

Peace Journalism in North Cyprus

By

Metin Ersoy

Eastern Mediterranean University

Faculty of Communication and Media Studies

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Address: Eastern Mediterranean University
Rector's Office – North Cyprus

Cell Phone: 0542 853 6388
Office Tel: 0392 630 2698 Office Fax: 0392 365 1886
e-mail: metin.ersoy@emu.edu.tr
web: <http://mediaif.emu.edu.tr/metin>

Abstract

Conflicts are alive everywhere in the world and journalists report them. The situation in Cyprus is similar. We present the results of an investigation on how the media reconcile the Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities and how the media contribute to the peace process in Cyprus. The author believe that the journalists in both communities can play important roles in bringing a peaceful solution to the island's long standing and what seems to the outside to be an unsolvable problem.

The basic aims of this paper are to look at the news selection process of the North Cyprus news media as well as looking into how news-writing journalists report the conflict news and how fateful they keep to the peace journalism approach.

A questionnaire and in-depth interviews were applied in this study. In the questionnaire, there are 37 statements, 30 of them were test statements about peace journalism, and 7 were demographic statements that were: age, gender, organization, duty, experience, salary and education.

Questionnaire results have shown that;

- News-writing journalists try and display the unseen effects of conflict on the society.
- News-writing journalists in North Cyprus accept the statements: “A journalist should take on an active role in trying to bring the people within conflict areas together and maintaining peace” and “Do not to transmit only the peace messages of the elite group.”
- North Cyprus journalists strive to find out who had metaphorically thrown the first stone.
- 76.6 percent of the participating journalists agree with the peace journalism oriented statements.
- Female journalists, older journalists, experienced journalists, and highly-educated journalists are more peace journalism oriented than male, younger, inexperienced, and unqualified (apprentice) educated journalists.

In the in-depth interviews the author attended to understand how North Cyprus news editors select the news items to be published. The advantage of the in-depth interviews was to allow respondents to take the discussion wherever they wished. The author met 8 news editors which is ninety percent of the North Cyprus news media.

The results of in-depth interviews show that:

- Most of the editor's news criteria are the same. Generally, the Cyprus problem oriented stories, accident, robbery and crime stories are the most popular for the North Cyprus print media editor's.
- Almost all of them use the Turkish News Agency news bulletin as one of their main news source.
- The final decision of the news selection for publication rests with the editors in consultation with the owners of the newspapers.
- What matters to the North Cyprus news media is not the source or the person/organizations providing/making the news but most importantly what matters is the content and the subjects of the news matter.

North Cyprus print media news selection is "subjective". Editors in the North Cyprus print media select the news to be published according to their newspaper news publishing policy. Furthermore, the editors make heavy use of the Turkish News Agency – as well as the Cyprus news bulletin in their publication decision making process.

In summary, this paper will expose the reader to the news publishing practices and principles of the thus far unknown North Cyprus news media and its contribution positive/negative to the ongoing peace process in the Cyprus problem.

Key Words: Cyprus Conflict • Peace journalism • news media • gatekeeping
 • agenda setting • public opinion • role of the media

INTRODUCTION

Twentieth century and twenty first century which we are in now continues to have found a place in history as the period of many ethnic conflicts. Along with political spectrum, media plays either negative or positive role in cold or hot conflicts of the world. Moreover, it is not wrong to state that media is an essential component of democratization process in societies. Societies continuously feel the necessity of media which investigates, questions, criticizes and is out-of reach of monopolize. At the point, what the impact may media and correspondents might create in societies and which kinds of roles they can take in intercommunal relations should be investigated and discussed.

Conflicts are alive everywhere in the world and journalists report them. The situation in Cyprus is similar. The media play an essential role in democratic societies. All societies feel the need for media that rest on principles of pluralism and therefore can discuss problems and find solutions.

We present the results of an investigation on how the media reconcile the Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities and how the media contribute to the peace process in Cyprus. The author believes that the journalists in both communities can play important roles in bringing a peaceful solution to the island's long standing and what seems to the outside to be an unsolved problem.

The basic aims of this paper are to look at the news selection process of the North Cyprus news media as well as looking into how news-writing journalists report conflict news and how faithful they are to the peace journalism approach.

This study is important in two respects. For one, this will be the first study that takes a peace journalism approach in terms of analysing the news selection and how North Cyprus news-writing journalists are to the peace journalism approach. The second importance comes from the final aim of providing a normative set of principles dealing with peace journalism. Although, there are several attempts to establish a global approach to peace journalism, we have to be careful in adapting them to local conditions.

This paper has three parts. In the first part we give information about the structure of Turkish Cypriot press, literature on peace journalism, Gatekeeping Theory, Agenda-Setting and Framing Theory. In the second part there is methodological information about the research. In the

third part, we present results of the questionnaire and interviews, which were applied to North Cyprus news-writing journalists and newspaper editors, discuss the results and give a conclusion.

Historical Overview of the North Cyprus Press

In order to explain the North Cyprus press, we have to look at the history of Cyprus as well. It is hard to evaluate the North Cyprus press without mentioning the historical developments on Cyprus.

There are two ethnic communities on the island of Cyprus, Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot. Cyprus was under Ottoman rule between 1571 and 1878. During that rule, Ottoman Press Law was introduced to Cyprus news media. According to this law, “License to publish must be obtained from the state by anybody who wants to establish a newspaper” (Azgın [1998]; p. 641).

Turkish Cypriot press was established as a reaction to the Greek Cypriot press's comments. The first Turkish newspaper, *Saded*, was established in 1889. The first issue of the paper was published 11th July 1889. That is why, every year 11th July is celebrated as “Press Day” in North Cyprus.

The second Turkish newspaper is *Zaman*. In the first issue, *Zaman* explained its aims and duties as follows (Azgın [1998]; p. 642):

- To fight against English colonialism.
- To maintain national consciousness and to continue reliance and trust on the motherland.
- To oppose numerous Greek newspapers propagating the Greek view on the Cyprus statement.
- To resist the Enosis movement.
- To make known views to the world the Turkish Cypriot/
- To make sure that the Turkish language survives on the island of Cyprus.
- Development of the Turkish community.
- To protect the rights of Turkish trade and workers.
- To be of help to the Turkish society socially, politically, ethically, and educationally.
- Not to protect self-interest, but to protect Turkish interest on the island.
- Not to have a grudge against anybody. Impartiality to everybody.

While the events and problems were rapidly increasing in Cyprus, many Turkish Cypriots started to be interested in journalism in order to put forward their point of views (Ünlü [1981]; pp. 14-15). Therefore, due to this, there were a lot of newspapers in Cyprus in those years.

Researcher and writer Cemalettin Unlu (1981) explains the history of Turkish and Greek Cypriot media. According to Unlu (1981),

In 1890's Greek Cypriot press was established but only its name was "PRESS". Because Greek Cypriots did their own propaganda by means of the news and they gave false information in their news. All the newspapers only gave ENOSIS information and were agents of propaganda about British colonialism (p. 13).

From that date until today, the common features of the Turkish Cypriot newspapers is "struggle press" or "fighter journalism". As researcher Sabahattin Ismail (1988) mentioned:

When newspapers' publication principles and politics are examined, it can be seen that all newspapers have a goal. This goal is to make the voice of the Turkish Cypriots heard, to protect and defend their rights and interests, to oppose ENOSIS and Cyprus being united with Greece; in short, as Ataturk said: "to stop 'the fading away of the Turkish voice' in Cyprus." Because of this, our press became a *resistance press*. This is the best definition for our press.

There are now twelve daily Turkish newspapers (Afrika, Cumhuriyet Kuzey Kıbrıs, Güneş, Halkın Sesi, Kıbrıs, Kıbrıslı, Ortam, Özgür Düşünce, Spor Dünyası, Vatan, Volkan, Yenidüzen), three weekly Turkish newspapers (Birleşik Kıbrıs, Kıbrıs'ta Sosyalist Gerçek and Yeniçağ), and one weekly Turkish-Greek-English newspaper (Cyprus Dialogue) on the island. Some of the Turkish newspapers support the party line and some of them are ideologically very close to the political parties.

History of Peace Journalism

Peace journalism is a new concept in the academic area and media sector. Although, there are several attempts to establish a global approach to peace journalism, we have to be careful in adapting them to local conditions.

The most prominent peace researcher Johan Galtung^[3] first began using the term ‘Peace Journalism’ in the 1970s. In summary, Peace journalism is defined by Jake Lynch and Annabel Goldrick (2005) as:

Peace journalism uses the insights of conflict analysis and transformation to update the concepts of balance, fairness and accuracy in reporting. Peace journalism provides a new route map tracing the connections between journalists, their sources, the stories they cover and the consequences of their intervention. Peace journalism builds an awareness of non-violence and creativity into the practical job of everyday editing and reporting (p. 5).

As Esra D. Arsan argues, in *Journalism in Conflict and War Periods (Çatışma ve Savaş Dönemlerinde Gazatecilik)* article: “Peace oriented journalism is based on humanity, truth and solutions; considers balance and hands-off attitude in selection of news and use of language; makes the reasons of the problem transparent; establishes empathy with others rather than antagonizing as you and us; tries to prevent violence before it occurs; puts emphases on the foundations of violence that are not apparent (Alankus [2003]; pp. 51-52).”

Peace journalists’ ideologies are to contribute something for peace and prevent conflict. Also every time they support peace, peace journalism is advocating peace. We should look at the alternatives for solving negative effects of media. The most important alternative for media is Peace Journalism. Journalists should be part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

As we mentioned above, media should inform the public fairly by using peace frame while producing news stories about the “other”. Fair news frames for peace journalism news values is that, journalist should look at the multi perspective while they are writing the news stories. If a journalist is writing the news in one perspective such as, give only elite voices^[4] and official resources oriented news it will not fairly the news framing. If journalist increases the number of sources while they are writing the news, it will help to give fair and true information to public.

Journalist-source relationship is defined by Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese (1996) in *Mediating the Message* book as,

[3] Johan Galtung, Peace Professor and Director of the TRANSCEND Peace and Development Network. (www.transcend.org)

[4] If media give only elite voices, sees a conflict as a battle, as a sports arena while they are reporting conflict Johan Galtung (1998) defines this ‘low road’, according to Galtung (1998) ‘low road’ in reporting conflict – chasing wars the elites that run them and a ‘win-lose’ outcome (p. 1). That is why, he urges an alternate route: the ‘high road’ of peace journalism.

Sources have a tremendous effect on mass media content, because journalist can't include in their news reports what they don't want. The most obvious influence occurs when sources withhold information or lie; but they may also influence the news in more subtle ways, by providing the context within which all other information is evaluated, by providing usable information that is easier and cheaper to use than that from other sources (what Gandy [1982] calls "information subsidies"), and by monopolizing the journalists' time so that they don't have an opportunity to seek out sources with alternative views (p. 179).

Current journalism news values are conflict oriented and it has become paradox with UNESCO^[5] universal journalism principles. The second principle says that, "journalist is opposite to war", but in conventional journalism war is good news, because newspapers circulation will increase.

When we look at peace journalism it seems directly opposite to conventional journalism, however we should not forget that peace journalism is not an invention. Conventional journalism went far from society problems, and became the power of government.

Peace journalism just wants to change these paradoxes within the journalism profession. As Esra D. Arslan (2003) in *Journalism in Conflict and War Period (Çatışma ve Savaş Dönemlerinde Gazetecilik)* argues, in the conflict situation journalists should investigate alternatives in order to solve the problem (Alankus [2003]; p.123). Conflict resolution is the alternative solution technique for journalism.

According to Ross Howard (2002):

Journalists should seek out other parties and other points of view. They should not only repeat old grievances by the old elites. Journalists should examine what the parties are seeking and the possibility for withdrawal, compromise or transcendence. Journalists should write about these possibilities. With conflict analysis, journalists can understand what diplomats and negotiators are trying to do, and can report it more reliably. With conflict analysis, journalists can identify more sources to go to for information (p. 13).

...If we can develop a new language and if we can add C (common ground) and the solution proposed by Joann Byrd, ombudsman of the Washington Post, alongside formula of 5 w 1 h that we do not usually implement (Ozgunes and Terzis, 1999: 60), we may contribute to the alleviation of conflicts (Tilic [2001]; p. 208).

[5] In the article 2 of the Report of UNESCO on communications tools, we apparently stated that: "Communication tools should be in favor of peace and should be used with mentality for strengthen the peace (Tilic [2001]; p. 196)."

As we know that the primary role of the journalist is informing society. Journalists inform society with news stories, however while journalists are informing society news framing and news selection is important. In conflict or wartime news, framing and selection which are used in the news media is more vital. For instance, in the First World War, journalists did not inform society enough. Tony Harcup argues, in *Journalism Principles and Practice* (2004) that: “If people really knew, the war would be stopped tomorrow. But of course they don’t know and can’t know. The correspondents don’t write and the censorship would pass the truth” (p. 62). Another example is US coverage of the Vietnam War. Daya Kishan Thussu and Des Freedman (2003) explained how media played a vital role and helped to finish US-Vietnam war. “One of the key turning points of the war was the transmission of a special report by the country’s most celebrated news anchor, Walter Cronkite of CBS (p. 5)”. These examples show that, the role of the media in the conflict process is serious, but because of the monopolization of media industries, media start, to become tool of the special interest groups and this is an important obstacle in peace journalism.

Piers Robinson (2002) in *The CNN Effect* entitled book, argues how media coverage is elite oriented he says that “...news media coverage is indexed to elite opinion is equated... (p. 14).” Another example how news is dominated by the elite part of the society is Herbert Gans’s (1979) analysis. Herbert Gans (1979), in his analysis of CBS, NBC, Newsweek, and Time, found that news is dominated by the “knowns,” people already prominent (71 percent of television stories, 76 percent of magazine columns in 1967) (cited in Shoemaker & Reese [1996]; p. 48).

If we turn back to peace journalist we should say that, theoretically it seems like a good model for journalism profession and it can be acceptable, however, when we look at the practicality of this model we need to look over the changes of dominant journalism practices. As Suleyman Irvan (2005) mentioned in a newspaper article, “Peace journalism adopts the view that conflicts between societies and countries can be solved without resort to violence and journalist also can play an effective role in this process (Basin newspaper p. 24).”

Finally we should say that, we can use the peace journalism approach in Cyprus media in order for a solution to the Cyprus conflict. Of course there are some obstacles such as the ownership structure of the Cyprus media and political pressure on media. We can increase the number of obstacles but if Cypriot journalists really want to contribute something for peace in Cyprus, they should come together first of all. As Irvan (2005) argues, “Organizations of

journalism both in south and north of Cyprus should come together and make an effort to establish the understanding of peace journalism on the island (p. 24).”

Burkhard Blasi (2004) gives a summary about the peace journalism approach with his *Peace Journalism and the News Production Process* article, “...balanced, all-sided, truth-oriented, win-win oriented coverage [in the news] (p. 10).” Dov Shinar (2004) gives ideas to solve negative coverage and selection of current media. Shinar (2004) argues, “...on increasing the news value of peace coverage...change media structures and professional code of conduct (p.1)...”, he continued, “...overcome the customarily negative (or at least indifferent) media attitude towards peace and to increase the news-value of peace coverage (p. 2)”.

Gatekeeping Theory

In 1947 Kurt Lewin first used the “Gatekeeping” term. Kurt Lewin was a social psychologist and his assistant David Manning White expanded this theory into the communication field in 1950. White (1950) researched about news selection process of wire editors at Midwestern newspaper. White told the editors to write a reason on copy regarding why he selected or rejected the stories. When he collected the answer he noticed that traditional news principles: significant, controversial, unusual, and interesting to the audience (Harmon [1998]; p. 75). According to White, wire editors were making final decisions therefore he was seeing the wire editors as the most important person of the newspaper.

In White’s gatekeeping model, gatekeeper or Mr. Gate (White’s term) plays an important role. Mr. Gate or the editor selects the news inside the source of news item. After this selection, he decides which news is all right for their audience. According to White, “Quality of writing and “way of writing” are also factors for news selection (Zhou [2001]; p. 4). Not only being on the agenda, importance, interest, timeless were factors during the selection process but also style of writing of the reporter is a factor. The style of writing of the reporter is important and we can add important factors during the editors’ selection. Generally editors select conflict-oriented news rather than peace-oriented, not only because of Western journalism values, but because of the newspaper’s ideology. Bad news creates more sensational impact and curiosity in society; this way circulation/rating of the newspaper/TV increases.

Anyone, who just looks at journalism values, can see easily that conflict is good news. Unfortunately, every country has these kinds of journalism values. Journalist’s experience,

attitudes, expectations, news judgment and personal values were factors in news selection process.

Agenda-Setting Theory

As McCombs and Yüksel (2004) argues that: “Agenda-setting theory basically explains how and why the public learn how much importance to attach to a topic from the emphasis placed on it in news coverage. In the words of the theory, the mass media of communication set the agenda for public attention and lay the groundwork for public opinion” (pp. 328-329).

In other words, “the idea that media don’t tell people what to think, but what to think about” (Baran and Davis [2003]; p. 311). This is an effect of media or journalist on people, if so, we should be looking at who sets the media agenda. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) cite five major categories: (1) Influence from individual media workers, (2) influences of media routines, (3) organizational influences on content, (4) influences on content from outside media organizations, and (5) ideology (Cited in McCombs and Yüksel [2004]; p. 383).

The term agenda setting was coined by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in their study of media coverage and voter attitudes in 1968 US presidential election campaign (Harcup [2004]; p. 63). They found that media has powerful effect on the voters’s opinion. In this respect journalist can use this powerful effect for influencing public opinion about building peace and conflict preventing. McQuail (1994) points out that the agenda-setting hypothesis: “Mass media news and information reflect the content and order of priority of issues. This representation of issues in the mass media exerts an independent effect on issue content and on relative salience in public opinion” (p. 357).

When we look at the beginning of agenda setting research hypothesis is very close to this study. “Agenda setting research began 25 years ago with a simple hypothesis: News coverage

influences our personal perceptions of what are the most important issues of the day” (McCombs and Bell [1996]; p. 105). Agenda setting theory suggest that news coverage influences perceptions of the peoples, in other words, news coverage of the media are important because it is influential.

As Maxwell McCombs (2004) defined the agenda setting and frame connections with this words: “Applied to the media agenda, a frame is ‘the central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration” (p. 87).

Framing Theory

Todd Gitlin (1980) first introduced the concept of framing. As McCombs and Bell’s (1996) definition of framing is, “news coverage of any social movement can use a variety of framing strategies. The news can describe the scope of the social problem, critique alternative proposals for coping with the problem, or detail the tactical moves of activists and officials (p. 106).”

The news media framing is very important especially in the conflict situation, because media “telling us what to think about a story before we have had a chance to think about it for ourselves (Parenti [1993]; p. 201).” Framing is defined by Michael Parenti (1993) as, “Framing is achieved in the way the news is packaged, the amount of exposure, the placement (front page or back, lead story or last), the tone of presentation (sympathetic or slighting), the accompanying headlines and visual effects, and the labeling and vocabulary (p. 201).

Media frames is defined by Gitlin (1980) in Gadi Wolfsfeld (1997) *Media and Political Conflict* entitled book as,

Media frames are persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual. Frames enable journalists to process large amounts of

information, to assign it to cognitive categories, and to package it for efficient relay to their audiences (p. 33).

METHODS

A questionnaire and interview were applied in this study. In the questionnaire, there are 37 statements, 30 of them test statements about peace journalism, and 7 were demographic statements that were: age, gender, organization, duty, experience, salary and education.

In the interview the author attempted to understand how North Cyprus news editors select the news items to be published. The advantage of the interviews was to allow respondents to take the discussion wherever they wished. The author met 6 newspaper editors, 1 agency editor and 1 television editor that is seventy percent of the North Cyprus news media.

In the interview the author asked five questions in order to find news selection criteria of news editors. These questions are: “How do you make news selection? What is your precedence, your newspapers journalist’s news or Turkish News Agency – Cyprus bulletin news?, While you are selecting the news, if you do not have enough space to publish the news what can you do? How you are selecting and making headlines? Which one is the most important for you: title of your news source or speech of your source?”

DISCUSSION, RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

Peace journalism appears as a counter alternative approach to currently accepted journalism understanding in mass communication sector. Peace journalism as an alternative gradually finds acceptance and expands among academics in communication field. It is possible to argue that peace journalism is the most effective journalism understanding to make positive contribution in conflict zones of the world, if it is duly exercised.

This new journalism understanding might be misunderstood due to the concept of “peace” in its title. Having more attention on the concept of peace journalism reveals the fact that peace journalism is an outcome of problems in implementation in current practice. Today, a few journalist uses peace journalism type which is an alternative to traditional journalism style.

Since peace journalism is being recognized in academic community day by day, it might be more popular among journalists as well in near future. In comparison to journalists whom chose traditional journalism, peace journalists have to complete more difficult processes. For instance, peace journalists spend more time in news reporting in order to give more sources. Peace journalists always have to be focused, investigator, process oriented, critical for balanced and quality news due to time limits. However, many journalists make concessions in quality in order to convey their news faster to readers and audience. All those constitute major risks for peace journalism practicing at the beginning.

Drawing attention of journalists is the most important for peace journalism. It is noteworthy to mention again that peace journalism assumption can not be successful and productive if unilaterally implemented.

Results and Conclusion

This study shows that in North Cyprus news-writing journalists were 76.6 percent in accordance with the peace journalism oriented statements in theory. Questionnaire results show North Cyprus news writing journalists news values are peace oriented.

Questionnaire results have shown that:

- News-writing journalists display the unseen effects of conflict on the society.
- News writing journalists in North Cyprus accept the statements: “A journalist should take on an active role in trying to bring the people within conflict areas together and maintaining peace” and “Do not to transmit only the peace messages of the elite group.”
- North Cyprus journalists strive to find out who had metaphorically thrown the first stone.
- 76.6 percent of the participating journalists agree with peace journalism oriented statements.
- Female journalists, older journalists, experienced journalists, and highly-educated journalists are more peace journalism oriented than male, younger, inexperienced, and unqualified (apprentice) journalists.

The results of interview show that:

- Generally editors give precedence for the Cyprus issue oriented news. As well as that, they are careful that the news must interest a broad mass within society. The most important difficulty facing the newspapers is “reporter problem”; therefore they are using the Turkish News Agency – Cyprus (TAK) news bulletin.
- Most of the editors’ news criteria are the same. Generally, Cyprus problem oriented stories, accidents, robberies and crime stories are the most popular for the North Cyprus print media editors.
- Almost all of them use the Turkish News Agency news bulletin as one of their main news source.
- The final decision of the news selection for publication rests with the editors in consultation with the owners of the newspapers.
- What matters to the North Cyprus news media is not the source or the person/organizations providing/making the news but most importantly what matter is the content and the subject of the news matter.

North Cyprus print media’s news selection is “subjective”. Editors in the North Cyprus print media select the news to be published according to their newspaper’s news publishing policy. Furthermore, the editors make heavy use of the Turkish News Agency – as well as the Cyprus news bulletin in their publication decision-making process.

In summary, this paper exposes the news publishing practices, news selection and peace journalism principles of the thus far unknown North Cyprus news media and its contribution (positive/negative) to the ongoing peace process in the Cyprus problem.

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