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#2

Peace Journalism: A Tool Within Media Development?

by
Fabíola Ortiz dos Santos
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Content

Abstract

The role that the news media play in wartime has been an important topic in journalism scholarship. Peace journalism has become a popular concept in the study of the media's role in conflicts in the early 21st century. This literature review seeks to determine whether peace journalism can be considered a tool for the field of media development, formulating some concrete recommendations for practitioners. Defining the core tenets of peace journalism, it discusses the ways in which journalists have been perceived as contributors to peace and the extents to which this notion has been both criticised and used in media development. In conclusion, the review points to future research to help deepen the understanding of this approach and the potential for its implementation.

Key findings

» The study of peace journalism emerged in the 60s, drawing on the overlapping fields of conflict analysis and peace research. The seeds of this notion were first introduced in a paper authored by Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge in 1965. Their study was instrumental in the development of the theoretical perspectives called 'peace/ conflict journalism' on the one hand, and 'war/ violence journalism' on the other.

» Whereas war journalism is oriented towards war, violence, propaganda, elites, and victory, peace journalism attempts to explore the formation of conflicts, and the parties involved in them, aiming for 'win-win' situations in order to make conflicts transparent and prevent violence. In short, peace journalism aims at providing a more balanced news coverage, seeking alternative interpretations, focusing on context, humanising all sides in a conflict, exposing lies from several actors, and revealing the suffering, pain, and trauma of warfare.

» This concept, however, is not without its critics, who blame it for its advocacy role and 'false morality'. According to the critics, this notion cannot be imposed from the outside, and can only evolve within a culture of peace in each society. Questions posed by scholars and practitioners have raised doubts as to whether the peace journalism approach can be implemented by journalists in their day-to-day reporting and if the circumstances of news production can be adjusted to the different contexts.

» Despite the growing interest and controversy surrounding the academic debate on the peace approach to journalism, some gaps are to be filled when it comes to empirical research of the media's role in conflict and peacebuilding. There has been a call from scholars and practitioners for the need of journalism to be more localised and context-based within the media assistance projects. Future research is needed particularly regarding the consequences and effects of the implementation of peace journalism on media development projects.

» For instance, research that explores the dynamics of the environment of disinformation and the factors that trigger hate speech, should not be ignored. Additionally, academic research

that seeks to merge peace journalism with other relevant and pressing topics, such as the safety of journalists, the culture of impunity, the need to encourage the vulnerable groups to actively participate in the media, the fostering of a pluralistic media environment, and the promotion of media and information literacy, can inspire new solutions and best practices in conflict reporting.

» A great challenge is to engage more professionals – individual reporters as well as those in leadership positions, such as editors. The idea is to equip media professionals with more critical and knowledge-based tools to enable more informed decision making and effective execution of their respective tasks.

» Media development practitioners are usually forced to adjust to the funding realities involving the training of individual groups of journalists, limiting their work to what they get funded for. In most cases, practitioners do not get to penetrate the existing structures and exert influence within them. One practical approach would be to combine the training of reporters, editors, and professionals at higher levels of the leadership hierarchy.

» The label 'peace journalism', or 'conflict-sensitive journalism', is usually reflective of the practitioners' perception of what is more context-relevant and likely to be conducive to the engagement of the donors, the audience, and the public at large. Regardless of how it is framed, the underlying precept is that professionals are willing to question their own prejudices, opinions, and biases when striving to accurately present the various perspectives involved in a conflict.

Conclusions for the practitioners

Questions posed by scholars and practitioners have raised doubts as to whether the peace journalism approach can be implemented by journalists in their day-to-day reporting and if the circumstances involving news production can be adjusted accordingly. The review concludes that, while the core principles of peace journalism can be used in this field, more research is needed to understand how this approach can be effectively implemented with respect to both the journalists and their audience. Empirical research is needed on media literacy experiences among journalism professionals and information consumers.

The peace journalism approach has resulted in an "animating concept" in professional development and a value-explicit approach to media practice *(Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, p. 310)*. However, it is unlikely to succeed unless there is a "serious drive" to train journalists, give reporters proper time for research and modify institutional norms *(Kempf, 2003, 2007; Rodny-Gumede, 2016)*. Under the broader development and communication umbrella, capacity-building is an essential dimension of media assistance. This includes a range of activities designed to support media organisations, with the most common and well-funded area of media development being the training of journalists. If journalists are not trained, if they do not know how to connect with people and help engage the conflicting parties, they may end up propelling the conflict.

Media development practitioners are usually forced to adjust to the funding realities involving the training of individual groups of journalists, which limits their work to what they are specifically funded for. In most cases, practitioners are unable to penetrate the existing structures and exert influence within them. Combining the training of reporters, editors and professionals at higher levels of the leadership hierarchy may be a practical and effective solution, but engaging a large number of professionals, whether individual reporters or editors, is a daunting challenge. The idea is to equip journalists with more critical and knowledge-based tools in order to foster their agency when acting, deciding, and reporting. Agency refers not only to the intentions people have in doing things but their "capability of doing those things" *(Giddens, 1984, p. 9)*. Whether it is peace journalism or related definitions, it is the professionals' ability to challenge and potentially transform the surrounding realities that should be fostered.

What needs to be achieved is a greater structural pluralism involving free and independent media outlets. Outlets independently funded through multiple supporters would be an alternative for securing journalists' autonomy, helping advance the objectives of peace journalism through grassroots coverage. According to *Lynch and McGoldrick (2005, p. 223)*, much of the impulse for peace journalism would come from journalists in post-colonial societies who would be ready to adopt it.

Despite the growing interest in, and controversy around, the subject of peace journalism, there are considerable gaps that need to be filled with respect to systematic empirical research and academic analysis of the media's role in peacebuilding *(Wolfsfeld 2001 and Howard 2003 cited in Ross, 2006, p. 5)*. There has been a call from scholars and practitioners for the need of journalism to be more localised and context-based within the media assistance projects. As *Betz (2019)* stresses, a crucial element of effective media development is adapting to the local context, which includes understanding the media environment and the audience.

The practice of journalism could follow a more nuanced approach to contextual differences across geographical and cultural boundaries *(Mitra, 2016, pp. 3–5)*. It is argued here that the peace journalism approach could be adapted to the complexities of different media realities to build a consistent body of critical journalists willing to produce durable changes within their reporting. The media as such could offer a safe space in which disparate (even conflicting) narratives could be mediated and negotiated. The label 'peace journalism', or 'conflict-sensitive journalism', is often reflective of the practitioners' perception of what is more context-relevant and likely to be conducive to the engagement of the donors, the audience, and the public at large. Above all, it is about the effort to adopt a more conscious, attentive, and knowledgeable behaviour and mindset while reporting. Irrespective of how it is labelled, the underlying precept is that professionals are willing to question their own prejudices, opinions, and biases when seeking to accurately present the various perspectives involved in a conflict.

Future research needs to investigate the consequences and effects of peace journalism combined with other context-based issues. Research that explores the dynamics of the environment of disinformation and the factors that trigger hate speech, should not be ignored in the context of scholarly inquiry. Additionally, academic research that seeks to merge peace journalism with other relevant and pressing topics, such as the safety of journalists, the culture of impunity, the need to encourage the vulnerable groups to actively participate in the media, the fostering of a pluralistic media environment, and the promotion of media and information literacy, can inspire new solutions and best practices in conflict reporting.

As *Bläsi (2004)* asked, "how can peace journalism be realised under a variety of political, historical, cultural, and geographical conditions? How can it be implemented within the different structures, procedures, and cultures of media corporations? And how can we overcome the obstacles that arise in journalists' daily activities and vary from conflict to conflict?" *(p. 11)* These questions need to be addressed if peace journalism is to contribute to establishing journalism as an important factor in international norm-setting and to raising the profession's ethical standards with regard to violent conflicts, suggested by *Nohrstedt and Ottosen (2015)*.

Research in this field should extend to the standards of peace journalism adopted in media development efforts in conflict scenarios. A donor-driven approach to establishing media projects also poses questions as to whether local journalists operating in conflict environments can act as agents in constructing media narratives aimed at social engagement, and how they understand their role in conflict and peace. One way forward, as indicated by *Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch (2009)*, is to look at journalistic practices beyond the Western context in order to identify a diversity in journalism as well as the ways in which roles, norms and journalistic practices are configured in different contexts.

1. Summary of the scientific literature

1.1 Defining peace journalism

The idea of peace journalism as a useful tool for de-escalation[1] of wars and violence has found increased attention from a number of academics and practitioners over the past decades. The study of peace journalism emerged in the 60s, drawing on the overlapping fields of conflict analysis and peace research. The seeds of this notion were first introduced by *Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge (1965)* in their paper *The Structure of Foreign News: The Presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus Crises in Four Norwegian Newspapers*, published in the Journal of Peace Research. Generally acknowledged to be the first empirical study of the criteria a journalist applies, as a gatekeeper, when gathering and selecting news, this paper is thought to have started the tradition of academic discussions pertaining to the notion of news values in the context of international news reporting.

The many studies that have used *Galtung and Ruge's (1965)* news value model over the past five decades as a starting point to dissect news content have all identified one major shortfall in news coverage, particularly with reference to crisis reporting: "mainstream news media too often disseminate distorted worldviews" *(p. 10)*, remarked *Joye, Heinrich and Wöhlert (2016)* in a retrospective review of 50 years of Galtung and Ruge. Such a notion of news values sparked the interest of scholars willing to inquire into the influence of journalism on the dynamics of conflict and peace *(Lynch et al., 2015, p. 24)*.

The most widely accepted definitions of peace journalism are grounded in Galtung's distinction between what he calls negative and positive peace. 'Negative peace' means passive co-existence in the absence of violence (direct violence, in structural or cultural forms) or peace that is not necessarily achieved by peaceful means *(Galtung, 1969; Galtung & Fischer, 2013; Shaw et al., 2012)*. 'Positive peace', in contrast, refers to mutually beneficial cooperation on an equal basis combined with reciprocal learning to heal past violence and prevent future violence *(Galtung & Fischer, 2013, p. 12)*.

This understanding forms the basis for the differentiation between 'war journalism' and 'peace journalism' with points of contrast between these two axioms. *Galtung (2002)* observes that traditional war journalism is shaped according to the metaphor of 'sports journalism' with its focus on the dimension of winning or losing a zero-sum game. Peace and war journalism can be distinguished along four major axes: an orientation towards peace and conflict, truth, people and solutions.

Whereas war journalism is oriented towards war and violence, propaganda, elites and victory, peace journalism attempts to explore the formation of a conflict, considering the multitude of parties involved, and aims for 'win-win' situations in order to make conflicts transparent and prevent violence before it occurs. In peace reporting, the focus is on the suffering of all participants, including non-combatants, as well as grassroots efforts towards conflict resolution *(Galtung, 2002, pp. 259–272; Obijiofor & Hanusch, 2011, p. 137)*.

With its spotlight aimed mainly at the visible effects of violence, war journalism is said to be reactive, waiting for violence to explode before it is reported. The sources of such stories are often elites as opposed to grassroots movements. In

1) De-escalation is understood as the cooling off or calming down of a heated conflict. It is the reduction in the intensity of a conflict *(Burgess, 2013)*.

contrast to this framework in which peace is seen as the result of a victory or ceasefire, the peace journalism perspective equates peace with endeavours to maintain non-violence *(Obijiofor & Hanusch, 2011, p. 137)*. This model denotes a form of reporting which: i) explores contexts of conflict transformation, presenting causes and options on every side so as to depict conflict in realistic terms; ii) gives voice to different views, not merely leaders of two antagonistic sides; iii) airs creative ideas for conflict resolution and peacebuilding; iv) exposes lies that reveal excesses committed; v) and, finally, pays attention to peace stories *(Lynch et al., 2015, pp. 24–25; Shinar, 2007)*.

In short, the concept of peace journalism aims for more balanced news coverage, seeking alternative interpretations, focusing on context, humanising all sides in a conflict, exposing the mendacity of various actors, revealing the suffering, pain and trauma of warfare, and de-anonymising evildoers *(Hamelink, 2015, p. 174)*.

Two important promoters of the concept of peace journalism, journalist Jake Lynch and psychotherapist Annabel McGoldrick, are British scholars based at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Sydney. They have published extensively, inspired by Galtung's approach *(Lynch, 2008; Lynch et al., 2015; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, 2012; Shaw et al., 2012)*. In their view, the notion of peace journalism can be regarded as a set of tools, both conceptual and practical, for building awareness of non-violence in the everyday craft of editing and reporting. It serves as a basis for rethinking newsmaking values and practices, with the intention of offering a better public service. *Lynch and McGoldrick (2005)* offer this definition:

> [Peace journalism] is when editors and reporters make choices – of what stories to report and about how to report them – that create opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict. *(p. 5)*

Another influential approach to peace journalism has been formulated by the German social psychologist *Wilhelm Kempf (2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007)*. *Kempf (2007)* suggested that peace journalism should be thought of as a two-step process. In the first step, during the 'hot phase' of a conflict, the focus is on de-escalation oriented conflict coverage, but this needs to be limited. Proposing solutions in this 'hot phase' is not advisable, for there is a risk that reportage will be rejected as unreliable or as hostile propaganda. The aim would be "to open the public's eyes to a detached standpoint and to deconstruct the polarization of the conflict parties" *(p. 7)*. A second step would then centre on solution-oriented coverage towards reconciling the opponents, in search of ways in which they can cooperatively resolve their differences. Only then, indicates Kempf, can solution-oriented conflict coverage make a contribution to dismantling war discourse.

As the head of the Center for Global Peace Journalism at Park University in the United States, *Youngblood (2020)* adapts and expands on Lynch and McGoldrick's definition by emphasising that peace journalism is a practice in which:

> Editors and reporters make choices that improve the prospects for peace. These choices, including how to frame stories and carefully choosing which words are used, create an atmosphere conducive to peace and supportive of peace initiatives and peacemakers, without compromising the basic principles of good journalism. Peace journalism gives peacemakers a voice while making peace initiatives and non-violent solutions more visible and viable. *(p. 6)*

In Youngblood's view *(2020)*, by adopting this approach and reporting contextually, journalists can move beyond superficial narratives by analysing how religion, science, language and art are used to explain or legitimise direct or structural violence *(pp. 13–14)*.

1.2 Empirical insights: From the Rwandan genocide to audience responses

The concept of peace journalism only took off in the mid-1990s, despite the fact that *Galtung and Ruge's (1965)* study had been published thirty years earlier, laying the grounds for a reform movement as a field of scholarly research. *Obijiofor and Hanusch (2011)* identified three main reasons why peace journalism received a surge of attention at that time: the growth in the number of global conflicts in the early 1990s; the more concentrated media focus on conflicts as well as on negative events; and public disenchantment with the way journalists reported on conflicts *(p. 137)*. The launch of scholarly journals, such as *Conflict & Communication Online* in 2002 and *Media, War & Conflict* in 2008, provided further evidence of the significance the field had achieved in academic and research communities.

The debate flourished particularly when concerns over media roles in conflict were sparked by the 1994 genocide in Rwanda; it was recognised that harmful use of mass media communication could propagate hate and provoke atrocities *(Lynch et al., 2015, p. 29)*. The climate of fear was disseminated in Rwanda in the Great Lakes region of Africa when 800,000 people were killed in roughly 100 days *(Obijiofor & Hanusch, 2011; Straus, 2007; Thompson, 2007; Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014)*.

Outside Rwanda other examples of hate media proliferated. During the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the early 1990s, Serbian-controlled television was reported to have transmitted hate-filled anti-Croat and anti-Muslim messages. In Asia, where countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka experienced ethnic conflicts, the news media also played an important role *(Obijiofor & Hanusch, 2011, p. 134)*.

Communication may become a decisive determinant in a conflict scenario. With this in mind, *Kempf (2006)* conducted a series of experimental studies which measured audience responses to escalation- and de-escalation-oriented news articles on the Yugoslavian conflict after the fall of Milošević and the War on Terror. Experimenting with German and Austrian audiences and with conflicts that did not directly affect them, the study showed that de-escalation-oriented news articles were accepted by audiences and resulted in less polarised mental models of the events.

Although de-escalation-oriented coverage goes beyond conventional war reporting, Kempf argues that it is still a long way from peace journalism in Galtung's sense, which may only be fully implemented in the second step of the process that he calls 'solution-oriented coverage' *(2006)*. Guided by the principles of peacemaking and reconciliation, this second step is only capable of securing majority support when an armistice or a peace treaty is already in place *(p. 3)*. Once a peace treaty has been reached, he says, a more people-oriented type of peace journalism may gain support in the wider society.

Another study based on Galtung's concept of peace/war journalism involved a survey of worldwide members of The Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting *(Neumann & Fahmy, 2016)*. The objective was to advance an empirical method to develop an instrument to assess journalists' attitudes towards peace/war performance. The authors *(Neumann & Fahmy, 2016)* proposed a measurement index of ten different conflict reporting practices linked to peace/war journalism. These practices included: coping with the invisible and visible effects of conflict (psychological and larger sociocultural damage, material damage and casualty counts); the presentation of similarities and areas of agreement, as well as dividing differences; a focus on both civilians and elites; and, lastly, paying attention to the past in discussions and projecting into the future *(p. 240)*.

This exploratory work represented one of the first scholarly endeavours to develop a survey instrument for a "reliable and valid assessment of journalists' attitudes toward conflict-reporting practices" in the context of peace and war journalism *(p. 239)*. Neumann and Fahmy's findings suggested that peace journalists would be well advised to incorporate traditional war journalism frames – "assuming they are not competing" – in their reports in order to increase peace journalism's share of coverage *(p. 240)*.

1.3 Critique

Peace journalism and its related dimensions of human rights and conflict-sensitive[2] reporting are not without critics who speak about 'false morality' and point to a shift from objective reporting to forms of advocacy *(Hammond, 2002; Ross, 2006, p. 5)*. Peace journalism, according to its opponents, runs the risk of becoming a subjective enterprise that disregards long-held journalistic norms of objectivity[3], neutrality and impartiality *(Obijiofor & Hanusch, 2011, pp. 139–140)*.

In a prominent critique, German scholar *Thomas Hanitzsch (2004)* argues that the underlying assumptions of peace journalism are both naive and simplistic *(Hanitzsch, 2004; Ross, 2006, p. 5)*, lacking a more realistic goal that embraces both the norms of professional ethics and peace as a resource for collective imagination. *Hammond (2002)*, in line with Hanitzsch, criticises media coverage for distorting interpretations of conflict with "simplistic narratives of good versus evil" *(p. 183)*.

Hanitzsch (2004) admits that peace journalism has noble intentions and that journalism can certainly contribute to the peaceful settlement of conflicts, though its potential influence is limited. In his view, this approach unintentionally overburdens journalists with responsibilities that ought to be reserved for politicians and policymakers. He reasons, therefore, that peace journalism draws epistemologically from a "naive realism" that is "largely based on the assumption of powerful, causal and linear media effects" *(p. 489)*, overestimating the power of the media and understating the impact of interpersonal communication.

Peace journalism, according to Hanitzsch, cannot be induced from the outside, and can only evolve within a culture of peace in a given society. "We should rather ask: what kind of society is it that creates the sort of journalism that has no sense of peace?" *(p. 491)*. He contends that it should not be the major task of journalism to free the world from crises, conflicts and other evils, since this is the

2) Conflict sensitivity means an awareness of the causes of historical, actual or potential conflict, and of the likelihood of further conflict and its severity; and the capacity to work with all parties to reduce conflict and/or minimise the risk of further conflict *(Fewer, 2004)*.

3) A story in journalism is objective if its claims are based on the best possible journalistic methods for gathering data, collaborating facts and checking a diversity of sources *(Ward, 2011, p. 31)*.

task of other social systems such as politics and the military. He also proposes that those who subscribe to an interventionist mode of peace journalism should turn their attention to another sector of public communication that deals, by nature, with communication intended to serve a particular purpose, namely public relations *(p. 491)*.

Simon Cottle (2006) identifies another problem with the epistemological assumption embedded in peace journalism: the concept seems to include the premise that those who practice peace journalism are able to decide between truths and untruths. As he stresses, peace journalists do not hold a position of "omniscience in respect of the truth" *(p. 103)* and much of the understanding of a certain reality will depend on the interests and perspectives of all the parties involved. What is needed, according to the author, is a broader, deeper understanding of the practice of war and conflict reporting; journalists should not hold to "an idealised view of the world as it should be, nor one that is representationally engineered to conform to a particular view of the 'peaceful society'" *(p. 103)*, as conflicts are endemic, and sometimes unavoidably violent.

Critiques also come from practitioners. In an opinion article from 2003, *David Loyn*, a BBC foreign correspondent, appealed for the return of traditional values such as fairness, objectivity and balance, since they are "the only guiding lights of good reporting" *(2003, paragraph 3)*. Loyn criticised Galtung for misunderstanding the journalist's role. "We are always outside, observers not players" *(2003, paragraph 5)*. He called peace journalism a "new orthodoxy" that draws journalists into a dispute as active participants, compromising their integrity and confusing their role. "If there is conflict resolution we report on it in context. We do not engage in it" *(2003, paragraph 7)*.

The peace journalism option, for Loyn, presents an "unhelpful and misleading view of journalism in general" *(2003, paragraph 9)* because it defines a way of performing that requires reporters to work "artificially" to seek out peacemakers. "Our job as reporters is only to be witnesses to the truth. There cannot of course be a single absolute truth", he concluded *(2003, paragraph 34)*. *Loyn (2007)* added elsewhere that the problem with peace journalism prescriptions and rules is that they "actually exclude constructive engagement" *(p. 11)* in the kind of research and insights that its advocates promote, putting peace journalism "far outside the daily practice of journalism" *(p. 11)*.

In response to the criticism, *Kempf (2007)* argues that peace journalism is a prerequisite for good journalism as it 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. The single goal of good journalism, in his view, is "to represent reality accurately" *(p. 2)*. Peace journalism is not as naive as *Hanitzsch (2004)* assumes, contests *Kempf (2007, p. 6)*. However, it cannot be ignored that typical mainstream coverage reduces conflicts to depictions of force and violence, showing little knowledge of the dynamics of a conflict and offering 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. *(Kempf, 2007, p. 4)*

Hamelink (2020) claims that reliable media need "good quality audiences" *(p. 17)*. Since the provision of information is of critical importance in democratic societies, citizens can be asked to be vigilant media consumers who actively and critically reflect on media content, since the press functions as part of the societal context. Although it should not, ultimately, be the major task of journalism to free the world from crises, journalists are nevertheless immersed in a context and, as citizens too (in many circumstances), can be expected to uphold a knowledgeable position in a conflict environment.

It is indisputable that journalists do not hold an omniscient position in respect of the truth, but it is their professional role to report and gather information as accurately as possible, avoid misleading data, and to attempt to understand the reasons behind given acts and facts. An additional responsibility is to avert distorting or misrepresenting information that could alter the audience's perception. The journalist is not all-knowing, far from it; s/he seeks to gather information in a transparent way and aspires to offer different versions and give the opinions of the actors involved in a certain subject, event or fact. Her/his duty is to be well informed and to demonstrate their commitment to professionalism and responsibility while performing their task.

The journalist should not have an idealistic or utopian vision of the world, nor take on the role of an activist, but s/he should retain a realistic view of the various factors that construct a given reality. A realistic view implies being aware of the diverse positions of actors and parties, knowing how to seek information at the source and assuming responsibility for the information relayed. It is not a simple matter of publishing for publishing's sake as a neutral observer of reality; there is the need to keep in mind what effect the information made public might have on social groups and in certain contexts.

2. Summary of grey literature

2.1 Handbooks & media toolkits

Throughout the decades, scholarly research spanning from the Rwandan genocide to audience responses towards (de)escalation-oriented coverage has contributed to the discussion concerning the use of media for conflict transformation. Various studies have contributed to the advancement of critical thinking with regard to the peace journalism approach, culminating in the publication of numerous handbooks, toolboxes and practical guidelines offering concrete recommendations for journalists and media practitioners.

One example is the handbook developed by *Ross Howard (2004)*, largely derived from the work of leading figures in media training such as Jake Lynch, Annabel McGoldrick, Fiona Lloyd, Peter du Toit and others. In this handbook published by the International Media Support (IMS) and the Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society (IMPACS), the Canadian scholar set out guidelines on how to practise journalism that is conflict-sensitive, given the assumption that professional journalists play "unconscious roles" *(p. 8)*. Although they do not set out to reduce conflict, journalists seek to present accurate and impartial news and "it is often through good reporting that conflict is reduced" *(p. 8)*.

Howard outlined elements of conflict resolution that are present in journalism such as the task of channelling communication between opposing sides and educating the different parties. "Journalism which explores each side's particular difficulties, such as its politics or powerful interests can help educate the other side to avoid demands for simplistic and immediate solutions" *(p. 8)*. Another aspect of conflict-sensitive journalism is the unconscious role of confidence-building, as the media can reduce suspicion. "Good journalism can also present news that shows resolution is possible by giving examples from other places and by explaining local efforts at reconciliation" *(p. 8)*. An additional element included in the guidelines is the importance of correcting the two disputing sides' misperceptions of each other.

In this handbook, Howard stresses that good journalism is a "constant process of seeking solutions" *(p. 9)*. When reporting from a conflict-affected area, a good journalist should identify the underlying interests of the conflicting parties, listen to the parties' grievances and describe the problem in a way that can reduce tension and launch negotiations, thereby encouraging a balance of power.

Conflicting groups, regardless of inequalities, have to believe they will be given attention if they meet the other side in negotiations. Good journalism encourages negotiation because the reporting is impartial and balanced. It gives attention to all sides. It encourages a balance of power for the purpose of hearing grievances and seeking solutions. *(p. 9)*

Incorporating the works of Annabel McGoldrick and Jake Lynch, Howard offered a checklist for conflict-sensitive journalism in practice *(pp. 16-22)*. Some years later *(2009)*, in another booklet he echoed the debate of peace journalism and answered its critics by putting forward conflict-sensitive journalism as a complementary approach. This later booklet offered a model curriculum for a training programme designed to strengthen the skills of professional journalists when reporting on violent conflict. "Some well-intentioned journalists, academics and peace researchers propose a new practice of reporting that consciously works for peace and engages reporters in the roles of advocacy" *(p. 4)*.

Howard emphasised in this more recent publication that within media development initiatives, conflict resolution is no longer a secondary consideration, and that responsible news media is a "critical part of preventing and resolving violent conflict" *(p. 12)*. The original role of the media as a source of news, a forum for free speech and a government watchdog remains essential and indeed needs to be reinforced so that journalists in conflict-stressed areas can report in an insightful and comprehensive way, revealing opportunities for conflict resolution and peace. Thus, Howard sees conflict-sensitive reporting as an evolution of this debate.

Throughout the years, scholars and consultants have come forward offering a myriad of guides for practitioners. *Peter du Toit (2012, 2014)*, for example, founded the Conflict Sensitive Journalism Project at South Africa's Rhodes University. He elaborated two toolboxes for journalists on conflict-sensitive reporting. The first curriculum *(2012)* was initially piloted during a workshop organised in partnership with Internews in Kenya (2010). The second *(2014)* was funded by a grant from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and aimed at providing reporters with insights for covering violent conflicts.

Both toolboxes assume that journalists can make a "positive contribution towards the peaceful management and resolution of conflict in their communities by helping to create conditions that allow for the needs and interests of various parties to be met" *(2012, p. 4)*. In addition, du Toit argues that journalists can serve the interests of their own communities only if they also serve the interests of others involved in the conflict. Their ability to make a difference relies on a commitment to providing fair, accurate, responsible and comprehensive coverage and on a willingness to explore the hopes, fears, needs and concerns of all parties caught up in a conflict as far as possible *(p. 4)*.

He stressed that fairness, accuracy, and responsibility – characteristics of good reporting – may not be enough on their own. Journalists also need to be aware of the contributions they can make to ease tensions and "to enhance their understandings of the causes of conflict, the dynamics of conflict escalation and how conflicts can be addressed" *(2012, pp. 3–4)*.

This 2012 toolbox offers a discussion on how journalists can contribute to peacekeeping, peacebuilding and peacemaking by offering strategies for conflict-sensitive reporting. Given the dilemma of whether journalists should get involved in mediating conflicts while reporting on them, or whether they should refuse to help and let the conflict take its course, various options are suggested: a) The journalist could help and mediate between parties, but s/he would have to be clear about his/her role when it came to reporting on events. This would involve clarifying in the news story that this was an exceptional circumstance and not something that he or she would normally do. b) Journalists could refuse to become directly involved in mediations yet continue to play an advisory role by educating parties about their rights and explaining the potential avenues people could follow in addressing their concerns. Often, they may help to facilitate initial communication between different stakeholders involved in the conflict. c) Alternatively, the journalist could refuse to take on an active role, but, through his/her reporting pose the necessary questions that would help parties to reach solutions for themselves. Such questions can help to foreground individual and group rights, the obligations of service providers and companies and the possibility of particular solutions in specific contexts *(Du Toit, 2012, p. 32)*.

In this practical guide, it is made explicit that journalists have the capacity to: offer a channel for communication between parties; provide them with the information they need to make wise decisions in managing and resolving conflict; educate parties on/about ways of managing and resolving conflict; foster trust between parties; counteract misperceptions; analyse conflict; and help to identify the underlying interests in the context of each issue.

These toolkits reflected most of the principles stressed in *Ross Howards'* publications *(2004, 2009)* and acknowledged that both approaches – peace journalism and conflict-sensitive journalism – recognise the importance of journalism in mitigating the harmful effects of conflicts. Both have contributed to our understanding of journalists' roles in reporting on conflict *(Du Toit, 2014, p. 4)*.

In 2015, the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation, along with the Protestant Development Service, funded a publication on media and journalism in peacebuilding. Originally written in French, this booklet described the differences between peace and war journalism for a French-speaking readership, inspired by the theories of Johan Galtung, the pioneer of peace research. Moreover, it gave

a perspective on the experience of peace journalism in an area dominated by Boko Haram *(Kayser & Djateng, 2015, pp. 30–33)* and shed light on the challenges professional journalists face in the Great Lakes region *(pp. 48-64)*.

Nigerian scholar *Jacob Udo-Udo (2016)* explored the principles of peace journalism in a handbook dedicated to the concept. In this document, published by the American University of Nigeria and the US Embassy in Abuja, he suggested ways in which different models could be applied within a peace journalism framework that could be useful to journalists and editors. He additionally discussed principles of storytelling in "peace news". In conclusion, Udo-Udo proposed peace journalism as a form of "humanitarian information intervention" *(p. 13)*.

A more recent conflict-sensitive teaching guide *(Rama & Gürten, 2018)* was funded by the Forum Civil Peace Service (forumZFD) and the Peace and Conflict Journalism Network (PECOJON) of the Philippines with the idea of strengthening the media's capacity to report on conflicts in Mindanao. By drawing on the works of Johan Galtung, Jake Lynch, Annabel McGoldrick and Noam Chomsky, this guide highlights four key ideas: truth-seeking, active accuracy, a focus on relevance and good writing. The underlying assumption is that it is often through good reporting that conflict is reduced. The aim is to facilitate understanding, engagement and action among society's "real problem-solvers", i.e., the people and its many segments *(Rama, & Gürten, 2018, p. 9)*. It is argued that once citizens are offered accurate, unbiased, contextualised and nuanced information, they will be able to make "educated choices that can bring about a just and peaceful society" *(p. 9)*. The PECOJON handbook has a chapter dedicated to a discussion of the media and conflict escalation *(pp. 33-39)*, in which eleven aspects of the media's role are outlined – channelling communication, educating, confidence-building, correcting misperceptions, humanising the opposing sides, identifying underlying interests, venting emotions, framing the conflict (describing the problem in a different way), consensus-building, solution-building and encouraging a balance of power.

It is clear that the media can serve as an agent of change. However, although conflict-sensitive journalism requires journalists to directly address capacity building, it is not clear how much can be achieved without the consideration of other factors, as *Betz (2012, pp. 4–5)* pointed out. She added that media development practitioners should examine how conflict-sensitive reporting could most effectively be monitored and evaluated, and proposed that implementers go beyond the collection of basic data such as the numbers of journalists trained in conflict-sensitive journalism.

Manuals of conflict-sensitive coverage have been distributed across different regions, including a handbook edited in 2015 by the Swedish organisation Kvinna Till Kvinna, which supports women in war and conflict zones in the Balkans, Middle East and the Caucasus. The handbook focuses on gender- and conflict-sensitive journalism but places strong emphasis on the tenets of peace journalism, using as reference the recommendations offered by Professor Dov Shinar, Head of the Center for the Study of Conflict, War and Peace Coverage at Netanya Academic College in Israel. He describes five headings under which peace journalism could be conceptualised *(Ahlsén, 2015, p. 4)*. Merging both peace journalism and conflict-sensitive journalism, this toolkit presents a 17-point plan with practical suggestions for devising and applying a strategy to rebalance the reporting of conflicts, countering the distorting influence of war journalism *(pp.*

5-8).

Another example is the guidebook edited in 2017 by the School of Information and Communication Studies at the University of Ghana, in collaboration with the African Peacebuilding Network (APN) within the Social Science Research Council (SSRC). This publication focuses on reporting on conflict in West Africa. It starts by introducing key concepts in conflict and peacebuilding, and describes the different typologies of African conflicts *(Gadzekpo, 2017, p. 13)* – ranging from colonial armed conflicts to post-Cold War and postcolonial secessionist wars. It also dedicates a chapter to discussing NGO-media partnerships in peacebuilding and experiences with the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) *(pp. 52–57).*

Deutsche Welle Akademie has also embraced conflict sensitivity standards in its publications for the media. Their 2016 report titled '*Media development in regions of conflict, transitional countries, and closed societies*' looks at the approaches used in fostering "quality journalism as a public good in itself" that can support the realisation of other human rights *(Jurrat, 2016, p. 14).*

This publication stands for the belief that media development initiatives in (post)conflict regions should strengthen the professional capacities of journalists, promote conflict-sensitive journalism and provide inclusive platforms for discussion. All of this can contribute to conflict de-escalation and reconciliation between warring factions if reporters are aware of their duties and responsibilities *(p. 14).* It sees peace journalism as 'taking sides' and this might in certain cases make media professionals feel 'uneasy'.

> Peace journalism, which was promoted by a number of Western scholars and journalists returning from having witnessed the atrocities of the war in the Balkans, asks reporters and editors to actively advocate for peace by choosing to report on stories that promote conflict resolution. (...) This, however, has made a number of journalists and scholars uneasy about their role, seeing it as taking sides and hence, undermining journalism's role and legitimacy of serving the public and acting as a watchdog for society. *(p. 5)*

Deutsche Welle's approach is more favourable to conflict-sensitive rather than peace journalism, as evidenced in a recent publication from 2021 named '*How close should we get? Media and conflict*'. It acknowledges the existence of different approaches such as peace journalism, constructive journalism, solutions-oriented journalism and conflict-sensitive journalism, and invites readers to reflect from different angles on the key question: "What is the role of journalists?" *(Bauer, 2021, p. 9).* This dossier cites examples where media companies or individual media activists found ways to address conflicts without inciting hatred, and to initiate debate without generating polarisation.

The table below summarises the multi-layered notions of peace journalism and conflict-sensitive journalism, alongside the contrasting concept of war journalism.

Peace Journalism	Conflict-Sensitive Journalism	War Journalism
Peace/conflict-oriented • Explore conflict formation, parties, goals, issues, general win-win orientation. • Make conflicts transparent. • Give voice to all parties, empathy, understanding. • Humanisation of all sides, more so the worse the weapon. • Proactive position: Prevention before any conflict occurs.	**Avoid reporting a conflict as consisting of two opposing sides** • Find other affected interests and include their stories, opinions and goals. • Interview merchants affected by the event, workers who are unable to work, refugees from the countryside who want an end to violence, etc. **The report goes further than violence** • It includes the views of people who condemn the violence.	**War/violence-oriented** • Focus on conflict arena between 2 parties; one goal (win); war; general zero-sum orientation. • Limits to justifying 'who threw the first stone'. • Portrayal of us vs them. 'Them' as the problem; focus on who prevails in war. 'Them' is dehumanised. • Focus on visible effects of the violence (people killed, wounded, and material damage). • Reactive position: waiting for the outbreak of violence before reporting.
Truth-oriented • Expose untruths on all sides/ reveal cover-ups.	**Avoid making an opinion into a fact** • If someone claims something, state their name, so it is explicitly presented as their opinion and not as a fact. • Report only on what is known. Use words carefully. **Avoid polarising words** • Avoid words like devastated, tragedy and terrorised to describe what has been done to one group. • These kinds of words put the reporter on one side. Do not use them yourself. Only quote someone else who uses these words. **Avoid emotional and imprecise words** • Assassination is the murder of a head of state and no-one else. Massacre is the deliberate killing of innocent, unarmed civilians. Soldiers and policemen are not massacred. • Genocide means killing an entire people. Do not minimise suffering, but use strong language carefully. • Avoid words like terrorist, extremist or fanatic. These words take sides, make the other side seem impossible to negotiate with. Refer to people by the names they use for themselves.	**Propaganda-oriented** • Expose one's own truth, only one version of the conflict and reasons.

Peace Journalism	Conflict-Sensitive Journalism	War Journalism
People-oriented • Focus on suffering, on women, the aged, children, giving voice to several actors. • Give names of all perpetrators. • Focus on peacemaking actors.	**Go beyond the elites** • Avoid defining the conflict by always quoting the leaders who make familiar demands. • Report the words of ordinary people who may voice the opinions shared by many. **Avoid focusing on the suffering and fear of only one side** • Treat all sides' suffering as equally newsworthy.	**Elite-oriented** • Focus on 'our' suffering, on elite males, relaying official declarations (as mouthpieces). • Name some perpetrators. • Focus only on elite peacemakers.
Solutions-oriented • Understanding that peace would entail transformation of conflict and non-violence. • Offer story angles of non-violence and creative resistance. • Highlight peace initiatives. • Focus on structure, culture, peaceful society. • Pay attention to the aftermath of conflict, such as resolution, transformation, reconstruction, reconciliation.	**Avoid only reporting what divides the sides in conflict** • Ask the opposing sides questions which may reveal common ground. • Report on interests or goals which they may share. **Explore peace ideas wherever they come from** • Avoid waiting for leaders on one side to offer solutions. Put these ideas to the leaders and report their response. • The report seeks out other sources of information, with solutions.	**Victory-oriented** • Understanding that peace would mean the victory of one side and a ceasefire. • Focus on treaties, institutions and a 'controlled society'. • Leaving space for future wars or for trouble to flare up again.

Table adapted from Howard, 2004; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005

2.2 Peace journalism in media development

A number of media initiatives have been created and fostered in the last few years. *Bratic (2008)* mapped and examined a set of 40 peace-oriented media projects in 18 countries. He concluded that the current practice would benefit from: the integration of the available media channels; the incorporation of media into other social institutions; processes to regulate hate media; and the production of peace-oriented media. He also pointed out that optimism surrounding the idea of peace-oriented media has encountered two obstacles: the literature about the positive impact of media in conflict has been deficient, and few academic studies, journal articles or academic conferences have been devoted to media involvement in peace processes *(p. 487)*.

In 1998, a group of eight Colombian journalists founded Medios para la Paz *(MPP, n.d.)* to foster responsible journalism when reporting on the armed conflict and peace efforts in Colombia. These local journalists ran a not-for-profit organisation which urged media professionals to reflect on their role in the conflict and to consider the ways in which they could help overcome conflict by engaging in "thoughtful journalism" and by encouraging the "disarmament of speech" in Colombia *(MPP, n.d.)*. The group used to hold nationwide conferences and workshops for journalists.

The 'Radio for Peacebuilding, Africa', founded by the US-based NGO Search for Common Ground, implemented a collaborative project that enabled African broadcasters to use radio as a tool for peace *(SFCG, n.d.)*. Using training manuals and workshops, the initiative was aimed at expanding broadcasters' knowledge of various peacebuilding techniques. Over fifty broadcasters in twenty sub-Saharan countries joined the programme in order to "develop their ability to constructively influence conflict" *(SFCG, n.d.)*. It facilitated training workshops, and manuals were published with recommendations to avoid certain language that tends to "inflame tensions", while at the same time "treating all sides' suffering as equally newsworthy and humanizing involved parties through drama" *(SFCG, n.d.)*.

In 2007, Radio Isanganiro was recognised by the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development as an example of a private radio station "actively involved in peacebuilding" *(Foundation Prince Claus, 2007)* in Burundi. It was founded in 2002 by a group of Burundian journalists, after decades of regional conflict, with the mission of conflict resolution. "Its multi-ethnic staff ensures balance and objectivity through dual-perspective reporting, commitment to a conflict-sensitive approach, verification of facts and avoidance of sensationalism" *(p. 39)*. Isanganiro broadcasts in Kirundi, French and Swahili, covering the nation and neighbouring countries sheltering Burundian refugees and the diaspora.

Isanganiro is an offshoot of Studio Ijambo – a radio production branch that used to broadcast programmes promoting dialogue, peace and reconciliation. Studio Ijambo was established by the NGO Search for Common Ground in Burundi in 1995 and it produced around twenty weekly programmes relayed by several radio stations in the Great Lakes region, where both Hutu and Tutsi staff were employed (it is no longer in operation).

The creation of Studio Ijambo had originally been a "direct response" to the climate of fear after the Rwandan genocide *(Abdalla et al., 2002; Slachmuijlder, 2002)*. It went on to develop a reputation for "credible, unbiased reporting" and proved to be an "effective method of promoting dialogue and peacebuilding in a region where most of the population's only access to outside information is the radio", according to the programme overview report *(SFCG, 2002)*.

With Medios para la Paz, Radio Isanganiro and Studio Ijambo, this section was intended to highlight concrete and outstanding examples of peace-oriented media projects in the field of media sector development. This paper acknowledges that there is diversity across cultures, and therefore various ways of practising journalism can be implemented in different contexts.

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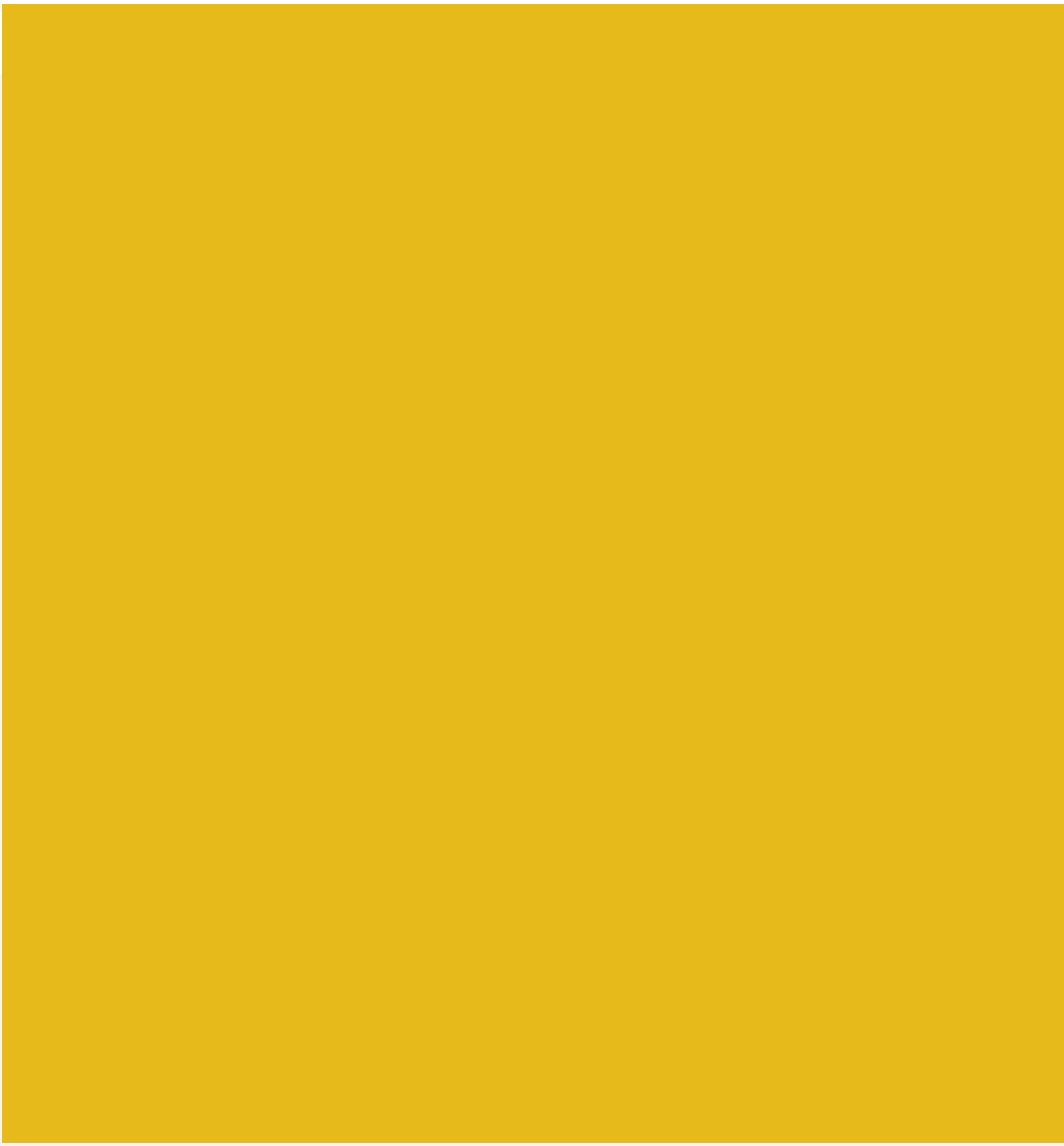

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