



RESEARCH PAPER

Reporting Insurgencies in South Asia: A Peace Journalism Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the reporting of insurgencies in the five South Asian countries including Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka. One elite newspaper from each of these countries was selected for a period of five years—January 2013 to December 2017. The researcher applied content analysis technique by operationalizing war and peace journalism indicators as expounded by Johan Galtung and others. The researchers found that the five national insurgencies are predominantly reported in the war journalism approach. The selected press adopted nationalistic and elitist perspectives and ignored options that could promote peace and reconciliation. The findings of this study are quite in line with the existing scholarship that media remain jingoistic and support their governments when deviant groups challenge the security apparatus

Introduction

The peace journalism approach is considered the most influential approach to critically analyze the war and peace attributes of conflict journalism as compared to other approaches like human right journalism, solution-oriented journalism and conflict sensitive journalism (Youngblood, 2017; Lynch and McGoldrick, 2015; and Tirse, 2019). Many researchers have applied this approach to analyze media reporting of probably all the prominent international conflicts including the occupation of Palestinian territories (Shinar, 2009; Fahmy and Neumann, 2012; Ross & Tehranian, 2009; Parry, 2010; Ozohu-Suleiman and Ishak, 2015; Peleg and Mandelzis, 2007) invasion of Iraq (Griffin, 2004; Schawlbe, 2015; King and Lester, 2005; Nord and Strömbäck, 2008; Perez, 2006) tension with Iran (Lynch, 2006; Izadi and Saghaye-Biria, 2007) invasion of Afghanistan after the 9/11 incident (Fahmy, 2010; Ottosenm2005; Campbell, 2011) Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan (Siraj, 2008; Thusu,

2002; Joshi, 2004; Bose, 11; Seth, 2016) and the conflicts in Africa (Goretti, 2007; Obonyo2009; Ogenga, 2012) and Asia (Lee, 2006; Changkamol, 2013; Neumann and Fahmy, 2013).

Barring few exceptions (Fawcett, 2010; Changkamol, 2013; Lee and Maslog, 2006; to be inserted later—due to anonymous review), the peace journalism approach has been predominantly applied to international conflicts. The present study aims to contribute to the existing scholarship by analyzing national level insurgencies in the five South Asian countries. Since all these five insurgencies have (or had) a common cause—to shun the structural violence by demanding equal political and economic rights, it would be interesting to analyze media behavior. Do the media follow peace journalism approach to unravel the key causes of conflicts or simply focus on the events? Besides these theoretical contributions, we intend to advocate practical tips for the implementation of peace journalism in South Asia.

Before discussing the peace journalism approach, a brief overview of the five insurgencies in South Asian is presented.

Baloch Insurgency in Pakistan

The insurgency in the Balochistan province started soon after the creation of Pakistan in 1947 when the Baloch nationalists called for more provincial autonomy and ownership over the natural resources (Harrison, 1981). The Center however refused to accept these demands, which led to further acrimony in the relations and starting of the first insurgency by the nationalists in 1960s. The Center resorted to use of force and was able to crush the insurgents (Harvey and David 2003). Between 1960-2000, the Baloch nationalists started three more insurgencies and every time, the state resorted to military force. The fifth and the lengthiest insurgency began in 2005 when the Baloch chieftain NawabBugti was killed by the military ruler General Musharraf who was protesting against the rape of a lady doctor by a military officer (Ahmed and Baloch, 2015). His killing led to massive protests by the Baloch nationalists and since then the province is undergoing a low-level insurgency.

Naxalite Insurgency in India

The Naxalite or Maoist insurgency in India started in 1950s by the peasants and laborers against the suppression of feudal landlords (Banergee, 1984). The armed insurgency rapidly spread in the east of India in 1960s and 70s, which led to military action by the Indian government. Despite the state high-handedness, the insurgents were able to unite under the banner of communist party (Bhatia, 1998).

Maoist Insurgency in Nepal

The Maoist insurgency in Nepal initiated with the launching of people's war in 1996 to establish a single party communist republic. However, the seeds of insurgency were sowed way back in 1949 when on the lines of Mao's China model, the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) proclaimed to wage efforts for a new people's

democracy (Gurung, 2003). The insurgency ended in 2006 when the 240 years old Hindu Shah monarchy of Gorkha was overthrown with the establishment of secular republican regime in the country.

Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan

The Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan started soon after the US invasion of Afghanistan following the 9/11 attacks. As former rulers of Afghanistan and trained as guerilla fighters, the Taliban fighters have given tough time to the US and her allies despite the declaration of victory and installation of pro-US government in Afghanistan (Washington Post, 2019).

Tamil Insurgency in Sri Lanka

Tamil insurgency also known as Sri Lankan Civil War is one of Asia's longest-run military conflicts spanned over three decades (1983-2009) that resulted in killings of hundreds of thousands of people. The insurgency was carried out by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to carve out an independent Tamil state in the north and east of Sri Lanka.

Peace Journalism

Johan Galtung and one of his colleagues presented the idea of peace journalism in 1965 in an article on the framing of international conflicts in Norwegian press. They found the press favored conflicts, elites and jingoism (Galtung and Ruge, 1965). According to Galtung (2000), peace journalism is peace-oriented, truth-oriented, people-oriented and solution-oriented as against the traditional war journalism which is war-oriented, propaganda-oriented, elite-oriented and difference-oriented. The peace journalism approach was further refined by Galtung (2002, 2005, 2006) and others (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2002 and 2005) as a critical theory that discusses the structural and cultural causes of violence and provides an alternative approach for focusing on long-term solutions to conflicts. Kempf (2003) adds that peace journalism is responsible reporting of conflicts to stop violence and explore ways and means to create greater understanding between conflicting parties.

Lee and Maslog (2005) identified 13 dichotomous indicators of war and peace journalism (as shown in table 1). These indicators are widely used by researchers to measure the war and peace potential of media reporting of conflicts. Besides the plethora of studies on peace journalism during conflict times, a number of researchers have applied this approach in non-violent scenarios (Youngblood, 2017) as well as in post-conflict scenarios () and found it equally usefully (Tirse, 2019).

Debate on Peace Journalism

The peace journalism has earned a fair amount of criticism as well. It is criticized for being advocative (Hanitzch, 2007), normative (Lyon, 2007), impractical

(Wolsfeld, 2004), ignoring the systemic and structural factors that shape journalistic field (2010) and its dichotomous nature (Hamelink, 2011). While summarizing the major critique on peace journalism, Lynch (2018) categorized it as conceptual and methodological. Conceptually, peace journalism is criticized for being normative and ignoring the structural forces that would impede its practice. Methodologically, it is critiqued for being descriptive.

The proponents of peace journalism have addressed a number of issues in this regard. Theoretically, Lynch's theory of critical realism (2015), Kempf's hermeneutist approach (2006), Hacketts' theoretical synergy of news sociology and field theory (2011), Lee and Maslog reliance on framing theory (2005) Hussain's critical pragmatic approach to peace journalism are some of the prominent examples to explain the conceptual moorings of peace journalism. The challenge comes from the peculiar nature of the peace journalism approach—it has to present itself as well-rounded academic theory to launch an attack on the power structures and at the same retain itself as a practicable working strategy (Lynch, 2013).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

R.H.1: The selected newspapers predominantly apply war journalism approach while reporting on the insurgencies.

R.H.2: The Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan being the most violent is framed predominantly in war journalism approach as compared to rest of the insurgencies.

R.H.3: News stories contain more war journalism as compared to the editorials in the selected newspapers while reporting on the insurgencies.

R.H.4: Foreign sourced news stories contain more peace journalism as compared to the local sources news in the selected newspapers.

R.H.5: Reports on peace events result in peace journalism more as compared to the other events happening in the five selected insurgencies.

R.Q.1: What are the key indicators of war and peace journalism in the selected press while reporting on the insurgencies?

Material and Methods

Five leading newspapers from the five South Asian countries including Khaama Press (Afghanistan), The Times of India (India), Himalayan Times (Nepal), Dawn (Pakistan) and Daily Mirror (Sri Lanka) were contently analyzed for this study. The data was retrieved through lexis-nexis database for a period of five years from January 2013 till the end of December 2017. The retrieved data was first sifted for relevant content and then through systematic sampling technique, every third story was selected for coding purpose. In this way, 272 stories were selected from daily

Dawn, 362 stories from The Times of India, 503 stories from the Khaama Press, 416 stories from Himalayan Times and 232 stories from the Daily Mirror.

Topics of the News Stories

All the news stories relating to the five insurgencies were mainly reported in the following four topics. These included violent events, security measures, political confrontations and civil society narrations. Stories falling in the violence category mainly focused on bomb blasts, attacks, injuries and armed skirmishes. While the security measures covered news topics like the statements of army and police officials, security establishments and defense analysts. The political confrontations included news stories like the statements of government and opposition parties, debates in parliament and election manifestoes etc. Finally the civil society narrations include stories relating to human rights, refugees, freedom of expressions, victims and think tanks etc.

War and Peace Journalism Indicators

Following Lee and Maslog (2005), the following list of war and peace journalism indicators were adopted.

War Journalism indicators	Peace Journalism indicators	Neutral
1. Visible effects of war: Casualties, dead, wounded.	1. Invisible effects of war: Emotional trauma, damage to society, damage to property and culture.	Story that contains
2. Differences oriented: Report leads to the conflict	2. Solution oriented: Report leads to solution to the conflict.	none of the two approaches, i.e., war and peace Journalism in the
3. Elite-oriented: Focuses on leaders and elites as actors and sources of information)	3. People-oriented : Focuses on common people as actors and sources of information .	paragraph/s or number of neutral values in a story are greater than
4. Here and now: Reporting on the war arena.	4. Causes and consequences : Reporting on the causes and future effects of the conflict.	the war and peace approaches, the story will be coded
5. Dichotomy: Good guys and Bad guys or victim and villain	5. Avoid Labeling of good and bad guys	as neutral
6. Two-party orientation: one party wins, one party loses	6. Multi-party orientation : gives voice to many parties involved in conflict	
7. Partisan: Biased for one side in the conflict.	7. Non-partisan (Neutral, not taking sides)	
8. Zero-sum orientation: one goal: to win.	8. Win-win orientation: Many goals and issues, solution-oriented.	
	9. Avoid demonizing language : Report on more precise descriptions, titles or name that	

9. Uses of Demonizing the people give themselves.
 language: Use of language such as vicious, brutal, barbaric, inhuman, tyrant, savage, ruthless, terrorist, extremist, fanatic, fundamentalist.

Table 1 Indicators of war and Peace Journalism Coding procedure

Five coders were trained in the coding scheme. Except for the Taliban conflict, inter-coder reliability yielded more than 80 percent agreements. Further clarification resulted in 79 percent inter-coder reliability, which is acceptable for coding international media (Riffe et al, 2014).

R.H.1: The selected newspapers predominantly apply war journalism approach while

Newspaper	War Journalism	Peace Journalism	Total	Chi-square P values
Dawn	212 (80)	60 (20)	272 (100)	P value: .01
Times of India	276 (76)	86 (24)	362 (100)	P value: .03
Khaama Press	402 (79)	101(21)	503(100)	P value: .00
HimalayanTimes	328 (78)	86 (22)	416 (100)	P value: .04
Daily Mirror	156 (71)	76 (29)	232 (100)	P value: .00
Total	1374 (77)	409 (23)	1785 (100)	P value: .02

reporting on the insurgencies.

Table2: Distribution of War and Peace Journalism stories

As shown in the above table 2, the five insurgencies were mainly reported in war journalism approach. Cumulatively, as many as 77 percent stories fall in war journalism category and 23 percent of stories falling in the peace journalism category. Researchers while analyzing framing of conflicts in South Asia have found preponderance of war journalism (Sreedharan, 2013; Lee & Maslog, 2005; Lee, 2006).

Statistically, the difference is significant. This finding challenges work of Hussain and Rehman (2015), who found more peace journalism in the reportage of this conflict. One reason for this change can be these researcher-analyzed media in the wake of a movement that called for end to military action in the province. Times of India was equally war journalism oriented while reporting on the Maoist insurgency. As shown in the Table 2, as many as 76 percent stories were related to the war journalism indicators against the 24 percent stories in the peace journalism category.

Similarly, Khaama Press of Afghanistan, Himalayan Times from Nepal and daily Mirror from Sri Lanka produced more journalism – 79 percent, 78 percent and 71 percent respectively. The press in these countries openly sided with the government and security forces against the insurgents. While the military action is justified, the

root causes of these conflicts are ignored in the media reports. These findings support the scholarship on war-media nexus than media follow national elites and national policies during wars and conflicts (Galtung, 2007; Ottosen, 2008).

R.H.2: The Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan being the most violent is framed predominantly in war journalism approach as compared to rest of the insurgencies.

Table 3: Differences among Newspapers in terms of war and peace journalism

Stories	WJ	PJ	Total	Chi-square
News stories	878(91)	89 (9)	962(100)	Chi square 52
Editorials	290(57)	254 (43)	544(100)	P value .08

In this hypothesis, it was conjectured that the Afghanistan media (Khaama Press) would be more jingoistic as compared to rest of the newspapers because the violent Taliban war is still going on and the casualty rate is very high as compared to rest of the conflicts. Though the Khaama press produced comparatively more war journalism (29 percent) the difference is not significant statistically (p value .21). All the newspapers of the five South Asian countries are equally escalatory.

R.H.3: News stories contain more war journalism as compared to the editorials in the selected newspapers while reporting on the insurgencies.

Table 4: Distribution of War and Peace Journalism in Terms of News Types

Stories	WJ	PJ	Total	Chi-square
News stories	878(91)	89 (9)	962(100)	Chi square 52
Editorials	290(57)	254 (43)	544(100)	P value .08

This hypothesis conjectured that due to the typical nature of news stories, these would contain more war journalism as compared to the opinion pieces. As shown in the table 4, majority of news stories contain war journalism. In these stories, usually the elite government sources were reported who condemned the insurgents for their violence. The opinion stories on the other hand contain a sizable number of peace journalism write-ups. However, statistically, the difference is not significant (p value .08) which means both stories and opinion pieces are equally war-oriented.

R.H.4: Foreign sourced news stories contain more peace journalism as compared to the nationally produced news in the selected newspapers.

Table 5: Distribution of War and Peace Journalism in Terms of Origin of News Source

Sources	WJ	PJ	Total	Chi-square
National	664(78)	186(22)	840(100)	Chi-square 10.3 P value .14
Foreign	524(77)	143(23)	667(100)	

In this hypothesis, the researcher conjectured that reports produced by reporters, correspondents and news agencies that operate at a national level will write more war journalism oriented news stories due to the considerations of nationalism and patriotism, journalists usually side with the government and military elites as compared to the news produced by the international news agencies like AFP, AP and Reuters – not bounded by the local conditions. However as shown in the above Table 5, this hypothesis is not supported as suggested by the high value of p (.14). The national and international sources of news are equally war-oriented. This comes contrary to the studies of Lee (2006) and Lynch (2013) who found that national and international media were different from each other while covering conflicts in Asia.

R.H.5: Reports on peace events result in peace journalism more as compared to the other events happening in the five selected insurgencies.

Table 6: Distribution of War and Peace Journalism in Terms of Topics

As shown in the above table, the reporting of violent events like bombing,

Topics	WJ	PJ	Chi-square
Violence	468(42)	21(5)	Chi square 23
Security measures	388(35)	90(23)	
Political confrontations	180(16)	69(17)	P value .04
Civil society narrations	74(7)	216(55)	
Total	1106(100)	396(100)	

attacks on security forces produced more war journalism. The violent events resulted in 42 percent of war journalism as compared to the 35 percent war journalism coverage in the reports on security measures related news, 16 percent news in the political confrontation domain and just 7 percent war journalism attributes in the civil society events like opinion of NGOs, common people etc. The low p value (.04) suggests that the difference is significant. Interestingly, the news reports on the violent events resulted in negligible amount of peace journalism (just 5 percent) as compared to the dominance of peace journalism approach in the news reports on peace events (55 percent stories were reported in peace journalism category).

These findings are quite consistent with the existing literature where researchers have found that violent events are mainly reported in elitist perspective that leads to further escalation (Youngblood, 2017).

Research Question 1: What are the key indicators of war and peace journalism in the selected press while reporting on the insurgencies?

Table 7: Distribution of war and peace journalism indicators in selected press

Indicator No.	Pakistan		India		Afghanistan		Nepal		Sri Lanka	
	War (%)	Peace (%)	War (%)	Peace (%)	War (%)	Peace (%)	War (%)	Peace (%)	War (%)	Peace (%)
1.	(4)	(6)	(6)	(9)	(20)	(17)	(17)	(11)	(2)	(9)
2.	(29)	(12)	(21)	(11)	(25)	(19)	(15)	(16)	(10)	(28)
3.	(24)	(10)	(24)	(10)	(23)	(27)	(5)	(8)	(20)	(9)
4.	(41)	(4)	(12)	(18)	(3)	(11)	(7)	(22)	(15)	(14)
5.	(3)	(19)	(5)	(5)	(7)	(8)	(17)	(4)	(13)	(5)
6.	(16)	(18)	(3)	(18)	(12)	(6)	(15)	(7)	(8)	(15)
7.	(3)	(21)	(1)	(8)	(19)	(8)	(19)	(9)	(6)	(8)
8.	(5)	(17)	(7)	(12)	(7)	(13)	(8)	(16)	(16)	(30)
9.	(9)	(6)	(19)	(7)	(4)	(22)	(9)	(7)	(12)	(14)
10.	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)

As shown in the above table 7, the three salient categories of war journalism in Dawn are: the visible effects (19 percent), elite orientation (24 percent) and here and now centered (41 percent). This is in line with the work of (to be cited later) who found that Pakistani media do not provide historical and background information on conflicts and focus on the perspectives of military elites. The salient indicators of peace journalism highlighted by the daily Dawn are the avoidance of dichotomies (19 percent), non-partisan (21 percent) and win-win orientation (17 percent). These indicators are termed passive form of peace journalism that emerges not as an intention to promote peace but rather as tradition of journalistic culture (Lee, 2006; Lynch, 2013). The Times of India, on the other hand mainly reported the Naxalite insurgency through war journalism approach. The key indicators are: visible effects (24 percent), elite oriented (21 percent) and use of demonizing language (19 percent). While the first two indicators usually occur in the contemporary commercial media (Thussu and Freedman, 2003), the use of demonizing language indicate the newspaper has a biased agenda against the movement (Kempf, 2007). Peace journalism on the other hand is fairly distributed between causes and effects and engagement of multi-parties (18 percent each). The key war journalism indicators in the Khaama Press are differences oriented (20 percent), visible effects (25 percent) and elite oriented (23 percent). Prominent peace journalism indicators included avoidance of demonizing language (22 percent), people oriented coverage (27 percent) and focus on invisible effects (19 percent). The last two peace journalism indicators show that victims in the Taliban conflict get some coverage. Researchers believe media can actively promote peace and provide better alternatives if perspectives of common people are shared (Galtung, 2006; Kempf, 2007). The three salient war journalism indicators in The Himalayan Times were differences oriented coverage (17 percent), dichotomous reporting (17 percent) and partisan reporting (19 percent). Similarly, of the limited amount of peace journalism, the key indicators are win-win orientation of coverage (16 percent), focus on invisible effects (16 percent) and causes and effects of the conflict (22 percent).

Finally, in daily *Mirror*, the three major war journalism indicators included elite oriented coverage (20 percent), here and now centered (15 percent) and dichotomous reporting (13 percent). On the other hand, the three most salient peace journalism indicators are invisible effects (28 percent), causes and effects of the violence (14 percent) and multi-party orientation of the conflict coverage. Though the LTTE led violence has ended in Sri Lanka but the emphasis on elites and antipathy towards the group shows that media still harbor enmity towards them. On the other hand, the emphasis on the invisible effects of the violence is a major category in the peace journalism scheme and since the violence is over, media can manage to focus on the sufferings of people. These findings are supported by the peace journalism scholarship that chances of peace journalism improve with decrease in violence (Kempf, 2013; Ottosen, 2010).

Conclusion

The five deadly insurgencies are the result of state oppression against the genuine demands of people. Like other institutions, the findings of this study suggest, the media acted more like an extended arm of the state. The five selected newspapers from the South Asian countries mainly adopted war journalism approach. These findings are not surprising as war journalism is the norm in reporting of conflicts (Lee and Maslog, 2005; Lee, Maslog, and Kim, 2006; Siraj, 2008). The press in the five countries openly sided with the government and security forces against the insurgents to report on these conflicts. Media support the monopoly of violence by the state and challenges other groups that resort to violence—notwithstanding how genuine the demands may be.

One important finding of this study is the support to the scholarship that prevalence of war and peace journalism is related with the types of events. While war journalism was dominant during violent events, the press mainly reported the peace events in peace journalism fashion. This challenges perspectives of by the critics of peace journalism (Wolsfeld, 2004; Hanitzch, 2007) who fear media substantially erode peace process.

The press of the five countries demonstrated almost similarly patterns of war journalism. Reliance on elites and visible effects of these conflicts are the two dominant indicators. These indicators highlight that the five insurgencies in the South Asia are mainly reported through single-perspective where the elites are able to share with the people that one group is problematic and responsible for killings and damages in the country. This obviously supports them to take a stern action against the enemy group and legitimize their actions (Kempf and Theil, 2012).

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