THE MEDIA AND SECURITY CHALLENGES IN NIGERIA: A REVIEW OF PEACE JOURNALISM

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Abstract

Nigeria has been facing diverse security challenges that have posed existential threats in recent times. These include violent militants in the Niger Delta, herdsmen/farmers' clashes, political violence and Boko Haram insurgency. People depend on the media for information about issues and events that do take place their immediate environments. The manner that the media report events and issues is of crucial importance to how these are perceived and acted upon by the people. Consequently, the manner media reports conflicts have serious implications. Journalism is anchored on the tenet of objectivity as reflected in principles such as fairness, balance and reporting facts in as detached a manner as possible. In practice, these ideals are pitched against practical realities such as the personal beliefs of the journalist, news production routines, the diverse influences on media content, and how news stories are framed. Peace journalism theory goes beyond the traditional media obsession with 'objectivity' in reporting conflicts. It posits that journalists should look at the backgrounds and contexts of the conflict, present causes and report the view of all sides (not just two sides) to a conflict at all levels, in addition to emphasizing ideas on resolution and peacemaking. This paper looks at the development of peace journalism, reviews its tenets, and examines its practicability in the Nigerian context with a view to its relevance in addressing the diverse security challenges facing the Nigerian nation. Recommendations were made on the adoption of peace journalism and how it can be applied in the reporting of conflicts.

Keywords: Peace journalism, conflict, Nigerian media, security challenges

Introduction

The Nigerian Nation had faced and survived many security challenges that have posed existential threats with the most prominent was the civil war between 1967 and 1970. After obtaining independence from the British in 1960, the civilian government was toppled by the military in 1966 following a series of disturbances, particularly in the western region in 1962 as a result of the crisis in Action Group, the party ruling the Western Region. This culminated in the infamous operation "wetie" in which perceived political opponents were doused with petrol and set ablaze and the declaration of a state of emergency in the region. There were also the TIV riots in the north, and the crises following the 1964 elections. After the military took over the running of government in 1966 there was a counter-coup in the same year and a gradual breakdown of law and order as a result of the coups. The first coup led to the charge that northerners were targeted by the Igbos leading to the killings of innocent people of eastern origin resident in the north. In the end, the situation degenerated into a civil war which lasted three years, 1967-1970. Thereafter, there was a period of relative stability with the military handing over to a civilian democratic government in 1979. Maitatsine disturbances broke out in Kano in 1980; Bulumkutu, Maiduguri in1982; and Jimeta, Yola n 1984.

The military terminated the civilian government in 1983, and ruled until it handed over to another civilian government in 1999. However, before handing over to a civilian government in 1999, it faced various security challenges including the activities of Oduduwa People's Congress (OPC), Bakassi Boys, Egbesu Boys and the Niger Delta Militants' struggles for

resource control. This is in addition to the then new criminal enterprise of kidnapping which became rampant, especially in the eastern part of Nigeria.

Since 1999 when the new civilian dispensation started, apart from the security challenges it inherited, the one that have dominated media headlines and has arguably constituted the greatest existential threat to Nigeria is the Boko Haram insurgency. There are also the farmers/herders clashes and the activities of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) seeking for secession from the rest of Nigeria and the lingering Niger Delta agitations. It is therefore not in doubt that the Nigerian nation has been facing a number of security challenges in contemporary times.

The media are the prime source of information about happenings in the society for the vast majority of the people. What people know about public events is largely through the media, unless they are witnesses to the events. Apart from information, the media educate, and maintain surveillance on the society. They are also a transmitter of cultural and societal norms and provide a platform for all no matter their differences and ideas. The media also play the role of watch dog, especially over the government. Given these crucial and decisive roles that the media play in the society, how the media discharge their responsibilities in times when a community, society or nation is facing security challenges can have profound implications. It is in the light of this that the role of Nigerian media in their coverage of security challenges facing the nation is examined in this paper with an emphasis on peace journalism theory.

Traditional media principles and peace journalism principles are examined so as to assess which can better promote peace and understanding in times of conflicts and security challenges such as the one Nigeria is currently facing.

A Review of Principles of Traditional Journalism

Journalism is founded on the principle of reporting facts in a manner that is detached, balanced, fair and comprehensive. In reporting events and issues, journalists are expected to provide answers to the standard 5 Ws and 1H, which is: **who, what, when, where, why** and **how** of an event or issue that is reported. Journalists seek to establish the truth of an event or issue, although arriving at the truth is difficult. As noted by Loyn (2007), journalists make the pursuit of truth their objective even though a perfect understanding of truth is not available to any one person.

In carrying out their professional assignments, journalists must adhere to the concept of objectivity which is a central tenet in journalism. Writing on objectivity, Hackett (2006:8) states:

> *objectivity is a normative, a set of desiderata (factualness, accuracy, completeness, as well as a stance of detachment, neutrality or independence). Second, it entails an epistemology, assumptions about knowledge and reality, like the possibility of separating values from facts and observers from observed. Third, objectivity also crucially involves news gathering and presentation practices, like the use of appropriate sources and the separation of news from opinion...*

Ideally then, the media strive to leap a detachment between itself and the news it is reporting, and to report in a balanced, fair and accurate manner. The journalist is not partisan on the side of an issue or person, and he keeps personal emotions and biases out of reports as much as possible. McGoldricks (2006:2) cites Rosen (1994) as defining objectivity "as the value of fairness which is extremely important. It is the ethic of restraining your own biases which is also important... It's the idea that journalists can't be the voice of any particular party or sect." Kinsey (2001) also cited in McGoldricks (2006:2) defines objectivity as "an effort to report the

facts without developing - or at least without revealing – an opinion about them". Loyn (2007:5) cites Hammond as defining objectivity as comprising "three distinct though interrelated concepts: truthfulness and accuracy, neutrality, and emotional detachment".

From these discussions of objectivity, it can be seen that this central tenet of journalism seeks to ensure that in reporting news, personal opinions and ideologies do not intrude; that reporting be done in as comprehensive a manner as possible airing the views of all sides. That the journalist does not take sides in reporting; and that the journalist always strives to seek the truth about issues and events even when apprehending truth completely may not be possible. As Loyn (2007:4) states "while truth may be goal, objectivity is a tool to reach it." Journalism scholars have noted that objectivity historically allowed the media to appeal to the widest possible potential audience without offending potential and existing audience. This has a positive effect on audience size.

Objectivity is the ideal that all good journalism strive to achieve. In reality however, the practice of journalism contends with practical issues. Such issues include the fact that journalism practitioners are human beings with individual idiosyncrasies; the routines of news production and institutional issues such as that media organizations are mostly driven by the profit motives. and the issue of the environment in which they are operate, including government policies and the underlying ideology of that society.

Herman and Chomsky (1988) in their propaganda model, for example, suggest that the media subordinate their interest to that of the elites in the society and in fact promote and protect those interests. They identified five institutional filters that tied media interests to those of the elites. These include the nature of the media as a profit-driven institution and the concentrated ownership of the media in a few hands; media dependence on advertising revenue for survival; and the reliance of media on government officials, so called experts, military and business leaders as sources of information. Other filters or pressures that determine media content, according to them, include the adverse sustained criticism from the rightwing section of the American society; and the ideological environment of the unbridled capitalism that blindly promotes free market forces, condemning outright contrary ideologies.

Still on factors that constitute pressures that influence media content and may hinder objectivity and the principles of fairness and balance, Hackett, (2006) discusses Shoemaker and Reese (1999) hierarchy of influences model. The model identifies five influences in a hierarchical order ranging from the personal to the global. At the personal level we have individual journalists whose ethics and training directly influence their reports. Also influencing their reports indirectly is their demography and their own ideology. Next, there is the organizational influence in the form of daily work routines in the newsrooms as these structure journalists output regardless of ideology and training. "The process of getting information from sources and turning it into news ready for consumption by the audience results in standardized and recurring patterns of content" (Hackett 2006:4). Thirdly, there are the organizational objectives of the media as a commercial institution and the interest of the ownership which must not be jeopardized. This consideration can have a direct and indirect influence on media content. These first three more or less have to do with the media itself, with influences within the media. External influences on media content include sources, advertisers and the government. Another external influence on media content is the influence of ideology as in capitalism versus communism or as is playing out presently, the portrayal of Islam as an antithesis to western values. Ideology is a set of ideals, norms and values that influences what the media, journalists, and their audiences consider as normal and natural. This ideology not only shapes news, it is extended, renewed and reproduced through media content. All these factors have an influence, directly or indirectly, on the final shape and

content of the media. These influences also impact on objectivity, balance and even the choice of what the media covers and features.

The Media and Conflict Reporting
As noted earlier, a guiding principle of media reporting is captured in the 5 Ws and one H that the media is supposed to concentrate on, that is, provide answers to who, what, when, where, why and how of an event or issue. The media, in striving for balance that is an essential feature of objectivity, also tries to report all sides to a story. In reality however, this is not usually the case as the 'why' aspect of reporting is usually ignored because of news routine pressures of time, space and other production imperatives. In reporting, the media concentrates on events, describing issues of immediacy like 'what happened?' 'Where and when it happenned?' 'Who is involved?' and possibly, 'How did it happen?' An analysis or explanation of 'why' it happened is usually not done.

Applied to reporting conflict, this reality of news reporting is reflected in the media's penchant for reporting violence, using provocative headlines that are meant to attract the attention of the audience. As it is the unusual and abnormal that is news, and because the customers of media products are more likely to be attracted and buy products featuring these abnormal and usual events and issues, media reports of conflicts are usually not helpful in resolving the conflicts or even ameliorating a conflict situation. As Howard (2003) cited in Aslam 2011: 127 points out:

> As a profession, journalists are in constant search of conflicts as news, and they have rudimentary to highly sophisticated skills in reporting it in conventional terms. But world-wide journalism tracing and development contains almost no reference to the discipline of conflict analysis.

Reporting conflicts can be taken as an essential part of journalism but journalists are seldom equipped in conflict analysis which would have educated them, for example, on the different dimensions of conflicts and ways that reporting a conflict can escalate or help to resolve it. Aslam (2011: 120) notes that "the rhetorical and narrative structures that shape and constrain the way in which conflicts have been reported have been largely due to persistence…that reporting 'naked violence' in conflict sells news and is good for business and raising one's profile…". It can be seen that the routines and the profit motive driving most media houses encourages reporting of conflicts in a manner not conducive to peace and also that journalists mostly do not have any training in conflict analysis. Ross (2006:4) cites a study by Taleb (2004) which found that "media frame conflicts in one of five ways: as win/lose conflicts, as human interest stories, as economic forces, as morality tales, and as indicators of blame". Clearly, while framing conflicts as human interest stories or morality tales may conduce to peaceful resolution of the conflict, the frames of win/lose and indicators of blame are not helpful in any search for a resolution of a conflict. Still on how media report conflicts and whether this is conducive to peace, Ross (2006:8), cites a study on the coverage of the middle east crisis by the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs,* a magazine that presents summaries of newspapers coverage of middle east crises.

> "The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs highlights five mechanisms through which news media undermine and marginalize the credibility and effectiveness of peace processes while simultaneously underscoring the potency of actions that threaten peace…. Through both news coverage and commentary, the selected newspapers recurrently dismiss the

> *potential for peace and denigrate diplomatic solutions. Peace initiatives are alternatively a political charade or a vital component of imperialistic ambitions. Public protests against war are condescendingly represented as sincere but misguided. Violence is inherent, logical and embedded in the very nature of the peoples and the extremism of the region. It is an intractable cultural phenomenon among those 'other' people, who often are represented as irrational, full of essentialist hatred, and increasingly committed to violence as a solution.*

In reporting conflicts the media, most often than not, exacerbates a crisis situation because of the nature of the media itself as reflected in the influences that determine media content. There is also the profit motive that drives most media institutions- violence news sells, or constraints of space and/or time, and other routines governing news production.

Adongo, Awobamise and Chidiebere (2018) did a study on how Kenyan newspapers report conflicts and found that the media mostly used negative (inciting) headlines and news stories in reporting conflicts. Adebayo (2017) did a study on how the Nigeria media have covered conflicts persisting in the Nigerian society and found that "the media inadvertently frames regional agitations, whether it is greater resource control, the implementation of the Sharia law or the quest for self-determination as a tussle of supremacy between the government and the community or regions" (Adebayo 2017:150). These conflicts are portrayed by the Nigerian media as a zero sum game where only one side wins and the other loses, a win by one side being a loss to the other. Adekunle (2014) also conducted a study on Nigerian media's coverage of conflicts to determine if they were consistent with the principles of peace journalism and found that the pattern of media coverage of conflict is not consistent with the principles of peace journalism. Abdulbaqi and Aremu (2017) studied how Nigerian media cover the herdsmen-farmer conflicts in Nigeria and found that "newspaper framing of herdsmen-farmers conflicts in Nigeria aligned more towards war oriented journalism than peace oriented journalism" (Abdulbagi & Aremu, 2017:99).

As noted by Ross (2006:1) "many studies show media rarely report conflict neutrally. Human psychology, journalistic norms and structural constraints draw media away from complex historical reporting of violence". This seeming tendency of the media to report conflicts in ways that are perceived as promoting violence and exacerbating conflicts have generated reactions and suggestions as to how the media can promote the cause of peace; and in their coverage of conflict be part of the solution to that conflict instead of contributing to its persistence and/or complication. Irvan (2006:34) points out, "if media play a negative role in terms of increasing the tensions between and among sides of the conflict, they can also play a positive role by promoting peace". Bauman and Siebert (2000) also discussed how the media can better perform their role as part of their function is already to provide context to events and issues, and an outlet for emotions. Also in proffering solutions and helping to build consensus they are inevitably engaged in conflict mediation whether they intend to or not.
The perception of the media's coverage of conflict as being negative, inciting and not conducive to resolving conflicts led to suggestion as to how they can better perform their role without the adverse consequences observed. One of these suggestions is the proposing of the peace journalism theory as a reformation or refinement of the practice of journalism.

Peace Journalism
According to Lynch and McGoldricks (2005:5) peace journalism "is when editors and reporters make choices about what to report, and how to report it which creates opportunities for society at large to consider and to value non-violent responses to conflict". It is a development and

refinement to traditional journalistic concepts of balance, fairness and accuracy in reporting, using insights obtained from researches in conflict analysis and transformation. Peace journalism emphasizes the linkage between the journalists, their sources, the stories they cover and the consequences of their journalism. It also builds awareness of non-violence responses to conflict situations. Peace journalism focuses mainly on conflict reporting by journalists. Traditional journalism reports conflicts concentrating mainly on specific events while ignoring background information, and mostly through a dual lens in its pursuit of balance in a story. In doing this, the media rely on official and elite sources, prioritizing what the government, the military experts and other elite sources have to say about the conflict, and framing the conflict as a kind of zero sum game in which when one side wins and the other loses. This kind of reporting is referred to as war journalism by Johan Galtung, the pioneer of peace journalism. McGoldricks (2006) cites Galtung as characterizing war journalism as conflict reporting that is: (a) violence oriented; (b) propaganda oriented; (c) elite oriented; and (d) victory oriented. These contrast to peace journalism which is (a) peace oriented; (b) truth oriented; (c) people oriented and; (d) solutions oriented. While it is true that the objective of journalism is the reporting of facts, reporting of facts is inherently a choice of which facts the journalist (and convention) chooses to report as it is not everything that is fit for reporting and it is impossible to know all the facts. As Lynch and McGoldricks (2005: 209) observes, the facts that the journalists purports to report

> *is a category of infinite size....That category has to be shrunk to fit into news. The journalist is a 'gate keeper' allowing some aspects of reality through, to emerge, blinking into public eye; and keeping the rest in the dark. Neither is a random process. The bits left out are always, or usually, the same bits, or the same sort of bits; news generally prefer official sources to anyone from the 'grass roots'; event to process; and a two-sided battle for supremacy as the basic conflict model.*

Peace journalism advocates that the choices that journalists make in reporting conflicts should be such that will contribute to peace making. As Khalid (2014:7) explains, "the notion of peace journalism…relates to the process through which tension and communication gaps could be alleviated and a message of peace could be promoted via journalism among adversaries".

Traditional Journalism and Peace Journalism
Some of the major points of divergence between peace journalism and traditional reporting or war journalism as applied to conflict reporting includes the fact that traditional journalism concentrates on events, rather than process; relies heavily on official sources; reports conflicts through a dual prism as two-sided; and as a win-lose situation. There is also the influence of nationalism and ideology which makes journalists report international conflicts as a contest of good versus evil, 'us' and 'them'. These factors are adjudged as unhelpful to conflict resolution. Still, as Hackett (2006) points out, violence, government, and the activities of the elite make better news than reporting a peace process or peace promoters. In addition, the pressure to meet deadlines and constraints of space, among other factors, compels journalists to stick to simple storylines and familiar stereotypes and to favor immediate events, like bomb blasts, over long term process such as the search for peace.

On focusing on events rather than process, the nature and structure of the media itself and the influences that determine media content tend to encourage this. It could be said that for an issue to be newsworthy, it has to be dramatic and immediate, and the simpler to report, the better. However, in reporting conflicts, concentrating on the event rather than the process ignores causes and reasons, while background and context are mostly ignored. The 'why' of a conflict that constitutes an important aspect of news reporting usually is not answered. As

McGoldricks (2006:3) notes: "without *some* exploration of underlying causes, violence can be left to appear, by default, as the only response that 'makes sense'. Most times journalists ignore this aspect of a story, perhaps, because it may make a story too long". However, as Lynch (2005:209) states, "To report violence without background or context is to misrepresent it, since any conflict is, at root, a relationship of parties setting and pursuing incompatible goals. To omit any discussion of them is distortion". A lack of context and background which is characteristic of traditional journalism means that the aspect concerning why a conflict occurs is usually ignored.

Another drawback is the reliance by traditional journalism on quoting only official sources like the government, the military and other elite sources. This gives undue weight to the position of those that are already advantaged and who may in fact be benefitting from a conflict. This indexing is one of the conventions of journalism and is a feature of objectivity. The media always quote the same kind of sources, give weight to official sources and elites, as represented by experts, thereby giving a semblance of distance and detachment as these do not represent the journalist's personal views. In conflict situations, other less prominent sources on all sides of a conflict need to be cultivated and quoted, especially those that are not members of the elite so that the media can truly be a platform for the airing of views in all their diversity.

Reporting conflicts from a dual perspective, that is, depicting sides to a conflict as consisting of only two, most times, do not reflect reality, although this may help the journalist in balancing a story in furtherance of the tenet of objectivity. It is also easier than portraying multiple sides to a conflict and their views. However, a single side to a conflict may even contain many tendencies which all need to be aired. Peace journalism views a conflict as consisting of many sides all of which the media should provide platform for to ventilate their views. The kind of reporting that sees conflict as consisting of two sides also encourages the zero-sum game mentality in which the sides are portrayed either as victors or losers. Traditional journalism also appeals to their audiences' sense of nationalism and ideology when the conflicts are international "through the construction of an abstract nation at risk through constant evocation of the 'natural' boundaries of the national community" (Brookes, 1999:261). When the conflicts are not international, the nationalist media emphasize and magnify popular sensitivity to essentialist differences fueling conflicts between cultures and promoting "envy and hatred that... outpaced mutual understanding, respect and tolerance" (Tehranian, 2002:59). Traditional journalism focuses on events, on conflict as two sided, and on official sources. It also frames conflicts in terms of victory and defeat, and evokes nationalist and cultural identity. In contrast Hackett (2006:2) argues that

> *Peace Journalism draws upon the insights of conflict analysis to look beyond the overt violence which is the stuff of news (especially television) and calls attention to the contexts, of attitudes, behaviors and contradictions, and the need to identity a range of stakeholders broader than the 'two sides' engaged in violent confrontation. It calls on journalists to distinguish between stated demands, and underlying objectives; to identity and attend to voices working for creative and non-violent solutions.*

It is clear that the practice of journalism today is influenced by factors such as journalistic routines and practices; institutional imperatives of the media, the most prominent of which is the commercial nature of most media organizations; personal disposition of journalists, including their beliefs; and the ideological environment in which they practice among other factors. These had been discussed earlier. These factors are not all conducive to promoting peace when the media reports on conflicts. Consequently, peace journalism was propounded

as a solution to the inadequacies observed in traditional journalism reporting of conflicts. It is not a replacement of traditional journalism but rather a refinement to address perceived weaknesses of journalism in the coverage of conflict, especially in the application of the tenet of objectivity. Traditional journalism believes that objectivity means a complete detachment of the journalist from events reported, and the reporting of usually two sides to a story to provide balance, through using official sources which usually consists of government, military, police, and leaders in business and the elite in general. Peace journalism believes this understanding of objectivity does not help the cause of peace when journalists are covering conflicts. It also believes that journalism should actively promote peaceful resolution of conflicts by searching out peacemakers and ideas for ending a conflict through building awareness of non-violence and creativity. They should also report all sides, not focus or two sides of a conflict, and use diverse sources especially among the lower ranks of those affected by the conflicts thereby providing contexts instead of concentrating on events.

An important aspect of peace journalism is its insistence that journalists covering a conflict must provide context and explain the conflict instead on focusing on the event alone and reporting news on conflict in a simplistic and stereotypical manner limited by pressures of deadliness, journalistic routines and news patterns. Peace journalism thus argues that journalist should understand and be, perhaps, grounded in conflict analysis so that their reporting of conflict would advance the cause of peace.

A Brief of Some Features of Peace Journalism

Some of the main principles of peace journalism are summarized as pillows.

(i)   Peace journalism redefines balance, fairness and accuracy in reporting, as encapsulated in the concept of objectivity, based on insights of conflict analysis and transformation.

(ii)   Peace journalism emphasizes the linkage between journalists, their sources, their stories and consequences of their journalism.

(iii)   Peace Journalism creates awareness for non-violent, even creative, options of response to conflict and wants this turned into an everyday attitude of the journalist covering conflict.

(iv)   Analyses the causes of conflict through contexts and backgrounds and provides perspectives and options for peace from every side of the conflict, not just two sides.

(v)   Peace journalism serves as a platform on which all sides to a conflict, from all levels, can air their views.

(vi)   Exposes lies, cover-up attempts and culprits on all sides, and suffering inflicted on people of all parties to the conflict

(vii)   Pays attention to peace stories and peace makers, and to post-conflict developments. (Adapted from Lynch & McGoldricks, 2005)

Criticisms of Peace Journalism

Scholars have criticized peace journalism for its journalism of advocacy for peace, jettisoning objectivity and ignoring the realities of journalistic practices that are responsible for most of the perceived inadequacies of traditional journalism in its covering of conflict. Loyn (2007) calls peace journalism the opposite of good journalism and in a sweeping criticism states that "peace journalism is at best meaningless, and at worst a uniquely unhelpful and misleading prescription for journalism in general and broadcast journalism in particular (Loyn, 2007:2). He condemns the prescription that journalist should be active participants in a conflict, albeit on the side of peace, as that is not the role of journalists. He faults the idea that journalists can contribute to peace by reporting in a certain way, encouraging peace and peace makers. He argues that the proper stance of reporters is as observers not players in a conflict. However, even Loyn (2007:4) admits that journalism could be better practiced and conceded

that objectivity, for example, has its drawbacks as when "objectivity distorted what was happening because it meant that official account was not challenged". He also highlights the difficulty of reporting the truth as there cannot be a single truth but still insists that the pursuit of the ideal of truth is important if done sincerely by journalists. Apart from the accusation that peace journalism lacks objectivity, being involved in a conflict, Hanitzsch (2004) also draws attention to the criticism that peace journalism is a normative theory that is rooted, not in journalism, but in peace and conflict research, and so does not take into consideration the reality and imperatives imposed on news production including professional values and organizational culture. Peace journalism, he argues, ascribes to journalism a power it does not have – that of powerful media effects theory and its focus is too much on individual journalists, ignoring structural impediments limiting the work of journalists. Thus, the major criticisms of peace journalism can be said to be its proposal for advocacy journalism and its focus on the journalist while ignoring the structures of news production and the general media environment. This is it is argued, because peace journalism is not rooted in journalism but in peace and conflict studies.

Conclusion

Although there are criticisms of peace journalism, it can be argued that the conditions that gave rise to the advocacy for peace journalism are real, namely, the tendency for media coverage of conflict compounding the conflict and making resolution of the conflict more complex. The preoccupation should be on how peace journalism can be applied such that it can contribute to solving instead of escalating conflicts. Should peace journalism emphasize more on advocacy journalism or should it focus on reconstructing the concept of objectivity and generally see to it that journalism is practiced as it should, especially addressing the question of 'why' by providing background and context? As it is now, there is a noticeable dichotomy between peace journalists canvassing an advocacy role for the media and those that place more emphasis on peace journalism as quality, objective journalism that includes under-represented perspectives and provides background and context in reporting of conflicts. Considering the state of affairs of media's coverage of conflict, should journalists play an advocacy role for peace or broaden the scope of practice of journalism, or do both at the same time since they are not mutually exclusive? Lee and Maslog (2005:324) for example are of the position that peace journalism relies less on advocacy than on the "extensions of the objectivity credo… avoidance of good-bad labels, a non-partisan approach, a multiparty orientation, and an avoidance of demonizing language". On the other hand, Kempf (2002) reflects attempts to understand peace journalism as a form of advocacy and favors peace journalism as "good journalism" that goes well beyond the simplistic dualism of good and bad. The challenge is for peace journalism to synthesize these positions, so that even if there are notable distinctions, peace journalism will not be something new but an extension of traditional journalism.

Recommendations

The media is an important part of the society that performs the role of information, education and mobilization. Their role in influencing public opinion and as custodian and purveyor of culture is also acknowledged. Consequently, how the media report conflicts has clear implications for the sustenance of peace in any society. It may be that not all media practitioners and researchers agree with all the tenets of peace journalism but it is, perhaps, generally agreed that the media could do much better in their reporting of conflict so as to serve the cause of peace and its sustenance. It is no virtue to cling to the traditional role and tenets of journalism when a clear cause can be made that these are proving inadequate and the very concept of what the media are and the environment in which they are operating is changing. As noted by Hackett (2006:10).

> *Social and economic changes are also shifting the nature of journalism as it increasingly dissolves within profit-driven media and entertainment and information conglomerates; its economic basis threatened by audience lamentation; its governing ethos shifting from public service and objectivity (however conservatively defined) to one of consumerism and commercialism. The regime of objectivity is in decline but no clear replacement has emerged.*

It is in the light of these that the following recommendations are suggested regarding how journalism tenets can be adapted to new challenges, with emphasis on the reporting of conflict anchored on the principles outlined in peace journalism theory. This way, the media can play a more positive role in resolving conflicts, establishing and sustaining peace.

(i)   Journalists should receive training and retraining on the concept of Conflict Analysis and Transformation. As noted by Ross (2006:8) "understanding the intersections of media conflict and identity is fundamental to the practice of peace journalism". Conflict analysis should be part of the curricular of journalism.

(ii)   Journalists should always be conscious of the negative role that national and cultural identities and ideology can play in a conflict situation.

(iii) Journalists should challenge themselves on how subsisting professional trainings, structures and routines can be used in the service of peace and conflict resolution. In particular, the "why" question that is in practice ignored in reporting conflicts should be answered in conflict reporting. Background, context and causes should be emphasized instead of events.

(iv)   Journalists should cultivate sources from all sides and classes to conflicts to reflect the reality that parties, and identities to a conflict are varied and the roots of a conflict can be subjective and contextual. They should be conscious of the pitfall of reporting conflicts as essentially two-sided.

(v)   Language used in reporting conflict should not victimize or demonize. The use of derogatory, inflammatory and/or emotive language should be avoided in reporting conflicts.

(vi)   Above all, as a member of the society, the journalist must seek to be part of the solution to a conflict and actively avoid reporting conflict in a manner that compounds or escalates a conflict.

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