative studies to empirical studies that examined media coverage of war and conflicts in different countries around the world. Theoretical frameworks that have been used to explain and strengthen this field of research include agenda-setting, framing, conflict, critical discourse analysis and critical race theories. Majority of the studies have adapted the use of qualitative and quantitative content analyses with only a few adopting a triangulation approach that combines the use of experiments, focus group discussions, critical discourse analysis and surveys. Based on these findings, this paper sets an agenda for future research in the field of peace and war journalism.

Keywords: Peace Journalism, War Journalism, Framing theory, Agenda-Setting Theory, Critical Discourse Analysis

Introduction

Conflicts, both domestic and transnational, are the staple of the media. The appetite of journalist and journalism for conflict has fuelled some measure of

suspicion that mass media banner coverage is inadvertently lubricating the unyielding desires of combatants to embrace peace. This incendiary relationship between journalism and conflict has engaged some respectable degree of scholarly attention. Efforts to ease the national tension in Nigeria as a result of Boko Haram extremist ideology, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) agitations and lately, skirmishes between nomadic herders and sedentary farmers in Nigeria, as well as, attempts by the Nigerian community of professional mass communicators to proffer communication solution have all rekindled scholarly debates on the issue of media and conflict. As prelude to determining the association, if any, between Nigerian media framing of the crisis presaging the Nigerian civil war and modern Nigerian media framing of IPOB and MASSOB agitations, this article attempts a review of pertinent literature on these concepts.

The coverage of conflict by the media has inspired normative and ethical debates that have resulted in the emergence of types of journalism. The prominent classifications have been 'bystander journalism versus journalism attachment' and 'war/conflict journalism' versus 'peace journalism' (Gilboa, 2010, p. 99). Of these classifications, the war/conflict journalism versus peace journalism has been the most prominently utilised, spanning more than four decades, wherein it has developed as a research field for the past 48 years. Scholars have looked to peace and war journalism as an approach to examining the role of the media in a war or conflict situation as it emerged from researches that indicate how media coverage of war/conflict has the potential to escalate or de-escalate the war/conflict.

Peace and war journalism was inspired by an essay written by Johan Galtung & Marie Holmboe Ruge titled *The Structure of Foreign News* which demonstrated how journalistic norms for defining and reporting stories influenced the representation of conflict in the media (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2012). At inception, peace and war journalism transitioned from theory to practice without the benefit of research. Most of the research works done were normative and philosophical in nature with majority focusing on how-to guides that employ the use of case studies (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, Hanitzsch & Nagar, 2015; Hussain, 2016). However, the hiatus created has been filled with a number of empirical studies that have emerged. The first empirical study to be conducted in this field was Lee and Maslog's study that focused on the content analysis of four Asian conflicts as presented in English language news stories (Lee & Maslog, 2005).

With the extant number of studies conducted in this research field, scholars are yet to agree on the theories supporting it and its core methodologies. Scholars have attributed this to the gap that has emerged as a result of the scholarly leap from theorising peace and war journalism to proposing media reforms without empirical evidence to guide the media reform initiatives

(McMahon & Chow-White, 2011). As a result, this paper examined normative and empirical studies that have been conducted so far in the field of war and peace journalism for the purpose of investigating empirical patterns, theoretical frameworks and methodologies that have been utilised in the field as well as identifying research gaps and making recommendations for future research.

Peace and War Journalism: Normative Discussions and Debates

From ancient times, there has been a link between communication and conflict. As a result, literature is replete with research on the role of the media in several wars and conflicts including the two World Wars, the Cold War and conflicts arising in African and Middle Eastern countries. Following Galtung & Ruge's reference to the media's role of promoting peace during conflict through peace journalism, scholars have continued to debate the concept of war and peace journalism along normative and ethical lines. For instance, Carruthers (2000) while supporting and explaining the notion of war journalism noted that in the media's coverage of war, the tendency for hard news and objectivity to be pushed aside giving way to propaganda and partisanship exists as a result of the control exerted on the media by the government and military. Hence, Galtung (2002) suggested that good war reporting should adapt the model of health journalism where members of the audience are informed about a particular disease, its causes as well as the cures and preventive measures to be taken.

Referring to his proposition of the high and low roads of peace and war journalism respectively in 1998, Galtung (2003) formally introduced the concept of peace versus war journalism and likened war journalism to sport and court journalism where winning is the only thing, while conflict transformation is the focus of peace journalism. He described war journalism frames of conflict as 'violence-oriented, elite-oriented, propaganda-oriented and victory-oriented, while peace journalism frames of conflict are conflict (and peace)-oriented, people-oriented, truth-oriented and solution-oriented. He noted that peace journalism should be an approach that focuses on conflict transformation suggesting ways in which the concept of peace journalism can be adopted.

Addressing the topic of objectivity in war journalism, McGoldrick (2006) highlighted a paradox that is evident in journalists' practice of reporting war and fulfilling the journalistic ethic of being objective. The author argued that most media coverage of conflict was in favour of war yet objective and neutral because the set of conventions guiding the rule of objectivity in journalism predisposes news about conflict in favour of war journalism. These conventions of objective reporting as identified by Lynch & McGoldrick (2005) and cited by the author include 'a bias in favour of official sources, event over process and dualism in reporting conflicts' (p.3). Based on media research, Nohrstedt (2009) continued the discussion on the ethical and professional challenges of war journalism by focusing on new trends and challenges of war journalism since the

end of the Cold War. The author examined the gradual transformation of war journalism since the end of the Cold war with a focus on Swedish media and found that the media are giving increasing attention to the sufferings of civilian populations and victims of warfare, the conditions of war journalism are receiving increasing attention and have become objects of self-critical reflection and increased allocation of space to visual materials that are not subjected to critical scrutiny like textual materials have been subjected to.

Lending a voice to the discussion on the applicability and relevance of peace and war journalism, Nohrstedt & Otossen (2015) note that majority of the work done in this field are scattered geographically and cannot be replicated globally. As a result, for the purpose of globalising and raising the ethical standards of journalism linked to violent conflicts, the authors proposed the need for a joint collaboration between universities, colleges, training institutes, non-governmental organisations and inter-governmental organisations. This, according to the author can only be made possible through a further conceptual development of peace journalism that is based on the combination of Galtung's peace journalism approach with insights from other theories and methods such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Bordieu's notion on doxa.

Mitra (2016) addressed the tendency of peace journalism to leap from normative discipline to practice-related implementation in diverse post-conflict countries without taking into consideration the socio-cultural contexts and environments within which journalists operate. The author argues that there is a need to test the applicability and acceptability of the normative framework of peace journalism in different settings. As a result, the author suggests that there are lessons that peace journalism can gain from the academic sub-fields of 'manufacturing consent', 'media contest' and 'media culture' derived from the field of media and conflict. Abdul-Nabi (2017) while in agreement with Lynch & McGoldrick's proposition that peace journalism is a reform initiative that revises the professional norms of conventional journalism recognises that certain economic, political and professional structures have the potential of posing challenges that hinder the practice and implementation of peace journalism. Suggesting solutions to the highlighted hindrances to the practice of peace journalism, the author noted that there should be pluralisation of media ownership that allows for the dissemination of diverse views, the creation of a new field that is independent of any form of domination and supported by civil society, Utilisation of current news values for the promotion of positive attitudes towards peace journalism, encouraging media peace discourse among others.

Peace and War Journalism: A Review of Empirical Studies

With extant research towing the lines of normative discussions on peace and war journalism, Lee and Maslog (2005) conducted the first empirical study in this field by adapting and building on Galtung's classification of peace/war

journalism. The authors categorised the coverage of conflicts as war versus peace journalism frame by employing the use of quantitative research methodology. Examining the coverage patterns of four conflict events in four Asian newspapers using the indicators of war versus peace journalism, the authors built a case for the promotion of peace journalism. The authors observed that the dominant indicators of peace journalism were less interventionist in nature and more descriptive. They proposed a model reflecting the indicators of war and peace journalism. The model's indicators comprised two criteria – approach and language. The approach based criteria include the (1) reactive or proactive approach, (2) visible or invisible effects of war, (3) elite or people orientation, (4) differences or agreements, (5) focus on here and now or on causes and effects, (6) good vs. bad dichotomy or no labeling, (7) two or multiple party involvement, (8) partisanship or non-partisanship, (9) zero-sum or win-win approach, and (10) the continuation of reports. The language-based criteria included: (1) demonising, (2) victimising, and (3) emotive words.

Ottosen (2007) argues through theoretical and practical examples that the visual aspects of peace journalism should be examined and emphasised upon, as they have been underestimated when examining how the human brain deals with textual and visual impulses. Using the Norwegian media coverage of Colin Powell's presentation to the UN Security Council before the Iraq War in 2003 and the attack on the Iraqi town of Fallujah by US and Iraqi forces in November 2004 as a case study, the author argues that attaching importance to visual elements such as graphics and photographs can aid peace journalism. The author suggested that the new media can also be a powerful tool in the hands of journalists who are advocates of peace journalism.

Lee (2010) expands on Galtung's classification of war and peace journalism by describing and comparing the news coverage of three Asian conflicts. Lee observed that peace journalism as an alternative to traditional war reporting is subject to certain structural limitations such as story characteristics, conflict length and intensity that have not been addressed extensively by research. Based on these limitations, the author suggested that for peace journalism to move into the mainstream and become applicable there is a need for journalists to rethink the notions of news values and the inverted pyramid style of writing in presenting news on war and conflict. Onyebadi & Oyediji (2011) examined newspaper coverage of the post 2007 presidential election violence in Kenya and observed that news stories and editorials addressed peace-building in the country as opposed to the Rwandan media that escalated the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Based on these findings, the authors conclude that the media has the potential to de-escalate conflict in Africa.

Ogenga (2012) noted that African media have the best opportunities to employ peace journalism given its proximity to the wars and conflicts that take place in Africa. As a result, using a triangulation of quantitative and qualitative

research methods, the author explored the possibility for the Kenyan media to apply peace journalism. The finding revealed, however, that the Kenyan media failed to apply peace journalism frames in their coverage of the event under study and the author attributed this to the deficiency in peace journalism training that Kenyan journalists had at the time of the study.

Prakash (2013) using peace journalism theory and content analysis research method, explored the extent to which the coverage of the Balochistan/Pakistan conflict had exhibited indicators of peace journalism proposed by Johan Galtung and other scholars on social and traditional media. The analysis of the traditional media with an emphasis on national newspapers was based on peace journalism theory proposed by Galtung and later expanded by Lynch & McGoldrick (2000), using Shinar's five active peace journalism indicators and Lee, Maslog & Kim's three passive indicators. The combination of passive and active indicators allowed for comparison between social and traditional media. Due to the expression of tweets in no more than 140 characters, the analysis and coding of the social media demanded that a new model be developed from Galtung's peace journalism table resulting in the development of indicators that were open yet precise in addressing the problem. Findings from the study revealed that social media reflects more of peace journalism than traditional media and the Pakistani media lends itself to peace journalism than war journalism.

Fahmy & Eakin's (2014) note that there was a dearth of literature on media coverage of Israeli/Palestinian war from the peace and war journalism perspective. To fill this research gap, the authors employed Lee & Maslog's (2005) classification of and criteria for peace/war journalism and content analysed online stories from three English language dailies namely *Haaretz* (Israel), *The Guardian* (London) and *The New York Times* (United States) that reported the Israeli/Palestinian-related event (2010 Mavi Marmara) from a peace/war journalism perspective. Findings from the research revealed that the dominant salient indicators of peace journalism were avoidance of dehumanising language and victimising language, nonpartisan coverage and an objective and moderate style of reporting. These indicators according to the authors are not the strongest indicators of peace journalism and do not contribute to peace journalism theory rather, they are an extension of objectivity in journalism.

For the purpose of examining the content of conflict coverage and how it can be altered by peace journalism, Perez de Fransuis (2014) presents an in-depth analysis of peace journalism as proposed by Galtung and applied the theory to the case study of the American coverage of the war in Iraq. Findings of this study revealed that there are elements of peace journalism as classified by different orientations proposed by Galtung & Lynch & McGoldrick embedded in the American coverage of the war in Iraq. Arthur (2015) explored the associations of media representations of Australian Muslims with the peace journalism approach

to reporting. The author noted that peace journalism has the potential to promote the contextualisation of conflicts, focus attention on challenging dominant news conventions such as bureaucratic sources, interrogate the assumptions of objectivity in mainstream journalism and provide opportunities for the audience to be empathic. The study found that narratives of violent conflict had a significant impact on the escalation and entrenchment of Islamophobic representations in the select newspapers. As a result, the author advocates for the adoption and use of peace journalism model that encourages journalists to move away from the war journalism approach of reporting conflict.

Cozma (2015) examined the relationship between sourcing, framing and propaganda in war journalism by analysing foreign news reports for the presence of propaganda techniques, war journalism and peace journalism frames and sources used by CBS foreign correspondents during the World War II. Findings from the study revealed that the indicators of war journalism in the news reports analysed focused on visible effects of the war, elite-oriented actors and sources of information, differences that led to the conflict, dichotomy between victims and villains, two-party orientation and zero sum orientation. However, the news reports tended towards peace journalism than war journalism.

Lynch, McGoldrick & Heathers (2015) conducted another experiment where television viewers were exposed to news stories on the policies of the Australian government towards asylum seekers and peace talks between Israel and Palestinians sponsored by the US government. The study was conducted to address the criticism that peace journalism proponents paid too much attention to media frames and the ability to influence them through reforms and in the process modeling the audience as a passive component in the peace journalism process. However, findings from the study indicate that members of the audience are active participants in the peace journalism process as reformed media frames have an impact on the cognitive and emotional responses of television news viewers. Specifically, the study found that peace journalism viewers had greater hope and empathy among viewers than war journalism viewers who had increased anger and distress.

Adebayo (2016) argues that insights gained from the peace journalism model can be used in training Nigerian journalists thereby building their capacity to report elections in a conflict sensitive and peace-oriented manner. Taking a cue from the key role the Kenyan media and journalists played in preventing violence during the Kenyan 2013 general elections having being exposed to peace journalism initiatives, Adebayo employed the action research paradigm by inviting 40 journalists for peace journalism training and administered pre-training questionnaires that measured the kind of journalism they practised. Findings of the study revealed that pre-training, the dominant writing style of the participating journalists was war journalism oriented and it was hinged on the need to be objective; post-training, journalists found that they have the power to

promote a culture of peace in the society and applied what they learned at the training to journalistic practice. Hassan & Sadiq (2017) examined the coverage of Pakistani tribal conflict by two Pakistani newspapers for the purpose of further understanding the theory and practice of peace journalism and its role in promoting peace. Using the indicators of war and peace journalism proposed by Lee & Maslog (2005), the authors observed that adequate pre-established indicators of war and peace journalism were presented in the articles reviewed. However, the war journalism frames were stronger and higher than peace journalism frames and this according to the authors can be attributed to the socio-political situation of the region under study.

War versus Peace Journalism: A Review of Analytical Frameworks

Despite the large amount of scholarly attention given to media coverage of conflicts and wars, literature has revealed that few analytical frameworks exist for the purpose of analysing media coverage of conflict and its potential contribution to conflict escalation or de-escalation. Peace and war journalism as proposed by Johan Galtung emerged as a prominent framework for classifying conflict coverage in the field of journalism studies and peace research (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, Hanitzch & Nagar, 2016). Within the framework of peace journalism, Galtung (2002) distinguished between two competing frames of conflict reporting namely war/violence journalism and peace journalism. This model was further expanded by McGoldrick & Lynch (2000, 2006) into 17 good practices to adapt in covering and reporting war. Some of these good practices as identified by the authors include focusing on solutions instead of differences, reporting on long-term and/or intangible effects, rather than the short-term and tangible effects, orientating the news on ordinary people instead of elites, reporting on all sides, and using precise language.

Scholars have either singularly applied the war and peace journalism model to conflict situations or combined the model with other frameworks used for analysing the role of the media in a conflict situation (Hussain, 2016). The actor-event framework is one of such frameworks used to analyse the presentation of conflict and war in the media. The contextual framework as proposed by Tenenboim-Weinblatt *et al* (2016, p. 155) integrates insights from existing frameworks and ‘categorises conflict based on depicted events and actors.’ Unlike the peace journalism framework that focuses on two major realms of events— war versus peace processes, the actor-event framework focuses on four major domains of events comprising ‘violence and military action; economic, political and media measures; ceasefires and maintenance of nonviolence; and gestures, dialogue and peace negotiations’ (Tenenboim-Weinblatt *et al* 2016, p. 56).

Theoretical Approaches to Peace/War Journalism

Peace and war journalism has been grounded in several theoretical frameworks as identified by various research studies. Peleg (2006) contributed to the development of the peace journalism theory by proposing that insights from conflict theory be adapted to peace journalism theory for the purpose of strengthening its analytical and normative rigour. Ottosen (2007) also used the theories of visual persuasion to present a theoretical backing on how an emphasis on visual elements in media coverage of war and conflict can promote peace journalism and mobilise broader perspectives of peace.

Other theoretical approaches that have been adapted to peace journalism include the Critical Discourse Analysis approach proposed by Nohrstedt & Ottosen (2010) to explore ways in which mediated discourses are interrelated. Lee (2010) also noted that peace journalism is supported by framing theory despite the inability of scholars to reach a consensus on the definition of framing. Lynch & Galtung (2010) with McMahon & Chow-White (2011) corroborated Lee and provided a theoretical backing for peace journalism by suggesting that the critical race theory, framing theory and agenda-setting effectiveness of the media, as well as, Habermas's public sphere model can be used to explain peace journalism.

Ogenga (2012) contributed to peace journalism theory and employed a theoretical approach that combines theories of media representation in mainstream journalism with concepts of peace journalism. Theoretically, the author focused on theories of political economy, theories of news production, and cultural studies. According to the author, these theories were appropriate because they brought to fore the language used in news stories which is important for understanding media representations.

Methodological Approach to War/Peace Journalism

A review of literature has revealed that scholars have employed the use of quantitative research methods with majority using content analysis to examine the presence of peace or war journalism frames in media content (Lee & Maslog, 2005; Lee, 2010; Prakash, 2013; Fahmy & Eakin, 2014; Arthur, 2015; Cozma, 2015). Some scholars have also employed mixed research method or triangulation method by combining both qualitative and quantitative analyses to investigate the media coverage of conflict/war from a peace and war journalism perspective. Qualitative studies conducted in this field have used critical discourse analyses and in-depth interviews with conflict journalists and analysts (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2012; Hussain, 2016). Critical discourse analysis has been particularly relevant in this field of research because it lends itself to peace journalism approach and because its view of discourse as 'socially constitutive' and 'socially conditioned' (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258) supports the assumptions of media effects underlying the practice of peace journalism.

A few studies have employed the use of experiments to determine how audience respond to frames of peace and war journalism present in conflict news and show that the audience are active participants in the dissemination of news on conflicts and wars. However, these experimental studies have been used alongside other research methods such as survey, content analysis and discourse analysis (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2012; Lynch, McGoldrick & Heathers, 2015).

Criticisms of Peace/War Journalism

Literature is extant with criticisms of the war and peace journalism. It is important to note that it was the criticisms of war journalism as being violence-oriented that gave rise to the emergence of peace journalism as proposed by Galtung (2003). Hammond (2002) criticised the notions of peace journalism as being characterised by false morality. He argued that it is only a neutral and objective press that has the ability to serve the needs of the society, however, peace journalism does not allow for this as it promotes journalism of attachment that increases subjectivity, lack of balance, selectivity, oversimplification, insufficient contextualisation and dualism. Hanitzch (2004) confirming Hammond's position on the oversimplification and naïve nature of peace journalism argued that there are severe theoretical, ethical and practical limits to the adaptation of peace journalism.

Scholars have also criticised the professional realities of peace journalism. For instance, Lyon (2007), a BBC reporter, criticised the professionalism of peace journalism as being too dualistic. Also, Hanitzch (2007) posits that the proponents of peace journalism underestimate the material conditions for modern news reporting and overestimate the possibilities for journalists working under hectic deadline pressure to contextualise their stories arguing that it should be called 'good journalism' instead. Criticisms are not restricted to scholars alone as journalists have criticised the model for not promoting the ideal of objectivity in journalism (Hamelink, 2008; Ottosen, 2010; McMahan & Chow-White, 2011; Tenenboim-Weinblatt *et al* 2016).

Concluding Remarks on Peace and War Journalism: An Agenda for Future Research

Although, much has been written on peace and war journalism, there are many questions that remain unanswered as many contributions to the debate are based on normative reasoning rather than empirical research. Instead of ending with a conclusion, this paper seeks to identify gaps in literature and propose an agenda for future research.

First, majority of the normative and empirical research that have been conducted in the field of peace and war journalism have been largely focused on Western societies such as America, Iraq, Israel/Palestinian, Australia, Asia, Philippines among others (Lee & Maslog, 2005; Ottosen, 2007; Lee, 2010;

Lynch & McGoldrick, 2012; Prakash, 2013). There is a dearth of literature on normative or empirical research on peace and war journalism in African countries such as Nigeria. The few studies that exist have focused on the media coverage of post-election violence with a particular focus on Kenya (Onyebadi & Oyedeji, 2011; Ogenga, 2012; Adebayo, 2016). As a result, there is a need to carry out research that examines the presence of peace and war journalism frames in media coverage of wars and conflicts in Africa. Future research also needs to address the possibility of applying peace journalism practice in African countries taking into consideration the socio-political and cultural environments within which African journalists operate.

Second, majority of the studies reviewed employed the use of quantitative research method (Lee & Maslog, 2005; Lee, 2010; Prakash, 2013; Fahmy & Eakin, 2014; Arthur, 2015; Cozma, 2015) with only a few employing the use of mixed research methods (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2012; Ogenga, 2012; Lynch, McGoldrick & Heathers, 2015; Adebayo, 2016). A quantitative approach is not sufficient to account for important components of conflict narratives that is associated with symbols and visual dimensions. Hence, future research in this field can employ the use of the triangulation approach that combines two or more research methods such as Critical Discourse Analysis, experiments, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews for the purpose of examining a phenomenon. For instance, experimental research has the potential to find the strongest predictors of when articles will contain war or peace frames. Hence, future research in the field of peace and war journalism can take the triangulation of these research methods into consideration.

Third, despite the plethora of studies on peace and war journalism, only a few studies have examined the responses of the audience and journalists to peace and war journalism. Building on the survey instrument developed by Neumann & Fahmy (2016), there is a need to employ the survey research instrument to get opinion on the practice of peace and war journalism in different regions of the world.

Fourth, there have been calls to include peace journalism in the curriculum of journalism training institutions in order to strengthen peace journalism theory. However, research is lacking in this area, hence, a survey should be carried out to find out the number of journalism training institutions that have adapted peace journalism in their curriculum. There is also a need to find out to what extent journalists have been trained and have applied peace journalism in their reports of conflict and war particularly in Africa.

Fifth, a review of the literature revealed that majority of the empirical studies carried out in this field examined media content for a relatively small period of time ranging from weeks to a year (Lee & Maslog, 2005; Ottosen, 2007; Lee, 2010; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2012; Prakash, 2013). Hence, there is the need to conduct longitudinal studies that examine media coverage of a war or

conflict over a long period of time. Also, the plethora of studies in this field have only examined media coverage of conflicts and war that have ended failing to take into consideration the exploration of media coverage of ongoing conflicts. There is also the need for research to look in this direction. On a practical level, international and local journalists covering African countries would benefit from additional studies that provide deeper insight into some of the problematic themes and trends with reporting on conflicts and wars in the African region.

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