Another criticism is that peace journalism mistakenly gives too much credence to powerful and direct media effects, ignoring the fact that journalism is just one of the many sides of the equation. If we focus on the role of journalism in contributing to international relations, we may fail to appreciate the complexity of the media landscape.

In essence, peace journalism ‘provides a site for initiatives to be taken, and debate.’ In fact, this is an important role for journalism in times of conflict and crisis.

To highlight the impossibility of standing neutrally between good and evil, right and wrong, victim and oppressor, the terminology of journalism is a relatively new field of study that may have made sweeping statements about the ‘butcher’s bill’ of the Shah in Iran, the ‘massacre’ at My Lai in Vietnam, and the ‘Srebrenica Massacre’ in the former Yugoslavia.

The relatively brief history of peace journalism goes back to 1997 when Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung, the founder of the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), wrote ‘the nonviolent’ as a stepping stone to peace. Peace journalism grew out of this perspective and has been defined as a partnership between journalists, their sources, the parties to conflict, and the audience. Peace journalism is about promoting a vision of peace and encouraging people to take action towards that goal.

Peace journalism claims that such reporting can transform the context in which parties to a conflict present and formulate their own narratives. The dominant form of journalism that prioritizes sensationalism, immediacy, and in some cases, a grain of journalistic objectivity, is far more gracious than any other form of journalism.

The World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) promotes communication for social change. It believes that communication is a basic human right that defines people’s common humanity, and that giving preference to secular partners at grassroots, regional, national and global levels, giving preference to women and marginalized communities, is a resource for violence.

The nonviolent frame of peace journalism is the state of the art. It is a resource for practitioners, anyone working towards peace in their various contexts.

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Explaining the concept

John Gallagher describes the mainstream, dominant style of journalism as "war/violence journalism", protected by a massive umbrella of rationalizations. In contrast, there are few working models of peace journalism based on the premise that it can contribute to the building of a culture of peace. Peace journalism supports broad objectives... as does conventional journalism. But peace journalism goes further. It is an effort to transcend the bounds of established journalism, to ask questions about impartiality and fairness, to encourage journalists and media institutions to review themselves and their practices, to encourage the public to examine the information that fills their lives... Peace journalism seeks to transform journalism as: 'A kind of journalism and media that addresses the full array of ethics that attempts... to transform conventional journalism towards democratic humanism and social justice and contributes... to dialogue towards a climate of confidence... towards a world of peace and justice...'

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The gender dimension

There is a significant gender dimension to journalism... The gender dimension to journalism is constructed and nevertheless brought to light... We can recognize that all knowledge is constructed and nevertheless brought to light... The knowledge is always constructed... The voices of the Tharu (the largest tribal group), Kammayas (ex-bonded labourers) and women in the picture both as producers and consumers... are not exceptions.

Increased donor resources and capacity building may increase the potential of peace journalism. It raises questions about impartiality and fairness, to encourage the public to examine the information that fills their lives... Peace journalism seeks to transform journalism as: 'A kind of journalism and media that addresses the full array of ethics that attempts... to transform conventional journalism towards democratic humanism and social justice and contributes... to dialogue towards a climate of confidence... towards a world of peace and justice...'

Peace journalism is not without its critics. It is an effort to transcend the bounds of established journalism, to ask questions about impartiality and fairness, to encourage the public to examine the information that fills their lives... Peace journalism seeks to transform journalism as: 'A kind of journalism and media that addresses the full array of ethics that attempts... to transform conventional journalism towards democratic humanism and social justice and contributes... to dialogue towards a climate of confidence... towards a world of peace and justice...'

Peace journalism in practice

In 2007 Sahibram Forum, an organization of journalists based in Kathmandu, Nepal, produced and broadcast fortnightly programmes on non-violent conflict resolution. The aim was to spread awareness in the country for democratic elections to a Constituent Assembly and the transitional government of Nepal from a monarchy to a parliamentary republic following the protracted conflict which ended in 2006. Sahibram supported these efforts under its programme 'Communication for Peace'.

Naya Nepal (meaning 'New Nepal') offered a mix of news items, commentary and popular music and women's voices can influence public discourse and decision-making on peace and security.

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