

Jake Lynch

Peace journalism and its discontents

Kurzfassung: Anliegen des Autors ist es auf die Kritik an den Konzepten des Friedensjournalismus von Seiten des Journalisten David Loyn und des Medienwissenschaftlers Thomas Hanitzsch zu antworten, indem er auf eigene Erfahrungen in Journalismus und Friedensforschung zurückgreift.

Der Autor argumentiert, dass konventionelle Journalisten, wie Loyn, die Trennlinien innerhalb der Friedensjournalismus-Debatte oft falsch ziehen, da sie zu sehr auf Realismus und Faktenhaltigkeit der Nachrichten fixiert sind.. Damit werden zugleich einige der wichtigsten Forschungsergebnisse aus der Journalismus- und Kommunikationsforschung ignoriert.

Auf der anderen Seite argumentieren Wissenschaftler, wie Hanitzsch, dass die konventionelle Art der Berichterstattung akkurater und funktionaler sei als friedensjournalistische Ansätze, indem sie wichtige Ergebnisse der Friedensforschung bewusst ausklammern.

Die Tatsache, dass die friedensjournalistischen Leitlinien und Konzept aus den Ergebnissen der Friedens- und Konfliktforschung abgeleitet wurden, während man sich in der konventionelle Nachrichtenindustrie häufig an nicht-empirischen Konventionen orientiert, spricht jedoch für die Anwendung des Friedensjournalismus in der Berichterstattung über Konflikte.

Ein weiterer Vorwurf an den Friedensjournalismus besteht darin, er beruhe auf einem rein individualistischen Modell journalistischer Arbeit und schenke den realen Arbeitsbedingungen, mit denen Reporter und Herausgeber konfrontiert sind, zu wenig Beachtung.

Diesem Argument begegnet der Autor, indem er die praktischen Bedingungen zwar als handlungsleitende, jedoch nicht als komplett determinierende Einflussfaktoren anerkennt.

Abschließend werden die potentiellen Leistungen des Friedensjournalismus hervorgehoben, welche unter anderem in seinen Beiträgen zur Mobilisierung sozialer Ressourcen und Anstößen zu strukturellen Reformen liegen, so wie in der Umsetzung existierender reformatorischer Konzepte.

Zusammenfassend wird festgestellt, dass die konventionelle Journalismusforschung den Ergebnissen der Friedensforschung zu wenig Aufmerksamkeit widmet und daraus abgeleitete pragmatische Konventionen dem Anspruch eines friedensorientierten Bezugsrahmens der Berichterstattung nicht gerecht werden.

Abstract: This article is a response to criticisms of peace journalism from a journalist (David Loyn) and a scholar (Thomas Hanitzsch) by one who has recently gone from one profession to the other. It argues that journalists, like Loyn, often misrepresent the dividing lines in the debate over peace journalism because they take an unduly realist view of news and its relationship with the facts. This is tantamount to ignoring some of the most important insights of research into journalism and communications.

On the other hand, scholars like Hanitzsch take an unduly conventionalist view, it argues, thereby excluding important arguments about the basis upon which we should prefer some representations of conflict over others, as being more accurate and more useful. Peace journalism bases its claims on observations about conflict, peace and violence by researchers in Peace and Conflict Studies, preferable as a basis for representing conflict to the often-unexamined conventions of the news industry.

Peace journalism is also criticised as resting on an overly individualistic model of journalistic endeavour, attaching too little weight to the importance of structural constraints on the work of editors and reporters. This article acknowledges those constraints as governing, though not fully determining influences; but it also argues that peace journalism can contribute to the mobilization of social resources for structural reform, or for the existing structural provisions for public service concepts in journalism to be applied and carried out.

Furthermore, some research into journalistic representations of conflict is insufficiently attentive to the insights of peace research, as distinct from research on journalism, a shortcoming which, the article says, invalidates some of its conclusions.

Introduction

Journalists often dislike peace journalism because it is 'too critical'; or rather, many of them dislike the critical self-awareness of journalistic structure and agency inscribed in peace journalism analysis and methods (Loyn, 2003 and 2007; Phillips, 2006). This, I will argue in this paper, is tantamount to a rejection of some key propositions from scholarship on journalism and communications, established by researchers over several decades; chiefly, the structure of foreign news as mapped by Galtung and Ruge (1965). When journalists enter debates about journalism, therefore, the onus is on them to explain why and on what grounds they reject these propositions.

When journalists dismiss peace journalism they tend to champion notions of 'truth' and 'objectivity', as if in counter-position (Loyn, 2007). I will argue that this rhetoric falls short of the real distinctions in the debate over peace journalism, and conceals unexamined prejudices about 'right' and 'wrong'.

Academic writers (such as Hanitzsch, 2004 and 2007), on the other hand, often dislike peace journalism because it is 'not critical enough'; resting, as it does, on normative judgements about the representation of conflict which it uses to suggest that peace journalism is better than war journalism – *as journalism*. I will argue that any meaningful debate about journalism must include some effort to set out the basis on which some forms of representation should be preferred to others.

Then there is the question of journalistic agency. Implicit in most writing about peace journalism is the suggestion that journalists – acting individually and/or collectively – can decide to make some degree of difference to their journalism (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005: 227-231), and that this will, in turn, make a difference to the train of events and processes on which they are reporting (216-218). Academic hackles tend to rise at this, and I will consider the conceptual framework within which journalism about conflict can be considered, in order to allow for journalistic agency and creativity, and to map the effects journalism can have on the course of conflicts.

Most journalistic work is governed by convention, of course – speed is of the essence, so it would be impossible to formulate responses to breaking news, from first principles, starting afresh every time. Responses harden into conventions in a process governed by structural factors arising from the economic and political interests of the news industry. Notice – 'governed', not 'determined'. I will argue that journalists' own self-awareness and efforts at reform can combine with mobilisations in civil society to challenge and supplement conventions; and that ideas from peace journalism, whether named as such or not, can help.

Lastly, where scholars of communications consider the role of media in conflict, they are often let down by applying an understanding of key concepts – from Peace and Conflict Studies rather than their own subject – which is inadequate, and therefore invalidates their conclusions (Hanitzsch, 2007; Wolfsfeld, 1997). Peace journalism, I shall argue, effectively bridges the gap between these disciplines. Therein lies its novelty and utility for media researchers.

David Loyn (and feathered friend)

David Loyn is a brave and talented reporter, well experienced in many of the world's trouble spots. He is also a fierce foe of peace journalism. David and I have debated these issues several times down the years, both in print and in person. I repeat here what I have said to him on other platforms – in many respects, much of his own reporting *is* peace journalism. He complains (Loyn, 2007: 2) that I propose "highly prescriptive rules [that] inhibit good journalism". One of my purposes here is to suggest that peace journalism as I have defined it – "creat[ing] opportunities for society at large to consider and to value non-violent responses to conflict" (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005: 5) – is more inclusive than he allows.

Where we differ in this debate is chiefly in the lack of critical awareness Loyn brings to bear on journalism in general and his refusal to acknowledge the structural characteristics of news representations of conflict in particular. He concedes that objectivity may be "chimerical"; "anyone who has ever interviewed two observers of the same incident knows that there is no perfect account". He proposes, in other words, that 'imperfections' in journalism can be *explained* by the variance between any two accounts of the same event – as if that is, as it were, 'all there is to it'.

This is an approach to these issues that I have characterised, jocosely, as typical of "Otto the Objective Ostrich" (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005: 195). Loyn (2007: 6) objects to this treatment, but I maintain it is justified. Consider – media studies of the early post-war period gave us the now familiar propositions of gatekeeper theory. Journalists report the facts, and good ones set out to do so truthfully. But 'the truth' and 'the facts', whatever one thinks of the epistemological basis for such concepts, are, by their very nature, larger categories than 'the news'. Some process of *framing* is inevitable in journalism – some facts are allowed through the gate, others kept out.

Then came *The Structure of Foreign News* (Galtung and Ruge, 1965), which proposed that, far from being made at random, gatekeeping decisions on particular stories can be shown to be taking place according to discernible patterns. The bits left out of the picture are always, or usually, the same bits, or the same kinds of bits. News is, in other words, a *systematic*

process. It inhabits and upholds its own set of conventions for representing the world around us, and much – arguably all – subsequent serious research has tended to look for evidence of these conventions and what they are doing *to* the facts as they are being represented.

According to Loyn, the patterns discerned by researchers can be wholly explained by the fact that “reporters share a language and certain assumptions with their audience” (2007: 4). This shows perhaps most clearly the weakness of any argument about journalism which does not attend to ‘Galtung-Ruge’ and its implications – it precludes any real engagement with propaganda, and consideration of how and why it works. Indeed, in Loyn’s latest article (2007), the word propaganda does not even occur, save in quotes from me.

Propaganda sets out precisely to penetrate and transform shared language and assumptions. It does ideological work, in the Gramscian sense of ideology as a set of ideas and symbols made to appear natural, or ‘common sense’ (Gramsci, 1971). Meaningful discussion of the role of media in conflict is impossible without considering propaganda, and to form a useful understanding of propaganda it is essential that these categories be seen as dynamic – the site of constant construction and contestation – rather than as givens, as Loyn apparently does. Hence the ostrich metaphor – his account, and other, similar criticisms of peace journalism by western-employed professional journalists, effectively ignore four decades of scholarship and research. In the face of unpalatable ideas, they prefer to bury their heads in the sand.

This gap in understanding also explains persistent misinterpretations of the real dividing lines in this debate. There is no dispute over a journalist’s duty to “truthfulness”, as Loyn misleadingly suggests. Reporters should report, as accurately and fully as they can, the facts they encounter. Where peace journalism goes further is to call on them to consider how these particular facts, as distinct from a practically infinite number of others ‘out there’, come to meet them; and how they, the reporters, come to meet these particular facts. If it’s always the same facts, or the same kinds of facts, what consequences follow, for the nature of representation produced? How does that representation affect the understanding developed by readers and audiences, and their responses? And how do those responses, or assumptions about them, feed in to the actions and motivations of parties to conflict? These are the real questions in the peace journalism debate.

Conventionalism and realism

Loyn (2007: 4) tells us that Thomas Nagel, the New York University law and philosophy professor, “proves that there is such a thing as objectivity”. It’s a bold claim – so let’s take a closer look. The example Loyn cites is about the physics of light, as opposed to the mere perception of colour – “one objective, the other subjective”. But the wave model, which he regards as proven fact, is actually a way of *describing the behaviour* of light. For some purposes, notably in astronomy, it has to be supplemented with a particle model if observable phenomena are to be fully explained.

Nagel gives a definition of objectivity as a pursuit, rather than a state of grace: “In pursuing objectivity we alter our relation to the world, increasing the correctness of certain of our representations of it by compensating for the peculiarities of our point of view” (Nagel, 1986: 90).

This shows what is wrong with claims for objectivity, even in this attenuated form, when put forward in counter-position to peace journalism. Nagel’s version falls short of the real dividing lines in the debate because it does not specify what we are to use to compensate for the peculiarities – other points of view? If so, which ones? Actually, he tells us, points of view can be measured, not just against each other – a process he calls “human objectivity” – but against an *external reality* whose existence we can intuit, even if it cannot be conceptualised in the (present) structures of human understanding:

“There may be aspects of reality beyond its reach [the reach of ‘human objectivity’] because they are altogether beyond our capacity to form conceptions of the world” (1986: 91).

Loyn, for his part, intuits a metaphysical Truth – going so far as to quote Christ’s testimony in his trial – as a transcendental signifier to anchor his pursuit of truthfulness. Thus anchored, he suggests, we can be content with the truth of a news story as “quotidian... ‘true’ in the sense of not being ‘false’”.

And here is the crux – where Loyn commends “truthfulness” as a goal of journalism, as opposed to falsity, there is no difference between us – how could there be? And where he does succeed in delineating a difference between us, it depends on intuiting the numinosity of a pre-ordained order, which the tenacious reporter can *reveal*, without, therefore, needing to consider the conventions of his or her reporting or their theoretical construction.

This epistemological stance lends a strong moral flavour to Loyn’s strictures, notably when he comes to consider media responses to the ‘Kosovo crisis’ of 1998-99, an example discussed at length by Lynch and McGoldrick (2005: 98-106). It leads him to describe our account as, quite simply, “wrong”.

We criticise the dominance in media representations of war propaganda, emanating from privileged sources in western governments, swinging public opinion in their respective countries behind a policy of violence. In other words, we assume

sources are active – “trying to create a reality that does not yet exist” (183). Loyn, on the other hand, typifies what we characterise as the journalist’s working assumption that sources are passive, “revealing a reality that already exists” (183). This is, of course, convenient for the authors of propaganda, and there is no shortage of research that says so:

“The media are subject [in the build-up to war] to massive propaganda from the parties involved, and are often without their own knowledge representing the necessary link between the propaganda machinery and the audience. If they are not aware of this potential role themselves, the danger of playing a role as a catalyst for propaganda will be even greater” (Hojjer, Nohrstedt and Ottosen, 2002: 4).

We ourselves argue: “Journalism needs some workable form of reflexivity, analysing and addressing its own role in shaping discussions and creating realities. Without this, it is fated to collude and conceal” (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005: *xvi*).

Kosovo reconsidered

Was journalism colluding, then, in the Kosovo case, and what, if anything, was it concealing? Loyn states (2007: 7), as a fact, that the build-up to the bombing of Yugoslavia was a

“...sequence of Serb atrocity and world reaction ratcheting up towards war in 1999”.

Nato’s ‘Operation Allied Force’ (OAF) was, in these terms, the crucial act in a drama of intervention, with the international community riding reluctantly to the rescue of a beleaguered minority, as a reaction when all else had failed.

As it is, Loyn himself allows that Nato countries already had forces on the ground, well before the onset of bombing, “making contact with the KLA [Kosovo Liberation Army] and yes, surprise, surprise, possibly giving them military assistance” (7).

In our account, we quote an episode of the BBC’s own *Panorama* programme (BBC, 2000) which showed how KLA activities at this time, the latter part of 1998, brought about a decisive escalation in the conflict. At that stage, a ceasefire agreement was in place, brokered by the so-called ‘Contact Group’ of the US, Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Russia, and policed by the Kosovo Verification Mission, sent in under the aegis of the Organisation for Security Cooperation in Europe.

Perhaps the most widely quoted history of the period – at least in English – is by a journalist, Tim Judah, who points out the crucial flaw in the KVM:

“The KLA were not party to it, and, as far as they were concerned, not bound by it either. As the Serbs pulled back, the KLA followed in their wake, reoccupying positions they had withdrawn from during the summer... [the ceasefire gave the KLA] a reprieve, time to reorganise and rearm, and, as they told anyone who cared to listen, time to prepare for their spring offensive” (Judah, 2002: 189).

Loyn attributes the KLA’s sudden ascendancy as recognised representatives of the Albanian-speaking Kosovar people to the weakness of Ibrahim Rugova, then leader of the main political party, the LDK (Democratic League of Kosovo). Judah explains it as a rather more sinister process, taking place over the winter of 1998-99:

“The KLA was also seeking to stamp its authority on areas that it controlled and to make sure the LDK understood Mao’s dictum that power grows from the barrel of a gun. LDK activists were arrested and according to one UN report, the activity of KLA ‘tribunals’ suggested ‘a pattern of arbitrary arrests and executions’”. (190-1)

The *Panorama* programme, titled ‘Moral Combat’, presented, in essence, a picture of a civil conflict exacerbated by interventions on the part of the international community that were, at best, bumbling and ineffective (OAFish, perhaps) and, at worst, geared towards provoking armed confrontation. Far from appearing “a rather curious essay” as Loyn claims (2007: 7), this version of events has steadily gained in salience, especially as the political future of the province has remained clouded in uncertainty, through a period of UN-sponsored negotiations, and fraught with the potential for causing more trouble in future.

There is an intriguing congruity between Loyn’s favoured mode of analysis, and the approach to conflict issues at a political and diplomatic level in western capitals, especially London. He is typical of many professional journalists, working in those capitals, in refusing to acknowledge the conventions they apply whenever they observe the world around them. (Actually, he goes further than most, albeit writing them off as no more than the inevitable divergence between any two accounts of the same event.)

This fits, as if naturally, with the representation of conflict by politicians and diplomats as a drama of intervention, whether in process or in prospect. What is missing, from both, is any sense that the world we encounter is partly of our own making – evident in recent cases from the ‘7/7’ London bombings (discussed in Lynch, 2006b) to Iran’s supposed ‘nuclear ambitions’ (discussed in Lynch, 2006a).

In Kosovo, the KLA, emerging strengthened from the internationally brokered ceasefire period, resumed its attacks on Serb targets from more advanced positions and with far more effective firepower – thanks to weapons bought with money channelled through German bank accounts – and tactics, thanks to training by the CIA. (The Americans, Judah observes wryly, were the only nation who refused to “fold in” their on-the-ground observers to the KVM.)

The Yugoslav Army rumbled back into the province and began striking, with its trademark lack of discrimination, at Albanian villages in territory the KLA had taken over, in the meantime, from the LDK. The die was cast for war: Judah quotes James Rubin, then spokesman at the US State Department, briefing reporters in February, 1999:

"All of the officials who have worked on this have made it very clear that in order to move towards military action, it has to be clear that the Serbs were responsible" (2002: 212).

Judah goes on to detail the gyrations of Rubin's boss, then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, in setting the bar in negotiations low enough for the KLA to sign up to an agreement, involving an implicit promise of independence and an agreement that they could keep their weapons; which simultaneously set it too high for any Serb representative to surmount.

Why should the US wish to bring about such an outcome, to move towards military action? The answer would take too long to rehearse in full, but see, for instance, the notorious *Defense Planning Guidance*, drawn up for the Pentagon by a senior official, Paul Wolfowitz, in the wake of the fall of the Berlin Wall and 'Operation Desert Storm' to expel the Saddam Hussein regime from Kuwait (New York Times, 1992). America's top strategic priority, according to this paper, was to maintain "the sense that the world order is ultimately backed by the US". In Europe, this meant:

"A substantial American presence in Europe and continued cohesion within the Western alliance remains vital... we must seek to prevent the emergence of European-only security arrangements which would undermine NATO".

The Rubin press briefing describes the moment Kosovo ceased to be viewed as an international political problem, and started to be viewed as an international military one. If the former, who better to deal with it than the world's foremost international political organization, the European Union? If the latter, who better than the world's foremost military organization, Nato? The main difference between them? US leadership of the latter, but not the former.

The account I give here, in short, re-inscribes the degree of self-interest and complicity by elements of the 'international community', which is written out by formulations such as that served up by David Loyn, of Serb atrocities followed by world reaction. Such is the collusion and concealment that is inevitable in journalism compiled without reflexivity. As well as being the handmaiden of propaganda, it provides the opportunity and incentive for more.

Realism(s)

In epistemological terms, the Loyn view of news, and the official British view of international conflict, would be well described by what Nagel calls "normative realism":

"The view that propositions about what gives us reasons for action can be true or false independently of how things appear to us; and that we can hope to discover the truth by transcending the appearances and subjecting them to critical assessment". (1986: 139)

In scholarly circles, Nagel has tended to attract more critics than supporters, and one of them, Richard Rorty, takes issue with precisely this habit of remitting the discovery of truth to vaguely defined processes like "critical assessment" without clarifying the basis upon which any such assessment would take place. Rorty accuses Nagel of what is, in effect, a category error; presenting his intuitions, that there must be some reality beyond the scope of our structures of understanding, as evidence for its existence:

"Of course we have such intuitions. How could we escape having them? We have been educated within an intellectual tradition build around such claims" (1982: *xxix*).

So, is there anything in the centre, at the root of our perceptions, an underlying reality that is hard and fast? Or do familiar gravitational metaphors such as these – favoured by both Loyn and Nagel – actually mislead us into preferring one representation to another, when in fact both have equal claims on our attention?

This is, in essence, the complaint put forward by Thomas Hanitzsch, in his critique of peace journalism:

"The news is 'a representation of the world, and all representations are selective' (Schudson, 2003: 33)... To say that reality can be 'misrepresented', for instance by drawing on an 'incomplete' factual basis (Kempf, 2006: 5), assumes that there is a proper and 'true' version of reality. However, every representation is inevitably biased, and any 'correspondence' between an objective reality and its representation(s) is hardly possible" (2007: 5).

Where Loyn takes a realist view, and finds peace journalism over-critical, Hanitzsch takes a conventionalist view, according to which, peace journalism is not critical enough. His phrase, "hardly possible" does allow a little wiggle room, however, and he makes the sensible suggestion that "standpoint epistemology" may be worth further consideration in the search for an "epistemological foundation" for peace journalism.

On Hanitzsch's account, standpoint epistemology is, indeed, as its name implies, the exact opposite of Nagel's view from nowhere. Far from calling on us to "transcend" our point of view, or compensate for it, this takes standpoints from which dominant representations can be inspected from the outside. It "holds that less powerful and marginalized members of

society enjoy a certain epistemic privilege to see social reality differently from those who dominate society". There are, in other words, intelligible power relations built in to the acts of representation and understanding, even before they take place.

So far, so promising, especially as it meshes with Stuart Hall's important concept of decoding (Hall, 1980) – that the meanings of media messages are made, at least partly, at the point of reception, in a process influenced chiefly by the socio-economic position of the reader or viewer. A form of journalism that deliberately sought out perspectives from the disadvantaged margins and elevated them into the news could encourage, in Hall's terms, "negotiated" and "oppositional" readings of dominant ideological constructs, thus correcting for some of the effects of journalistic convention.

Hanitzsch leaves it there, as an interesting thread to pull, which it certainly could be. He has not, apparently, read any of my own later material on peace journalism (such as Lynch, 2006a) – the most recent reference is to a short piece published on the Open Democracy website in 2003, my initial response to David Loyn.

If he had, he would have seen that I have been suggesting a second version of realism – critical realism – as another candidate to be the epistemological foundation of peace journalism. Critical realism has been defined thus:

"A way of describing the process of 'knowing' that acknowledges the reality of the thing known, as something other than the knower (hence 'realism'), while also acknowledging that the only access we have to this reality lies along the spiralling path of appropriate dialogue or conversation between the knower and the thing known (hence 'critical')" (Wright, 1996: 35-36).

Critical realism begins with the advantage of having been devised explicitly to reconcile arguments in social science which are closely analogous to the ones Loyn and Hanitzsch put forward in their papers:

"On the one hand those who advocated a human and social science which should – after the pattern of the natural sciences – try to ascertain general laws by applying and developing abstract theoretical models; a nomothetic approach. On the other hand, their critics who held that social science should describe empirical reality in all its complexity and diversity; an idiographic approach" (Danermark et al, 2002: 3).

To open consideration of its claims, I will first examine a useful account, by Gilles Gauthier, a French-Canadian scholar, of 'A realist point of view on news journalism' (2005).

This suggests that, at the root of any news story, lurks some 'brute fact', which should be seen as above, behind and beyond the conventions of reporting:

"News always regards a state of affairs that logically precedes it or, in more general terms, information always formally emerges from a necessarily prior reality" (53).

Gauthier readily concedes that most news is based on socially constructed realities, but "the social reality on which the news is based is constructed from a reality that is given, rather than constructed" (53-4).

It is when he comes to consider a real news story that Gauthier comes unstuck, however. The example he uses, as a 'given' reality, or 'brute fact', is the selection of John Kerry as the Democratic nominee for the US presidential election, in 2004. And yet it could be argued that an expectation of the way Kerry's candidacy would be treated by journalists was built in to the calculations of party delegates even as they voted for him.

For many, the turning point in the primaries was 'Howard Dean's primal scream', the former Vermont Governor's rallying call to supporters in the room following his defeat at the Iowa caucus. According to eyewitness reports, Dean's behaviour seemed unexceptionable in the context of an emotional party rally – it was the merciless glare of the TV cameras, framed on the candidate's own head and shoulders, which effectively stripped it of context and made it seem excessive and odd.

What followed was a burst of war journalism – a demolition job on the only candidate who set out both to oppose the war in Iraq and to bypass traditional fundraising mechanisms (USA Today, 2004). The Dean campaign sagged and Kerry was left with a clear run to the nomination. So it was, above all, a media representation that tipped the balance in Kerry's favour by removing his main rival, making this 'brute fact' actually very highly mediated, even as it occurred.

In critical realist terms, Democratic Party members possessed causal powers; their selection process, resulting in the emergence of a nominee, is a mechanism. With Kerry's victory, this mechanism produced an event. But as this mechanism was in motion, and the event occurring, on what critical realism calls the social stratum of reality, others were working on different strata, notably the psychological.

In making their choice, Democrats imagined a sequence of future events – Kerry is received by the media as a credible President-in-waiting; media reporting influences voter reaction in the country; Kerry wins election. Their calculations about likely media responses were based, not unreasonably, on their experience of past media behaviour – an effect we have called a "feedback loop of cause and effect" (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005: 216).

In the context of this debate, critical realism's notion of a stratified reality provides us with a useful – because non-gravi-

tational – spatial metaphor. It models journalism, in this case journalism about the race for the Democratic Party nomination for the Presidency, as both cause, on the psychological stratum, and, simultaneously, effect, on the social stratum.

This may get us off the horns of a dilemma. We do not have to claim that journalism 'reflects' a logically prior reality, avoiding ire from the likes of Hanitzsch; but it also keeps us on the right side of Loyn with his demand that "reporters need to preserve their position as observers not players" (2007: 3). Peace journalism does not call on them to 'cross a line' or *set out* to involve themselves, merely to allow for their journalism as both cause and effect, based on their observer status.

This is what Rorty calls a "pragmatic" position:

"Truth is not the sort of thing one should expect to have a philosophically interesting theory about" (1982: *xiii*);

"[The pragmatist] drops the notion of truth as correspondence to reality altogether, and says that modern science does not enable us to cope because it corresponds, it just plain enables us to cope" (*xvii*).

Such levity draws disapproval from Danermark et al:

"The researchers who adopt this position, what do they think they are doing when they carry out their research? If we were to take this kind of relativism seriously, the consequence would be that we would have to regard all scientific argumentation as completely meaningless" (2002: 17).

However, they reassure us that:

"The criticism of 'naïve objectivism' need not lead to such conclusions. Critical realism bears this criticism in mind at the same time as it tries to maintain the positive claims to a useful and liberating knowledge, which was the basic motivation for the Enlightenment project and for modern science. Realism maintains that reality exists independently of our knowledge of it. And even if this knowledge is always fallible, yet all knowledge is not *equally* fallible" (17) (emphasis added).

If we are concerned to bear down on the fallibility of journalism, to improve it, then we need to look at the terms of what Wright calls the dialogue or conversation between the knower and the thing known – which means reflexivity – and decide what forms of knowledge are likely to prove less fallible, in a given case – what I have called "anchorage" (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005: *xvii*):

"When covering conflicts, we can tread down to find solid ground beneath our feet, by studying and applying what is known and has been observed about conflict, drawing on the overlapping fields of Conflict Analysis and Peace Research. We can use this knowledge to help us decide for ourselves what is important, and to identify what is missing from what we are told by interested parties" (*xviii*).

Conflict analysis and peace research

The Structure of Foreign News (Galtung and Ruge, 1965) identified five key factors of newsworthiness in the coverage of international conflict in the Norwegian press:

- Threshold: A big story is one that has an extreme effect on a large number of people. Frequency: Events that occur suddenly and fit well with the news organization's schedule
- Negativity: Bad news is more exciting than good news.
- Unexpectedness: If an event is out of the ordinary it will have a greater effect
- Unambiguity: Events whose implications are clear make for better copy

Johan Galtung later adapted this basic insight to propose a "four-factor news communication model". Negative events, befalling elite individuals in elite countries, were top stories. Positive processes, benefiting non-elite groups in non-elite countries, were non-stories (Galtung, 1998). A classic example – a friend on the London *Guardian* newspaper had spent weeks compiling a feature on efforts to alleviate the growing literacy crisis in sub-Saharan Africa. It was pulled at the last minute in favour of musings on the just-announced divorce of Hollywood stars Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman.

Peace journalism can be understood as a further adaptation, so War Journalism is

- Violence/war-orientated
- Propaganda-orientated
- Elite-orientated
- Victory-orientated

And peace journalism itself is therefore

- Peace/conflict-orientated
- Truth-orientated
- People-orientated
- Solution-orientated

These categories appear with brief notes in a table Galtung himself drew up in 1997 (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005: 6). One of the most important distinctions between them is that War Journalism represents conflict as confined to "closed space, closed time; causes and exits in arena".

This clearly makes it receptive to propaganda from western governments who either do not perceive, or will not acknowledge, their own complicity in a sequence of cause and effect – the problem (Saddam Hussein, for instance) is located in the conflict arena (Iraq), so that is where the solution is to be found (removing him from power; later, capturing him, then trying, convicting and executing him). It also makes it inaccurate, when compared with the insights gleaned by researchers in the field of Peace and Conflict Studies.

Any journalist knows a news story is supposed to answer six basic questions – who, what, where, when, why and how. When covering conflicts, these correspond roughly to what peace researchers call 'conflict dynamics'. According to one of them, Diana Francis, any statement of the dynamics of a conflict must identify "its history, recent causes and internal composition – the different parties, the nature of their involvement, their perspectives, positions and motivations, and the different relationships between them in terms of power, allegiance and interest" (Francis, 2002, p 28).

By this yardstick, peace journalism, with its preparedness to encompass a broader range of parties, across the conflict formation, is clearly more accurate than war journalism, and preferable as a form of representation. Think back to the build-up to war in Iraq, and news in the aggressor countries, chiefly the US and UK. The small amount of reporting that included America's appetite for oil, and the longstanding policy of successive US governments to secure control over access to global supplies, gave a more accurate representation of conflict dynamics than the majority of reporting that omitted these factors.

Why should this *be* the yardstick? What has the field of Peace and Conflict Studies to commend it, that journalistic representations of conflict should be found wanting, when weighed against it? Its insights have been assembled under the normal safeguards of academic rigour in social science: openness about – and preparedness to justify – starting assumptions for both observation and interpretation; and peer review. Built into social science, moreover, is an allowance for the participant-observer – as soon as you start to observe something, you cannot avoid changing it. In all these respects, there is reflexivity – preferable to the largely unexamined conventions of news.

Peace and Conflict Studies is further distinguished, in terms of content, by acknowledging the potential for the creative transformation of conflicts, and by the insight most readily associated with the Australian peace researcher, John Burton, that behaviour in conflicts cannot be explained solely in terms of power – power gradients, or the struggle for power. There is an irreducible role for human needs (Burton, 1993). In all these respects, it offers accounts of *relationships* in conflict that journalism generally ignores – and, without which, the representations it makes are bound to be distorted.

Another prominent peace researcher, John Paul Lederach, has commented:

"I have not experienced any situation of conflict, no matter how protracted or severe, from Central America to the Philippines to the Horn of Africa, where there have not been people who had a vision for peace, emerging often from their own experience of pain. Far too often, however, these same people are overlooked and disempowered either because they do not represent 'official' power, whether on the side of government or the various militias, or because they are written off as biased and too personally affected by the conflict" (1997: 94).

Despite what Loyn says, they are often overlooked by journalists, too, because they do not represent official sources. Their absence makes news representations, in many cases, misrepresentations – leaving an impression that the hardened positions of leaders on either side are unchallenged within their respective communities, when experience shows that such challenges are always present, and indeed may constitute the first stirrings of change. On this count, too, journalism about conflict would be improved – made more accurate, or less fallible – by attending to the insights of conflict analysis and peace research.

Hanitzsch does not, apparently, set much store by this. In the absence of any informed consideration of issues in Peace and Conflict Studies, his paper unwittingly takes positions and mistakes them for fixed parameters, thus invalidating some of his conclusions.

From the outset, we find him representing conflict very much in the war journalism mode:

"High-intensity conflicts have, for the most part, shown a regular increase from seven to 38 during the last 60 years. The large number of ongoing conflicts, part of which are carried out with a massive amount of violence, prevent entire regions (eg sub-Saharan Africa) from political democratization and socio-economic development. In addition, at least after Munich 1972 and even more so with September 11, 2001, terrorism has entered the picture" (2007: 2).

He apparently discounts state terrorism; he fails to discriminate between different kinds of democratization and socio-economic development, thereby ignoring the catastrophic effects of attempts to impose these, on terms defined by and congenial to outsiders, for instance in Rwanda; and he confines conflicts to their respective arenas (sub-Saharan Africa).

His figures come from the Heidelberg Institute – an august body, to be sure, but it is odd, and surely, in the context of this debate, unjustified, to quote their findings without any comparative or critical commentary on what they decided to look for, and how. For comparison, the Liu Institute's inaugural *Human Security Report* found that the country involved in the highest number of international armed conflicts of any in the world, between 1946 and 2003, was Britain, with 21; France came next on 19 – the US third with 16; the overall number of armed conflicts had steadily fallen since the end of the Cold War (Liu, 2005). The same phenomenon can be sliced very differently, and the basis on which we decide to do so begs to be discussed.

Hanitzsch's lack of critical engagement with issues in conflict and peace most clearly invalidates his conclusions when he comes to consider Gadi Wolfsfeld's study of Israeli media representations of the so-called Oslo "peace process". I have inserted the caveats as a corrective to Hanitzsch's own apparently unquestioning acceptance of the official US/Israeli narrative of these events. He quotes Wolfsfeld's well-known thesis that there is an inherent tension between news values and peace:

"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 in tensions; journalists focus on conflict. Many of the significant developments within a peace process must take place in secret behind closed doors; journalists demand information and action" (Wolfsfeld, 1997: 67).

A study by Leah Mandelzis also identifies problems, vis-à-vis the prospect of peace, caused by media response, but diagnoses them very differently. She interviews Ron Pundak, now Director General of the Peres Centre for Peace and one of those involved in the original 'track two' pathfinding talks leading up to the Oslo Accord. In the first months after Oslo, he tells her, the Israeli media suffered from a "euphoria syndrome" in which the use of terms such as "peace process" and "peace agreements" created an unrealistic discourse:

"We did not sign any peace agreement. The Declaration of Principles was the threshold into which the political negotiations were channelled and no more than that. The Israeli public discourse was surrounded by 'peace with the Palestinians' as a result of the media discourse. It could not be peace when the occupation did not end and siege and oppression continued. The subsequent dissonance was due to the gap between the high expectations created by the media [and the reality]."

"Although the media cannot be blamed by itself (sic) – the government created these euphoric hopes and expectations – but the media inflamed these emotions and exaggerated without analysing the procedures themselves. The media created a euphoria on the one hand, and misunderstanding of a security horizon in a political agreement, on the other hand" (Mandelzis, 2006).

Shinar diagnoses a mismatch between the nature of the conflict – "cultural conflict... characterized by exclusivity, depth, duration, totality and global nature" (2003: 2) – and the nature of the 'solution' offered by such a political agreement:

"The optimism of the agreements, and the less euphoric reality of ongoing violence, did not signify conventional post-war peacemaking. They represent, at best, a changing pattern in the relations of long-standing warring parties" (4).

The problem was not so much the supposedly universal journalist's appetite for drama and novelty, but a failure by Israeli media, at a particular historical moment, to reach out to sources such as the Palestinian poor, on the receiving end of occupation, siege and oppression. Illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian territory doubled during the years of the Oslo process (1993-2000) – the biggest single underlying cause of the subsequent Intifada, according to the Mitchell Commission charged by the Clinton White House to investigate what had happened, and why. It said:

"The GOI [Government of Israel] should also give careful consideration to whether settlements that are focal points for substantial friction are valuable bargaining chips for future negotiations or provocations likely to preclude the onset of productive talks" (Mitchell, 2001).

Such considerations are glossed over in Wolfsfeld's own account of what caused the Oslo process to break down:

"There was quite a bit of cooperation between the two sides and a certain amount of progress was made over the years. Nevertheless each step towards a final settlement became increasingly painful and frustrating for both parties..." (182).

On the Palestinian side, mainstream media lost credibility and confidence because their efforts to report on the reality staring their readers in the face – the new settlement activity gobbling up more and more of their land – brought harsh repressive measures from the Palestinian Authority, especially after a Presidential Decree forbidding 'incitement', in 1998:

"[Since] The Presidential Decree... there has clearly been an increase in violations and abuses against journalists who write about, meet with or show interest in the opposition" (Siksik, 1999: 40).

If journalists on either side had paid more attention to conflict issues and their effect on human needs, their reporting would have been more accurate. This would have meant bringing readers and audiences 'bad news' in the form of drawing attention to continuing settlement-building, but it would potentially have been more conducive to peace, ultimately, by problematizing this phenomenon and (thereby) incentivizing an effective political response.

Engendering peace journalism

Why didn't they, then? Hanitzsch is right to draw attention to the "many structural constraints which shape and limit the work of journalists" (2007: 5). For Palestinian reporters, covering opposition perspectives on settlement building – perhaps as evidence that the 'peace process' was being misrepresented by officialdom, for its own purposes – risked sanctions and reprisals. Wolfsfeld mentions some of the difficulties for those Israeli journalists who did try to include more Palestinian sources in their coverage – the relative inaccessibility of professional spokespeople for the Palestinian National Authority, compared with the Israeli government, for instance (1997: 110-111).

Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) discuss several conventions of journalistic 'objectivity', which predispose the majority of news coverage towards the war journalism end of the spectrum – a bias in favour of event over process, in favour of official sources and in favour of dualism as a template for conflicts (chapter 7).

Hanitzsch complains that calling for more peace journalism, in the face of this, amounts to "an overly individualistic and voluntaristic perspective". The narrow conceptual horizons of Loyn's essay – which, I have suggested, actually goes further than many are prepared to – points up the unexplored scope for encouraging reporters and their editors to reflect critically on their work, and for the provision of safe and welcoming spaces for them to do so. At the moment, a lack of reflexivity on the part of individual journalists acts as a kind of 'force multiplier' for the structural factors Hanitzsch sees as fixed limits to the potential for change.

Then there is evidence that peace journalism is by no means absent from conflict coverage. Ting Lee and Maslog (2005) studied conflict coverage in the Asian press and put the proportion of peace journalism as high as 58%, in one newspaper in Sri Lanka. Lynch (2006a) carried out an empirical content analysis on UK press coverage of the 'Iran nuclear crisis' over a five-month period from mid-2005, finding that the overall 'peace journalism quotient' was about 15%, although some important publications, notably the *Financial Times* (22%), had more.

The latter study concentrated on one prime analytical factor from the peace journalism schema – whether conflict is represented as confined to the conflict arena, in the present day, or whether, on the other hand, it is shown in "open space, open time". Why?

"The distinctions [used for the study] *do* have a strong claim to be considered the important ones when reporting conflict because they foreground the key framing issues in war propaganda. They effectively map out the contested territory" (Lynch, 2006b).

Conflict reporting does not have to include all the elements called for in the Galtung table if it is to be regarded as peace journalism – different analytical factors, in different situations, will describe the main ideational content. If peace journalism is about creating opportunities for society to consider and to value non-violent conflict responses, then that ought to be enough.

Media activism

It means that peace journalism is possible, and realistic, here and now, for professional journalists, and it can become the focus of media activism. This is not a concept that would make much sense to Hanitzsch, to judge from some of his claims, chiefly:

"A peaceful culture is a *precondition* of peace journalism, rather than its outcome" (2007: 7).

Implicit in this is a rather idiosyncratic definition of culture. There are many – from Matthew Arnold's "right knowing and right doing" to this from Jeff Lewis:

"Culture is the assemblage of imaginings and meanings that may be consonant, disjunctive, overlapping, contentious, continuous or discontinuous... these experiences of imagining and meaning-making are intensified through the proliferation of mass media images and information" (Lewis, 2002: 15).

They are separated by a century and a half; one is simple, the other, sophisticated and complex, but both allow for the essential element that Hanitzsch appears to neglect – that of culture as a site of contestation. Hanitzsch relies instead on structural functionalist theories, notably from Durkheim – focussed, as they are, on questions of societal order and cohesiveness, and tending to relegate or ignore considerations about how power is exercised within societies, and, crucially, resisted. If Galtung-Ruge would be top of Loyn's remedial reading list, then one could recommend Hanitzsch browse in Foucault, to ponder such insights as:

"Power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategic situation in a particular society" (1977: 93).

"Domination [is not] that solid and global kind of domination that one person exercises over others, or one group over another, but the manifold forms of domination that can be exercised within society" (96).

Pedely (1995: 5) is one of many writers to see, in Foucault's concept of power as a "productive network", held together by rewards and incentives as well as possible punishments, a key to understanding the pressures and influences on journalists and their work. Power is being exercised, in other words, to inculcate norms of right knowing and doing into all forms of cultural production, including journalism, all the time; it saturates all social interactions to maintain patterns of dominance, or hegemony; and power is meaningless unless it is relational. Power, to *be* power, requires resistance.

Such is the theoretical framework within which the concept of media activism has started to attract more scholarly attention, particularly in relation to social movement theory. Struggles over media representation take manifold forms, which Annabel McGoldrick and I have categorised into "campaigning *through* the media" and "campaigning *on* the media" (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2007: 1).

Movements may either set out explicitly to achieve changes in media representation, in other words, or they may turn to the media as a 'lever to pull', in service of their cause – only to find that the routines and conventions of news make it impervious to their message. Hackett and Carroll find "most plausible" the proposition that media activism represents "a nexus – a point of articulation between movements, transforming and lending coherence to the broad field of movement activism as a counter-hegemonic formation" (2006: 199).

It may be true, as Tehranian has argued, that "structural pluralism [in media] may be considered a *sine qua non* of content pluralism" (2002: 58), but, mapped on to this understanding of cultural struggle and social movement, it should be clear that one good way to protect structural pluralism, and campaign for more, is to argue that the content we get shows the inadequacies of existing structures and points up the need for reform.

My own media activism has mostly aimed at effecting change in what Hackett and Carroll categorise as the "system" field rather than the "lifeworld", not least in working with professional journalists to encourage critical self-reflection and equip them with theoretical tools and insights to inspect from the outside, as it were, the structural characteristics of their representations of conflict.

Hackett and Carroll comment:

"We ought not to dismiss journalists as potential allies. Aspects of their material and cultural conditions militate against activism... Still, journalists will mobilize under certain conditions: if they develop connections (ideological and/or personal) with social movements... [or] if their professional status and ideals are blatantly violated" (2006: 201).

One project, called Reporting the World, attempted to provide these conditions, taking the form of a series of seminars in London, the transcripts of which are still posted on the project's website www.reportingtheworld.org.uk

The first of these seminars, in March, 2001, was called to discuss reporting of the conflict involving Israel and the Palestinians, and the first speaker was Tim Llewellyn, a former Middle East Correspondent for the BBC. His opening statement lamented the distortions to BBC and other coverage arising from the application of 'balance' – especially as the situation was, essentially, characterised by the very lack of balance between an occupier and an occupied people.

At the same time, researchers were finding widespread wrong-headedness, among samples of British television viewers, about the basic facts of the conflict, with the pattern of misunderstanding almost exactly matching what the same team identified as missing elements from the story as habitually presented in mainstream media:

"Viewers are extraordinarily confused. Many believed that the Palestinians were occupying the occupied territories or that it was basically a border dispute between two countries who were trying to grab a piece of land which separated them. The great bulk of those we interviewed had no idea where the Palestinian refugees had come from – some suggested Afghanistan, Iraq or Kosovo" (Philo, 2004).

How does this square with Hall's notion of decoding? Does it, indeed, exemplify the complaint from Hanitzsch, that audiences are modelled as a "passive mass" (2007: 6)? Not necessarily. For audiences to produce oppositional or negotiated readings of media messages assumes that they have enough directly relevant personal or social experience against which to measure them.

It is easy to see how this capacity may be widespread, in the case of stories about, say, labour laws, rental prices or unusual weather conditions. It is likely to be less widespread in stories about shadowy global menaces like 'terrorism' or 'weapons of mass destruction', so public reliance on media representations is greater. Indeed, the incursion by international conflict into the news agenda is often seen as a means of asserting control over it – so, the attacks on the US on '9/11' became a "good day to bury bad news", according to one UK government press officer. At such times, "the BBC turns into the Ministry of Information", said another contributor to Reporting the World debates, Tim Gopsill, editor of the National Union of Journalists' monthly magazine, *The Journalist*.

The chief researcher in the study on Middle East reporting, Professor Greg Philo of Glasgow University Media Group, later gave evidence to an independent panel set up to advise the BBC Governors. Among its conclusions:

"BBC output does not consistently give a full and fair account of the conflict. In some ways the picture is incomplete and, in that sense, misleading" (BBC, 2006a: 4).

Elaborating on this criticism, the report echoed the complaint of Tim Llewellyn, five years earlier:

"One side is wholly under the occupation of the other and, however reluctantly, necessarily endures the indignities of dependence. As some of our witnesses noted, this fact itself poses a challenge to a media organisation like the BBC committed, as our terms of reference make clear, to fairness, impartiality and balance. (While fairness and impartiality are legal requirements, balance is a concept adopted by the BBC in seeking to give effect to them.) These objectives, especially balance, work most naturally where the parties to a dispute are on an equal footing. Indeed, without care, a formulaic application of these doctrines, and in particular that of balance, to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could produce coverage which misleads from the outset" (11).

The decision by the Governors to commission their own independent study came in response to a multi-dimensional campaign, waged over several years by media activists from various backgrounds, to trigger corrective mechanisms provided for, at least notionally, under structural pluralism – specifically, the unique governance system of the BBC.

It drew on the insights of peace journalism in mapping out the ideational content of coverage of a vitally important, current story about conflict – the crucial issue, in this case, being, as Lynch and McGoldrick put it:

"AVOID only reporting the violent acts and describing 'the horror'.

If you exclude everything else you suggest that the only explanation for violence is previous violence (revenge); the only remedy, more violence (coercion/punishment).

INSTEAD *show how people have been blocked and frustrated* or deprived in everyday life as a way of explaining how the conditions for violence are being produced" (2005: 29).

The episode shows, perhaps, the potential of these ideas for mobilizing social resources in furtherance of changes to journalistic representations to make them more accurate and more useful, bringing them more into line with well-established expectations that journalism will play a civic role in democracy.

Whether it will have any lasting effect on BBC or other reporting of the conflict is not yet determined, but the team that carried out the main research on the corporation's output, an exercise in quantitative and qualitative content analysis, did hint at a change which they attributed to the very prospect of coming under scrutiny organised under these specific headings:

"The BBC's Board of Governors announced publicly in September 2005 that it was to undertake an impartiality review with respect to the Corporation's coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As such we must consider whether the performance of journalists and editors changed in light of their awareness that their coverage was being scrutinised... Given the sensitivity of the subject and the timing of the review in the run-up to Charter Review, it is conceivable that the impartiality review may have had some effect on some of the BBC coverage" (Appendix D).

The corporation's Head of News, Helen Boaden, commented, in an internal publication:

"There was some praise for what we do but also much criticism – not least that we fail to give enough context and history to this highly charged story and that we neglect the Palestinian narrative... In our response, we've tried to come up with practical ways of remedying our weaknesses and building on our strengths" (BBC, 2006b).

As one who was employed, on a regular freelance basis, as a BBC presenter (news anchor) and reporter up to the end of 2006, I can offer a further general impression, that audiences became much more likely to see or hear about the day-to-day experiences of the Palestinian population as they struggled with life under military occupation, through and beyond the review period. There had, in other words, been an increase in peace journalism.

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On the author: Jake Lynch is Associate Professor and Director of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Sydney. He is a founder member of the peace journalism commission of the International Peace Research Association and the peace journalism group of the Toda Institute for Peace and Policy Research. He was previously a professional journalist, latterly as a newsreader (anchor) for BBC World television. He also had spells as a Political Correspondent for Sky News and the Sydney Correspondent for the London Independent newspaper. He has published several books, book chapters and scholarly articles, and numerous comment and opinion pieces, on peace journalism.

Address: Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Mackie Building K01, University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia.
Website: <http://www.arts.usyd.edu.au/centres/cpacs/>
eMail: jake.lynch@arts.usyd.edu.au