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Peace journalism in South Africa: a theoretical discussion

ABSTRACT

This article presents a theoretical exploration of the concept of *peace journalism*. It assesses its usefulness for strengthening existing practices in the South African media. Peace journalism addresses issues around journalistic practices in relation to story selection and presentation with the aim of facilitating non-violent responses to real and potential conflict. There is no doubt that commercial media coverage often relies on sensational and inflammatory discourse to attract consumers (audience), and that, even during times of peace, political communication frequently incorporates conflict or war terminology. Given the potential for individual and intergroup violence (actual or latent) due to the diverse nature of the population and South Africa's historical legacies, there is a need to address peace-communication concerns on a continuous basis. This article is based on a review of seminal literature in the field and also on the discussion and findings of a round table conducted at the University of Johannesburg on 27 and 28 October 2011 with a number of South African academics and representatives of national media-monitoring organisations.

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INTRODUCTION

There has been much attention in the history of communication scholarship to the media's role in war (see Allan & Zelizer, 2004; Carruthers, 2000; Cottle, 2006; Hammond, 1998; Hudson & Stanier, 1998; McLaughlin, 2002; Mermin, 1999; Moorcraft & Taylor, 2008; Norris, Kern & Just, 2003), but a surprising lack of attention to the role/roles of the media in relation to peace. As Bratic and Schirch (2007: 7) argue:

> History has shown that the media can incite people toward violence … the media's impact on the escalation of conflict is more widely recognised than the media's impact on peace building.

Even though some texts do exist, the possibility for the media to play a facilitating role in conflict resolution is however promoted by few (Keeble, Tulloch & Zollman, 2010; Lynch, 2008; Lynch & Galtung, 2010; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005), and often not located within the context of sub-Saharan Africa nor driven by African media scholars. Furthermore, one often finds that, when issues of conflict on the continent are addressed, there is a tendency to disregard the role of the news media as a global actor and agent for change. This is illustrated in one of the more recent political texts discussing conflict and conflict resolution in Africa (Francis, 2008) that makes absolutely no mention of the media at all.

This need to review the potential of the media in African states gains impetus as a recent study by Media Tenor South Africa demonstrates that the continent continues to suffer from a 'reputational challenge', which Wadim Schreiner, Managing Director of Media Tenor South Africa, attributes to the "… media focusing extensively on crises, but failing to continue the story by reporting on improvements" (Media Tenor, 2012). Thus, the media may either "produce broader inequalities, or serve as a form of resistance and contestation, offering alternative discourses" (Entman & Rojecki, 2000 in McMahon & Chow-White, 2011). This article investigates how journalists working for news-media organisations in South Africa may harness the media's potential to act as a conduit for conflict resolution, as:

> Without the ability to report on peace, which follows violence, viewers/readers do not have the ability to judge progress. The image or perception created remains that of violence and aggression (W. Schreiner, personal communication at Roundtable, 2011).

1. DEFINING PEACE JOURNALISM

During the 1970s, the notion of peace communication and peace journalism began to receive increasing attention. Galtung (1969), who emerged as a principle theorist during this time, identified two main types of media coverage: the mainstream trends in conflict reporting that he deemed to dehumanise the enemy and to focus only on the effects of violence (war/violence journalism), and a possible new model, he named *peace journalism*, that would allow more parties coverage of their concerns, would focus on the less visible effects of violence and be solution

oriented (Keeble, et al., 2010). Galtung went on to state that war journalism shared a number of similar traits to sports journalism (Cottle, 2006: 101; Ting Lee, 2010: 362), where there were clear teams/sides and "winning is not everything, it is the only thing" (Galtung, 1998). Conversely, peace journalism should mirror patterns found in health journalism, where the "plight of the patient … would be described but so too would the possible contributing factors – life style, environment, genetic make-up – as well as the range of possible remedies and future preventative measures" (Cottle, 2006: 101). In this way, coverage of conflicts could be "liberated … from that fatalistic tradition" in which the 'disease', or in this case the act/s of violence, is seen as the sole focus (Galtung, 1998).

Galtung (1998; see also Lynch & Galtung, 2010) thus argues that there are two ways of reporting on conflict: the high road and the low road. The coverage may be categorised accordingly by determining whether the focus is on the conflict and possible means of resolution, or whether the focus is purely on the acts of violence and which side emerges the victor. As such, the low road presents the conflict as a battle between two clearly identified combatants, and events are discussed in terms of who has advanced and what losses were sustained to the enemy. The over-reliance on and use of conflict frames of reporting in news media, mean that there is potential for sensationalism and an emergence of "a superficial narrative" (Ting Lee, 2010: 362). The media frame is used to establish context, as well as to drive political strategies and media narratives/ stories, through a process of selection and emphasis. Fawcett (2002: 221) concurs:

> The rhetorical and narrative forms used by the news media facilitate certain frames and discourses, while closing off the development of alternative ways of viewing a set of events ... rhetorical and narrative structures shape and constrain the manner in which newspapers report conflict.

Peace journalism advocates argue that by changing the frame used, it is possible to adhere to the 'high road' that focuses on *conflict transformation*. It acknowledges the threat and reality of violence as an unsolved conflict with consequences (Lynch & Galtung, 2010), but offers additional information as to how opportunities may be created for progress towards a peaceful conclusion. Lynch and McGoldrick (2005: 5) therefore define *peace journalism* as "when editors and reporters make choices – of what stories to report and how to report them – that create opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict". This definition acts as a foundation from which several other academics build to allow for increased relevance to a wider array of circumstances. For example, Dente Ross (2007: 78) claims that:

> Peace Journalism is not simply interested in improving the reporting of conflict and in enhancing peace ... peace journalism is an ongoing effort to transcend the bounds of reified practice to open our public mediated discourse to a more inclusive range of people, ideas, and visions that *includes* space for voices of peace.

Shinar (2007:200) expands the definition to address concerns about delivery and the very nature of journalistic practice. In this regard, it is seen as:

> A fairer way to cover conflict, relative to the usual coverage and suggests possibilities to improve professional attitudes and performance; strengthen human, moral and ethical values in the media; widen scholarly and professional media horizons and better public service by the media.

Bläsi (2009: 2) includes elements of how this may be achieved in his definition. Peace journalism is thus:

> … solution-oriented coverage ... that focuses on common rights and interests, humanises all sides, points to the price of a potential war, reports on peace initiatives and actively searches for non-violent conflict resolution.

Most argue that much of the success of the implementation of peace journalism rests with journalists themselves – their agency – and that it is linked directly to 'good journalism' that occurs when journalists adhere to professional expectations of fairness, impartiality, objectivity and accuracy. According to this approach, peace journalism is less about advocacy and more about the "pattern of inclusion" (Lynch & Galtung, 2010: 91). Although, it is generally agreed that if this model were adopted by media personnel, in order for it to have as large an impact as possible, it would need to occur through a structural "whole-organisation" approach, one that must "emanate from the level of management" (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2010: 97). In other words, in order for peace journalism to be effective, all levels of the news organisation must agree to implement the methods, and not just a select few. Thus, peace journalism will only be able to gain momentum in the wake of reformation and transformation (Hackett, 2006: 11). However, in a slightly later article, Hackett (2007: 76) goes on to question whether "media organisations have sufficient autonomy … to put peace journalism into practice".

Support for the need for peace journalism to be incorporated in news gathering and news production is based on various studies that argue that in the face of conflict, there is little objectivity and more patriotism in media coverage (Ting Lee, 2010: 363). This is further complicated by increased censorship, news management (propaganda) and calls by government to support national interests. It is therefore imperative that in times of crisis, journalists exhibit critical awareness in their reporting, and be critically self-reflexive of their role in society (Dente Ross, 2007). There should be concerted effort to avoid the existing ideology of attributing blame to any one party (Gomo, 2010: 47), and instead efforts should be made to sensitise journalists to different cultures and perspectives.

In order for these attitudinal and behavioural changes to occur, media organisations should be encouraged to review principles on news gathering and news writing. Galtung and Lynch (2010: 23) indicate that the most effective means of doing so, is to change the media frames while realising that "the external frame has to be mind-set compatible … (and) the internal content has to be frame-compatible". One recommendation as how best to alter conflict frames and coverage is for journalists to answer the following key questions when preparing their reports (Galtung, 1998):

1. What is the conflict about? Who are the parties and what are their real goals, including the parties beyond the immediate arena of violence?
2. What are the deeper roots of the conflict, structural and cultural, including the history of both?
3. What visions exist about outcomes other than the one party imposing itself on the other – what particularly creative, new ideas? Can such ideas be sufficiently powerful to prevent violence?
4. If violence occurs, what about invisible effects such as trauma and hatred, and the desire for revenge and more glory?
5. Who is working to prevent violence, what are their visions of conflict outcomes, their methods and how can they be supported?
6. Who is initiating genuine reconstruction, reconciliation and resolution, and who is only reaping benefits like reconstruction contracts?

It is noteworthy that peace journalism does not advocate that violence should not be reported; rather, it is about changing the news frame to incorporate more creative outcomes. It is important to report "violence by all sides, and suffering by all sides." (Galtung & Lynch, 2010: 12). In this way, the entire range of consequences and conditions may be explored. Journalists are encouraged to remember that explanation is not justification.

2. CRITIQUES AND REBUTTALS

While more academics, media-monitoring and -training agencies and media institutions themselves develop methods and policies designed to alter poorly managed or deliberately manipulated coverage in order to encourage the reduction or resolution of conflict (Copenhagen Roundtable, 2003: 3), there is the unintended consequence that "the wide-ranging approaches that peace journalism scholars pursue … have contributed to a lack of coherence in this area of scholarship" (McMahon & Chow-White, 2011: 990). As a result, peace journalism has become a contentious issue. It is often argued that most of the work done is "philosophical and normative … based on anecdotes and case studies" (Ting Lee, 2010: 363).

There have, in the past, been debates as how best to categorise peace journalism in the academic field – is it a theoretical framework, a genre or a model? Now there appears to be a greater leaning in more contemporary literature towards referring to it as being more of a model designed to introduce new methods of reporting for conflict transformation towards resolution (Copenhagen Roundtable, 2003: 4). Therefore, one often discovers suggested practices and means of incorporating revised news routines in a majority of readings. This in turn creates tensions around perceptions of the role of journalists in society and their responsibilities to the population at large. Journalists have allegedly not received these suggestions well. They dislike the largely critical analytical role it would require, as well as the agency required in its implementation (Lyon, 2003, as cited by Lynch, 2008: 6), this despite media theorists claiming that it is "not critical enough" (Hanitzsch, 2004, 2007 as cited in Lynch, 2008: 6). The concern is linked to the lack of a clearly articulated definition. At this stage, there is a tendency to connect peace journalism with terms

that are also related to "advocacy models of reporting – such as 'journalism of attachment', 'victim journalism', 'justice journalism' and 'engaged journalism'" (Kempf, 2007). Understandably, it is therefore received by media practitioners with some wariness resulting from the perceived ease with which this could compromise impartiality and become 'peace propaganda'.

Supporters of peace journalism claim that, as it includes a "preparedness to encompass a broader range of parties, across the conflict formation, peace journalism is clearly more accurate than war journalism, and preferable as a form of representation" (Lynch, 2008: 20). This argument has been heavily criticised by Hanitzsch (2007) who responds that should this be the case, then peace journalism propagates an "overly individualistic and voluntaristic perspective". He later argues that it is also a form of "naïve realism" – that to claim any representation of reality is 'true' is questionable, as every report of an event must carry a natural bias on behalf of the one reporting it. Therefore, peace journalism cannot possibly fulfil the ideals required of it. This view is echoed in other, earlier works, in which peace journalism is deemed to be too idealistic for the normative theoretical framework to be practical (Cottle, 2006: 103; Hackett, 2006: 2). Kempf (2007) argues that this is a false accusation as numerous studies have been conducted and fieldwork completed that demonstrate peace journalism to be based on existing and accepted principles and theories of research and practice, especially those that are related to the sociology of news production. It has thus been proven to not only be a feasible model for consideration, but also one that currently exists in various facets of news-media reporting, although not explicitly recognised as such.

Lyon (2007: 2) contends that peace journalism is "at best meaningless, and at worst a uniquely unhelpful and misleading prescription for journalism in general". He maintains that peace journalism is merely what 'good' journalism *should be* according to existing norms. This is a common question among critics: "Does it not just reiterate professional standards (objectivity, reliability and impartiality) and ethical practices?" (Copenhagen Roundtable, 2003). Here, objectivity may be understood as "an effort to report the facts without developing – or at least without revealing – an opinion about them". Kinsley (as cited in Lynch & Galtung, 2010: 50). Halkett (2011: 42) argues that this is not the case: peace journalism constitutes "an *epistemological* challenge to the objectivity regime. In this view, journalism inherently involves choices; it is a matter of representation, not of reality-reflection". Peleg (2007: 2-3) supports this by stating that there are situations that merit more than mere observation and commentary, that there are instances where taking a side should be permitted, provided it is presented accurately and makes allowance for voices and respondents: "Is it dishonourable to take sides against genocide and ethnic cleansing? Is it amateurish to passionately promote awareness against massive raping and barbarism?" In this way, selection, not objectivity, should be the primary focus of journalists (Lynch & Galtung, 2010: 52). Of course, the recommendation that 'taking sides' should be permitted could give rise to objections regarding the need for impartiality and about the dangers of a journalism of attachment. As mentioned earlier in this section, such a suggestion is not supported by all theorists in the field (Kempf, 2007).

An additional concern raised by Dente Ross et al. (2009: 35), is that peace journalism fails to reconcile its ideals with the reality that power and profit directly influence media practices and

routines. Cottle (2006: 103) supports this further by stating that "the media cannot wishfully be sealed from this wider force of politics and culture much less disembedded from the economic structures and logics that drive its performance". In response to the above, Lynch (2008: 7) concedes that while it is true that most media coverage is affected by standardised norms and news routines that have implications for journalists' ability to find new formulations and responses each time they report on an event, it is important that such structures be seen as 'governing' rather than 'determining'. Thus, the journalist still has agency. Although agreeing with the tenet of agency, Boyd-Barrett (2010: 43) does warn that simply looking at overt media structures may not be enough: theorists in peace journalism should also consider more subtle forces such as the manipulation and subversion of the media by intelligence agencies in the name of 'national security'. In such instances, the cost of agency is high, as those perceived to be contesting the use of more conformist coverage, face imprisonment.

Even if peace journalism were adopted, would it be newsworthy? In their article, *The structure of foreign news*, Galtung and Ruge (1965) identify the main factors likely to influence the newsworthiness of an event. These include: threshold (the larger the effect of the story on the greater number of people, the higher the threshold); frequency (time span needed for the event to appear on the news agenda and garner public interest, and the relationship between the timing of the event and the timing of the news cycle); negativity (supporting the adage the 'bad news sells'); unexpectedness (the extraordinary or rare event); unambiguity (events with clear implications are more likely to receive coverage) and meaningfulness (relevance to audience, and cultural proximity); and, reference to elites (who are more likely to make the news than those from non-elite groups). Conflict reporting would therefore receive more media space and time than peace talks. This is in part because much contemporary reporting is event-driven, not process-driven" (Kempf, 1999 as cited in Peleg, 2007: 4). This creates additional demands of media practitioners. As Wolfsfeld (1997: 67, as cited in Lynch, 2008: 23) argues:

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

The challenge then is for the media to explain how peace processes alter over time and further to satisfy the "need for calm, incremental progress and [to recognize] … the multisided composition and cultural complexities that should ideally inform peace negotiations" (Wolfsfeld, 2004 as cited in Cottle, 2006: 104). This may then provide the kind of compelling analysis that makes coverage 'newsworthy'.

> How can the drama of working for peace, the struggle to see the violence and the festering conflict as the problem, and from there to arrive at conflict transformation, be reported in such a way that it becomes exciting news? Not easy – but not impossible (Galtung, 1998).

Audience/readership interest must also be considered. Studies around audience attention to news stories have been captured successfully in the Issue-Attention Cycle (Chong & Druckman,

2010; Peters & Hogwood, 1985) that purports that public interest in an issue will wane over a limited period of time. Can coverage of a peace process or of mediation maintain that interest through the duration of negotiations that may take months, or even years? In light of these and other structural pressures on journalists, Cottle (2006: 103) suggests that perhaps the need is not so much for a new model of journalism, but rather a "broadening and deepening of war and conflict reporting" within current reporting practices so that coverage of the cessation of violence in light of peace talks is included.

Despite the concerns raised in the foregoing discussion, peace journalism given its flexibility and general elements that allow for an alternative, more peace- and solution-oriented coverage may still, in some way, benefit the South African context.

3. IS THERE A PERCEIVED NEED FOR PEACE JOURNALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA?

Although originally designed to address coverage of war and direct conflict, peace journalism can however be used to analyse both social violence, such as the abuse of women and children or rape (Galtung, 1998) and also 'cold' conflicts (McMahon & Chow-White, 2011) such as racism, and media representations thereof. In South Africa, media representations of the aforementioned issues share traits similar to those of conflict reporting (as found in Hyde-Clarke, 2011). In order to consider these findings and the possible ramifications, the University of Johannesburg hosted a Round Table in October 2011 to address and discuss concerns about the role of the media in South Africa, and whether peace journalism offered an alternative. The Round Table comprised five academics and three representatives from two media-monitoring organisations.

The articles in this *Special Edition* address the aspects raised at the Round Table in more depth, so the discussion in this article will serve mainly to provide an overview of the theoretical debate. From the outset, it was stated that peace journalism did indeed have relevance in that "South Africa is not a community at peace, just a community not at war" (N. Hyde-Clarke, personal communication at Round Table, 2011). Participants came to realise that there was an interesting similarity between coverage in war journalism and the coverage of events during a time of transition, such as that currently experienced in South Africa. The situations were deemed to be quite similar, and therefore participants concluded that journalists currently working in South Africa need to be equipped with conflict analysis skills.

Almost immediately, consensus was reached about the contentious nature of the definition used. Researchers had experienced difficulty in gauging journalists' perceptions and practices of peace journalism because of complications associated with the actual term: "it is problematic as it sets up peace journalism in opposition to war journalism. This is polemic and naturally asks people to 'take sides'" (P. Du Toit, personal communication at Round Table, 2011). This seemed ironic given the aim of the framework itself. Knowing this, Du Toit had purposely not used the term when conducting his research in Port Elizabeth, and instead had focused on consciousness and practices. He was therefore able to present findings to the Round Table that demonstrated elements of peace journalism in a chosen South African newsroom, such as a desire to play a

more mediatory role within and between local communities, and that there was a clear realisation amongst journalists in his study of the importance of their role as facilitators of peaceful discussion and resolution and as providers of context. He did however note that there was some discrepancy between awareness and practice.

These data were in contrast to the observation of another participant who had discovered a different phenomenon:

> I do not think that there are any media organisations out there that are currently subscribing to the principle of peace journalism. It is overridden by the (unfortunately growing) trend to report on catastrophic events without the element of cause, and even less revisiting it when the catastrophe goes away. Although we did find that South African media were more often than other African media giving space to peace efforts and were following up on peace developments, this was limited to Africa only. In other words, our media provided a peace-and-reconciliation focus when it reported on African conflict, yet, for instance, not our own (W. Schreiner, personal communication at Round Table, 2011).

Therefore, in order to accommodate these different findings, it was acknowledged at the Round Table that in a country with a wide range of channels of communication, it was important not to generalise 'the media' as there was evidence of excellent efforts to create non-violent reports and narratives. It was also emphasised that the public service broadcaster, SABC, had greater obligations to consider the presentation of their content than did the tabloids. This argument was also supported by the campaign coordinator for SOS: Support Public Broadcasting:

> All that I can say is that given our very violent society, we certainly need journalists to be more sensitive to the issues of reporting on violence. The tabloidisation of newspapers hasn't helped with this. Also, lack of experience often leads to particularly crude portrayals of violence. The SABC has at times shown very violent images without contexualising the violence and without warning viewers (K. Skinner, personal communication, 24 October 2011).

It was noted that the problem was directly connected to the particular frames used, which were largely formulaic: "they almost write themselves" (W.R. Bird, personal communication at Round Table, 2011). It was simply a matter of journalists having to change names and the place of the event, but certainly in crime stories, it appeared that there was little if any variation in narrative. This was especially worrying as it not only had implications for journalistic agency but it also resulted in a perceived "loss of social agency" (P.J. Fourie, personal communication at Round Table, 2011). Thus the public too begins to believe that violence is inevitable and little can be done to correct it, this, in turn, resulting in feelings of disempowerment and hopelessness that again may lead to further violence. It is therefore imperative that any use of the conflict frame in South Africa be reviewed and practices altered sooner rather than later. If peace journalism were implemented as envisaged by Lynch (2005, 2010) then each narrative would be different in order to accommodate a diversity of opinions. They would also require 'creative ideas' as how

best to resolve the issue and these would need to be tailored to each unique situation. In South Africa, the mere diversity in terms of demographics, culture and economies would necessitate the abandonment of more formulaic frames.

Participants agreed with Ting Lee (2010: 366) that peace journalism was more likely to appear in editorials and columns, as these were clear avenues through which those writing in the media could encourage readers to consider reconciliation, and to focus on 'common ground' and not on differences. Of course, this does imply that spaces already allocated to opinion and which, by definition, require a journalist's or columnist's agency are most fitting for peace journalism. What about the other sections and features? Is there space in general news stories for a new way of reporting?

The final consensus was that although it was difficult to define peace journalism, it might also be counter-productive to have a set definition as practice needed to be based on needs and contexts that would change from one situation to the next (P. Du Toit, personal communication at Round Table, 2011). The lack of a set definition allowed for adaptability and flexibility. Perhaps then, it was a matter of adhering to professional norms, and decreasing the influences and layers created in a critical political economy system. In other words, the influence of editors, owners, political figures and advertisers on news routines and content should be revisited and decreased. Instead, the emphasis rests on the need to make journalists more keenly aware of their impact on potential and actual conflict in society. This is probably more in accordance with the sentiments expressed by Lyon earlier in the article. Not all participants agreed with this summation as they indicated grave concern over the increased pressure on the media from political figures in the ANC – pressure that many believe may result in less critical and investigative reporting overall. In the face of this challenge, the media must review their practices and adopt new models. Hackett and Zhao (1998) have shown that news and professional norms may in fact change, and be constructed, according to economic and political interests of the media in various contexts of time and place. The peace journalism model may then well be an alternative worth considering given the historical tensions within South African society. It may also allow increased visibility to grass roots efforts at engaging with a peace process, thereby giving these more momentum, as there would be room for broader social and political agency in the media by non-official sources.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

As was noted at the Round Table (2011), South African journalists are aware of their role in society and that this awareness was having an impact on coverage – although journalists themselves were hesitant to agree that this was 'peace journalism'. So then, to return to one of the objectives mentioned at the outset: to determine whether peace journalism methods are *useful* means of strengthening existing media practices in South Africa. On a theoretical level, peace journalism methods certainly offer much potential for including a diversity of voices and perspectives during times of crisis, whether latent or actual. This in turn could be useful towards maintaining peaceful conditions through the facilitation of constructive public debate. In South Africa, peace journalism may create a frame that reminds the public of past instances when racist

or violent rhetoric was misleading or resulted in destructive public policy or behaviour, and may instead suggest alternative interpretations of what may be at stake, and how best to engage with less confrontational outcomes. It would therefore work against existing journalistic practices of relying predominantly on official sources, the polarisation of parties in media coverage and sensationalist reporting. Also, in light of recent advances in media technology, journalists may consider or consult with online networks that may open access to larger sections of society. Yet caution should be exercised because it is often argued that while online sources allow for greater plurality, they may also allow for increased inflammatory discourse (Rodny-Gumede & Hyde-Clarke, 2012).

On the other hand, it is apparent that peace journalism may not prove to be useful to the extent originally envisaged by its founders. The rejection of the actual term by those in the field makes it difficult to introduce, teach or assess. Perhaps then, in order to illustrate the effect of alternative media frames and their impact, it becomes necessary to conduct participatory-action research by asking journalists to prepare two versions of the same event to demonstrate the difference, and then test how the public reacts to those versions (Round Table, 2011). This echoes similar studies mentioned in Kempf (2007), and is compatible with recent research undertaken by Lynch and McGoldrick (2010) in Australia and the Philippines, of which a further phase was set to occur in South Africa and Mexico between April and May 2012.

Even then, there may be too many variables to establish whether peace journalism alone may be useful towards strengthening the current system or is effective in its implementation. As critics point out, it does tend to oversimplify the mechanics of a complex system. It may not be enough for journalists simply to alter existing news frames. Consideration must additionally be given to audience mindset and reception, to commercialisation of the media itself, and to both the duration of the event and the political-social environment that surrounds it. All parties need to demonstrate a willingness to embrace or at least attempt to engage with what is essentially a new media culture in order for peace journalism to have any real impact. Is this probable in a society as diverse as South African society? Perhaps, in the face of government threats to implement the Information Protection Bill and a Media Appeals Tribunal, there could be sufficient incentive for the media at least to consider the possibility.

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