Article

Awareness towards Peace Journalism among Foreign Correspondents in Africa

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Abstract
Much has been said about the news media's role in instigating war, conflict and violence. Less attention has been paid to the news media's role in mitigating conflict. Criticism has been directed towards the ways in which journalists and war correspondents cover conflict with an emphasis on violence, suffering, polarization of the views of main stakeholders, and over-simplification of the underlying causes of conflict. The growing literature and scholarship around Peace Journalism stands as a response to this. In the context of the African continent, further critique has been levelled against frames and narratives of war, conflict and violence grounded in Western epistemologies and dominant discourses of African conflicts and stakeholders. Based on data collected from interviews with a selected group of journalists working on—and covering—the African continent, the article assesses awareness towards alternative narratives and news frames, as well as attitudes towards alternative practices and models for journalism. Particular attention is paid to ideas and responses regarding Peace Journalism as an alternative model for reporting.

Keywords
Africa; foreign reporting; Peace Journalism; war journalism

1. Introduction

While the news media's role in instigating war, conflict and violence has been documented, less attention has been paid to the news media's role in mitigating conflict (see Bratic & Schirch, 2007, p. 7). Criticism has been directed towards the ways in which journalists and war correspondents cover conflicts with an emphasis on violence, suffering, polarization of the views of main stakeholders, and over-simplification of the underlying causes of conflict. In the context of the African continent, further critique has been levelled against frames and narratives of war, conflict and violence grounded in Western epistemologies and dominant discourses of African conflicts and stakeholders. The growing literature and scholarship around peace journalism stands as a response to this (see Allan, 2011; Brock-Utne, 2011; Dente Ross, 2007; Galtung, 2000; Hyde Clarke, 2011; Lynch, 2008; Lynch & Gal-

tung, 2010; Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005; Rodny-Gumede, 2012, 2015; Theranian, 2002).

The research is based on qualitative semi-structured interviews with a select group of foreign correspondents covering conflicts on the African continent and assesses awareness towards: 1) the critique levelled against foreign reporting and the reporting of Africa and conflicts on the African continent; 2) alternative narratives and news frames, as well as alternative practices and models for journalism—in particular, Peace Journalism (PJ).

2. Critique Levelled Against Foreign Coverage and Coverage of War and Violence

Studies have established that there is an overwhelming emphasis on war and conflict in the news media. Less attention is paid to peace and peaceful solutions to violence (Bratic & Schirch, 2007; Carruthers, 2011; Gal-

tung & Ruge, 1965; Hyde-Clarke, 2011, 2012; Lynch, 2008; Lynch & Galtung, 2010; Rodny-Gumede, 2012, 2015). Much has been said of the news media's explicit role in instigating war, hatred and violence. Carruthers (2011, p. 5) argues that the news media thrives on a logic that seeks out conflict and emphasizes "bad news". War and conflict sell newspapers and journalists go for stories that will make the headlines (Carruthers, 2011). Criticism has therefore been directed towards the ways in which journalists and war correspondents cover conflicts with an emphasis on violence, suffering, sensationalization of coverage, polarization of the views of main stakeholders, and oversimplification of the underlying causes of conflict, with the result that reality is distorted and ethics and professional standards forsaken.

Galtung (1986) argues that coverage of war and conflict conforms to what he labels "war journalism". War journalism has a value bias towards violence and violent groups that leads audiences to overvalue violent responses to conflict and ignore non-violent alternatives (Galtung, 1986)—a militarist bias, "a reflexive predisposition to favour military force over non-violent methods of conflict resolution" (Roach, quoted in Carruthers, 2011, p. 26). This is the result of news reporting conventions and frames that only focus on physical effects of conflict, while ignoring psychological impacts (Galtung, 1986). War journalism is also biased towards reporting only the differences between parties, rather than similarities, previous agreements, and progress on common issues and it also values elite interests over other stakeholder interests (Galtung, 1986). War journalism focuses on the here and now, ignoring causes and outcomes and assumes that the needs of one side can only be met by the other side's compromise or defeat (Galtung, 1986).

War journalism and the role of war correspondents is steeped in a somewhat romantic lore, but is actually beset by problems of allegiance, responsibility, truth and balance (Zelizer & Allan, 2002). These are problems that also arise in the daily grind of journalism, but they do not lack resolvability and editorial control that a war or conflict situation presents (Zelizer & Allan, 2002). War correspondents tend to be parachuted into conflicts with little prior knowledge of the conflict or the stakeholders and without the backup of an editorial team and the time to reflect upon issues of the practices and ethics of journalism (Carruthers, 2011; Lynch & Galtung, 2010). The role of the journalist is to get the job done, cover the conflict, and to make sense of events to audiences often far removed from the issues on the ground, both geographically and perceptually. In a war or conflict zone, access to sources and information is often scarce and journalists tend to band together to feed off each others' "networks"; pack journalism and ideas of embedded journalism are therefore never far behind (Duncan, 2012, 2013). As

such, the reporting of war and conflict becomes a litmus test for journalism practices and, more broadly, ethics (Zelizer & Allan, 2002). As a response to these practices, scholars have advanced the idea of PJ as an alternative model for reporting conflict.

3. Peace Journalism

As previously stated, much attention has been paid to the role of the news media in instigating, maintaining, and exacerbating violence through their news coverage. Less attention has been paid to the media's role in preventing, mediating and ameliorating conflict. In essence, the news media gives peace less of a chance than war and conflict (Carruthers, 2011; Lynch & Galtung, 2010).

The term "Peace Journalism" (PJ) was first coined by media scholar Johan Galtung in the 1970s (see Cottle, 2006) and stands as a response to hegemonic discourse within media and communication studies that have for a long time framed coverage of conflict as binaries of us and them, war and peace, good and bad (Seaga Shaw, Lynch, & Hackett, 2011). Instead, PJ puts the emphasis on conflict resolution, the underlying causes of conflict, alternative news sources, and a use of language that does not over-emphasise conflict frames.

As opposed to war journalism as set out by Galtung (1986), PJ is a form of journalism that frames stories in a way that encourages analysis of conflicts, their root causes and emphasizes non-violent responses to conflict during periods of war and also during periods of peace and absence of open conflict (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, p. 5). On a practical level, PJ occurs when journalists select which stories to report and how to report them in ways that "create opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict" (Lynch & McGoldrick, 2005, p. 5). PJ aims to ventilate peace initiatives from whatever quarter and to explain the underlying causes of conflict and avoid polarisation of the parties involved (Dente Ross, 2007, p. 80). As such, PJ tries to transcend reified practices in order to alter journalistic practices—and the subsequent mediated public discourse—to a more inclusive range of people, ideas and visions (Dente Ross, 2007, p. 80). Thus, PJ addresses issues around journalistic practices in relation to story selection, presentation and sources, with the aim of facilitating non-violent responses to conflict.

Lynch and Galtung (2010, p. 13) argue that where war journalism is reactive and makes conflict and war opaque and secret, putting the focus on the visible effects of violence, PJ rather focuses on the invisible effects of war and violence, makes conflict transparent, and is proactive and truth-orientated rather than propaganda-orientated. Also, where war journalism embraces an "us versus them" mentality and focuses on violence and a final victor/victory, PJ involves a conflict-orientated analysis of the underlying causes of the

conflict and seeks solutions (Lynch & Galtung, 2010, p. 13). As such, PJ tries to give a voice to all parties, including the voiceless; it is people-orientated rather than elite-orientated (Lynch & Galtung, 2010, p. 52). In this way, PJ works against existing journalistic practices of relying exclusively on official sources and offers a way for journalism to provide a more nuanced style of reporting. While both war journalism and PJ are descriptive of reality, PJ tries to take in more reality (Lynch & Galtung, 2010, p. 52).

Lynch and McGoldrick (2012) show how television news inserts taken from mainstream news bulletins can be reworked according to a PJ model and can analyze audience responses to news items coded as "war journalism" and "peace journalism", respectively. From the PJ model, Lynch and McGoldrick (2012) establish a set of evaluative criteria and re-frame news items from two South African television news programmes and four newspapers according to a PJ model of news framing. The news items were then shown to focus groups that either saw the original news items or the reworked news items conforming to a PJ framing of news journalism. Lynch and McGoldrick (2012) find that PJ proved to be ideational in the sense that the focus group that viewed the PJ-adapted news items were more likely to perceive structural and/or systemic explanations for problems and more likely to see opportunities for therapeutic and/or cooperative remedies to be applied through exertions of political agency from different levels.

However, it is important to note that, however noble the aim of PJ may be, many injunctions have been made against the model. One of the main points of critique have centred on the lack of resources for implementing PJ and the practices it advocates, particularly at a time when media houses are facing financial constraints and the downscaling of staff. Kempf (2003, 2007) also points out that PJ is unlikely to succeed unless there is a serious drive to train journalists and alter institutional norms and that reporters need to be given proper time for research and the resources to do so (Hackett, 2007; Hanitzsch, 2004; Lyon, 2007; McMahon & Chow-White, 2011;). With fewer resources dedicated to research and training in newsrooms around the world, PJ is more likely to be a challenger ethos rather than practice (Rodny-Gumede, 2015). Other injunctions made against the model have focused on PJ as being too broad in its conceptualisations and scope, being too normative, philosophical and "utopian" (Hackett (2007, 2011) and drawing on an underlying epistemology of naïve realism based on assumptions of causal and linear media effects (Hanitzsch, 2004, p. 483). In itself, "peace" creates the impression that PJ's only focus is on peace and conflict resolution, as it reports only the "good news", providing little else than "sunshine journalism".

Labels aside, is there merit in rethinking some of the practices with regard to how conflicts are reported in light of the critique levelled against the news media and foreign coverage in particular? What do journalists covering war and conflict on the African continent say about these issues and is there an awareness of, and openness towards, alternative models and practices?

4. Methodology

The research is based on in-depth semi-structured interviews with 17 journalists from the following foreign news organisations and media outlets (based in Johannesburg) during 2013 and 2014: Al Jazeera, BBC (2 interviewees), AFP, AP (2 interviewees), Reuters, CNN, CBS, DPA (German Press Association), CCTV, Swedish Public Broadcaster (SVT), German Television (Deutshe Welle), *LA Times*, *The Guardian* U.K., *The Financial Times*, *Dagens Nyheter* (Sweden).

The choice of interviewing only foreign correspondents is based on two major considerations. Firstly, South African news media employs very few correspondents for their Africa coverage; in effect, most South African-run foreign bureaus have been closed down and the South African news media instead relies mainly on stringers and partnerships with international news agencies. Secondly, the critique levelled against the coverage of the African continent and how foreign correspondents and news agencies carry out their mandate—as set out in the literature on foreign coverage and war reporting—is specifically directed towards the foreign bureaus.

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were preferred over other data collection methods in order to gather as in-depth and as rich a set of data possible and to fully explore the way in which foreign correspondents carry out the work they are doing, how they think about the work they are doing, whether the critique levelled against the coverage of Africa is justified and whether there are attempts to address this and evaluate coverage and practices. Semi-structured interviews also lend themselves to small-scale qualitative and exploratory studies such as this (cf. DuPlooy, 2009; Drever, 2000). Qualitative interview data also shows the complex interplay between structure and agency in the media as articulated by journalists themselves.

Semi-structured interviews also generate open responses which allow the interviewee to articulate his or her views at length; this limits the possibility of responses being prompted or limited by the options of responses on offer and lends themselves to the *post hoc* development of categories for analysis that might be more appropriate than any preordained scheme of categorisation (Deacon, Pickering, Golding, & Mordich, 1999, p. 63). This is an important feature of this research, where the interviews have generated subthemes, which have subsequently been explored and incorporated into the data analysis.

However, the interview as a scientific method is not

unproblematic. In approaching the interview material, one needs to be extra sensitive towards issues of the subjectivity of the interviewee as well as accuracy in recalling events that happened in the past (Deacon et al., 1999, pp. 300-303). Furthermore, interviews without actual observation of conduct and procedure can only tell us what the people in the news media think they do or wish they could do. Hence, any researcher needs to be wary of the fact that discrepancies can exist between what editors and journalists say they do or should do, and what they actually do (Williams, 2003, p. 108). As such, "all answers need to be appraised carefully and occasionally taken with a pinch of salt" (Deacon et al., 1999, p. 62).

Journalists also often feel that social scientists who study the news media speak a language that they mistrust and misunderstand. Social scientists speak of "constructing the news", of "making news", and of the "social construction of reality" (Schudson, 2000, p. 176)—concepts that connote that there is something amiss in the way that the media reports. Media scholars, especially those who occupy themselves with the study and teaching of journalism, often attest to the difficulties in bridging the gap between academy and praxis (cf. Tomaselli & Caldwell, 2002; Zelizer, 2004a, 2004b). In the case of this study, all interviewees were told from the start that the focus of the study was specifically on the critique levelled against foreign coverage and the ways in which foreign correspondents both carry out their practice and how they frame stories.

The sample was drawn from the database of registered correspondents of the Foreign Correspondent Association of Southern Africa. Twenty-five correspondents were initially approached and finally interviews were conducted with 17 foreign correspondents over a three-week period from 23 February to 12 March 2015 in Johannesburg, South Africa. One interview was however conducted via email with a correspondent based in Nairobi. On average, the face-to-face interviews were an hour long. In order to reduce any misunderstandings, and for the purpose of recording responses as accurately as possible, all interviewees were asked to give their consent for the interview to be tape-recorded and these interviews were later transcribed. In instances where interviewees did not agree to such recording, the interview was recorded as accurately as possible by hand.

A set of 12 pre-defined questions was posed to all interviewees. In many instances, these generated follow-up questions that were recorded and later organized and analysed under seven broad themes: Knowledge and understanding of the continent; Coverage and story selection; Constraints and impediments for improving coverage; Framing; Acknowledgment of the critique levelled against coverage of the African continent; Role conceptualizations; Awareness and openness to alternative practice.

5. Interview Findings

5.1. Knowledge and Understanding of the Continent

To contextualize and put the responses from the interviewees in context, all interviewees were asked questions relating to their own knowledge, experience and interest in the region/continent. This provides some interesting data as to "who" the foreign correspondents are, their backgrounds and the knowledge base and experience acquired and required for their jobs.

All interviewees have three years or more experience in domestic coverage and most have two years or more experience from other countries/regions—except two interviewees with no foreign coverage experience before being posted to South Africa as Africa correspondents. At the time they were interviewed, all interviewees had had one or more years' experience in covering South Africa, Southern Africa and/or the African continent. It is important to note that foreign correspondents are more often than not stationed at one major duty station—in this case, South Africa, where the main news bureau is based and from which correspondents are sent on particular stories or longer assignments to countries around the continent.

When asked why South Africa was chosen over other duty stations, career planning seems to be a major factor, despite the fact that South Africa seemingly falls rather low on the list of duty stations which are seen as high profile and good for career advancement. Nine out of 17 interviewees say that their current position will be good for career advancement, but 10 out of 17 interviewees say that other duty stations might have been better for career advancement and quote duty stations such as Washington, Brussels and "China" as more high-profile duty stations. Of the 17 interviewees, 13 chose to be stationed in South Africa. Seemingly, there are other factors, apart from career advancement, that play a role in the choice of duty station. In this regard, the interviewees who chose to be stationed in South Africa state that they did so for very particular reasons, mainly emanating from previous experiences of South Africa, southern Africa and the continent, an interest in "Africa" and/or a particular knowledge base—often from studies undertaken which were related to African studies or development studies. However, two of the interviewees specifically stated that they had no real interest in "Africa" but were stationed here nonetheless. Nine out of 17 interviewees have a tertiary degree or educational background, which indicates formal knowledge of the continent and/or Southern Africa and South Africa in particular.

5.2. Coverage and Story Selection

In terms of a broader articulation of the focus of coverage, as well as their own understanding and commit-

ment to covering the African continent, all interviewees recognize that the African continent receives proportionally little coverage. Many also mentioned that despite being stationed in South Africa, and despite South Africa—Johannesburg in particular—being the financial hub of Africa, the South African story is no longer the "biggest" story. There is also a move away from coverage of South Africa to the broader global South. For example, there is an increased emphasis on South Africa in BRICS, but it would seem that this story has received less attention than, for example, coverage on China in Africa. As this journalist says:

"The BRICS story is not necessarily a big story. South Africa is also the odd partner in the mix. This said, financial coverage with regards to South African investments and economic links to the rest of the continent cannot be ignored. There is also a growing focus on China and Chinese investments in Africa." (Reuters' respondent)

This is also confirmed through the questions asked around coverage with regard to coverage focusing on the continent. This journalist argues:

"There is a larger focus on elections, this also true for domestic coverage, particularly with the American one coming up. More attention is also being paid to terrorism on the continent and its global repercussions." (CBS respondent)

Another colleague adds to this:

"Terrorism is high on the agenda. So is the environment, however often framed from a natural resource perspective, oil and 'fracking' for example. Of course, we also have the Ebola story." (BBC respondent 1)

Furthermore, most of the journalists interviewed also confirm that many preconceived ideas exist about the African continent, with 16 out of 17 interviewees stating that that the most prominent of all preconceived ideas is the idea that Africa, bar South Africa in certain circumstances, is a "country". As these two journalists say:

"It is sad but the African continent is often seen as one country, as such individual nations are lumped together as if they were a homogenous whole. Of course, some of this is changing and the BBC is also has very good world focus and an Africa business focus that might change some of these perceptions." (BBC respondent 2)

"Our audiences would distinguish between South Africa and the rest of the continent; however, as a whole Africa is seen as one country, at best maybe

some will make the distinction between an axis of South, North, West and East. We often have to add a regional tag to any country specific coverage to put people in the picture." (CNN respondent)

This also links to the critique levelled against coverage of the continent and how the interviewees articulate and acknowledge this critique and the changes they would like to see, including perceived impediments towards changing coverage.

5.3. Acknowledgment of the Critique Levelled Against Coverage of the African Continent

Many of the interviewees acknowledge the critique levelled against the coverage of Africa for perceivably over emphasizing conflict, poverty, maladministration and, in later years, terrorism. This journalist says:

"There is a clear focus on the negative, very few stories have and can actually have a positive angle. Of course the more you get to know the continent and different countries including regional cultures and commonalities, your reporting will inevitably be more nuanced." (AFP respondent)

Similarly another colleague argues that:

"As much as we can critique coverage for being one sided or steeped in stereotypes of the Continent as well as its 'people', I do not think that this is necessarily the fault of individual journalists. I think that view is about 10 years out of date. The BBC, CNN, the Guardian and others now do quite a lot of stories that counter the old stereotypes of war, famine, disease, dictators etc. That said, of course some of the stereotypes persist in some outlets. I think that mainly comes from editors sitting in faraway places, some of whom have never been to Africa, which makes it frustrating for correspondents on the ground who have a much more nuanced view." (*Guardian* respondent)

Yet another colleague expands on this by saying:

"There are real issues that need attention and I think we need to make sure that we do our job properly and that we do not add to or reify many of the preconceived ideas that already exist. I am absolutely committed to this Continent and what I do, and even though you sometimes despair over comments made or stories that you feel could have been covered in a different manner, I do not think that any of my colleagues are bad journalists or that they harbour any particular racists or pre-conceived ideas that would influence coverage." (Al Jazeera respondent)

There is an acknowledgement of the critique levelled against the coverage of the continent, but most interviewees also say that there are real constraints put on foreign reporting that sometimes hamper a more nuanced coverage.

5.4. Constraints and Impediments for Improving Coverage

With regard to impediments and constraints towards improving coverage, time constraints and lack of resources are brought up by most interviewees. Of the 17 interviewees, 12 state that stories have to be filed very quickly; 14 interviewees cite lack of resources and 11 argue that in particular there is a lack of resources to cover longer historical processes or narratives. As this journalist says:

> "The bigger news organizations are of course better resourced and rely on permanent staff rather than stringers and freelancers. They tend to have a better network of people in different regions as well to tap in to. As much as time is often scares on breaking stories and resources not always there, it is the ad hoc stories that could provide for a different take on issues that would need better financing. Big resources were dedicated to major events like the World Cup, death of Nelson Mandela, Oscar Pistorius trial or Ebola outbreak. I suspect most of the money goes on logistics: flying to west Africa to cover Ebola, and paying a driver and fixer there every day, is an expensive business. A lot of organisations threw a lot of people at the Mandela story. This can mean that smaller stories sometimes have to be covered from afar: a country like Angola is very costly to get to and rarely features prominently. So there's an imbalance." (*Guardian* respondent)

However, the journalists employed by larger news organisations also cite lack of resources as an impediment to improve coverage. This BBC correspondent for example says:

> "Lack of resources may be a bigger factor and/or impediment for smaller news outlets but does concern us as well. Budget cuts are real and impacts on staffing and what we can achieve." (BBC respondent 2)

Many of the interviewees also cite the lack of infrastructure in some locations, and while 14 out of 17 interviewees cite lack of access to infrastructure as an impediment, all interviewees acknowledge the fact that modern technology has addressed this to a certain degree. This is highlighted by this journalist:

> "Resources or the lack thereof, is not only about

money. We have had staff cuts, and bureaus closed. There is also infrastructure to be considered, new cheaper communication technologies have definitely changed the way we work but do not always take away the lack of very basic infrastructure, power shortages can be a real frustration on some assignments." (DPA respondent)

Another impediment often quoted is the lack of resources for research and also that fixers are absolutely crucial to gaining access to information and sites. These journalists say:

> "I have to make sure that I budget for the time spent on research, it is implied in the job that we do, but still it needs to be factored in. The time spent otherwise on just chasing interviews will generate little. There is no excuse for sloppy research but resources also have to be dedicated." (BBC respondent 1)

> "We sit with a situation where less resources are dedicated to foreign reporting, as such there is a certain amount of creativity needed to get the real, fuller story out there. I will not be able to get the stories that I want without someone who can get me connected, set up interviews etc. Fixers are not sources but often an invaluable resource to get to sources." (DPA respondent)

However, another journalist emphasizes contacts over research and says:

> "There is no way one can get around the importance of contacts or fixers. As much as we can rely on research, we cannot get by without contacts on the ground. Much research done has to be verified." (*Financial Times* respondent)

Furthermore, many of the interviewees acknowledge that the "pooling" together of foreign journalists—thought of as "pack journalism"—is hard to avoid. As pre-planned events feature high on the agenda, foreign correspondent often know where they will be and what stories they will cover, and they also share information with each other. There is no direct competition for stories around pre-planned events, apart from being larger news organizations or smaller ones. As these two journalists say:

> "I am in no direct competition with anyone else, bar other Swedish media present on the Continent, such as the Swedish radio and *Dagens Nyheter*, and it is unlikely that my stories will be picked up by any of my international colleagues." (SVT respondent)

> "There is no real competition for stories or scoops.

More than anything I think we work alongside each other and recognizing that we are colleagues often covering the same stories." (AFP respondent)

There is also a sense that it is prudent to share resources when resources are scarce; in remote locations journalists are often forced to do so. This journalist argues:

"For many stories out of South Africa the foreign corps tends to stay at the same hotels, go to the same locations, attend the same press briefings etc. This is a common practice. Often you have to set up very quickly and for smaller news organizations it might be necessary to share certain resources. I think we are all averse to sharing sources and fixers though. I might ask a colleague for some tips or help on certain stories but at the end of the day you want to have your unique inside on a story." (*Financial Times* respondent)

Overall, there is a sense that stories need to be geared towards and tailored to a domestic audience and the knowledge base of domestic audiences. Of course, many of the correspondents interviewed file stories for both domestic and world news bulletins and programmes. This raises questions around role orientations and how foreign correspondents look upon their own roles and how they articulate ideas around the public interest and the perceived impact of their stories. This will be elaborated on later in this article.

Another impediment cited is the perceived lack of interest in African stories, with 15 out of 17 interviewees stating that stories about Africa or emanating from the continent are not made a priority as there is little interest from the audience. This also seems a particular issue for smaller news markets. And while larger news organisations, such as the BBC, have direct historical links to the continent, smaller news outlets and nations and more remote news markets have to justify their stories on other grounds and work to create an interest among domestic audiences. This Swedish journalist says:

"Sweden is a small country. I am often happy to get any coverage at all and have to work hard to sell stories to my editors at home unless there is an immediate interest in a story, such as an election, or conflict." (SVT respondent)

It is also clear from the interviews that journalists have to work harder to submit their stories, unless there is an immediate conflict/war situation or pre-planned event, such as an election, major summit or official government/state ceremony. The idea of selling other stories and the difficulties faced in doing so is confirmed by all the interviewees. This journalist says:

"It is not always so that bad news is emphasized

over other stories; however, an immediate crisis will have to be covered if deemed significant enough or relevant to a domestic audience or a global audience. Other stories are covered but will not be given the same priority. It is the bigger impact stories that get covered." (Deutshe Welle respondent)

As such, there is also an acknowledgement of the fact that to stand a chance to be published, stories of or from the continent need to conform to thematic issues such as conflict, elections/leadership change, natural resources (often in relation to domestic economic interests), natural conflicts, and domestic political interest. As this journalist says:

"The stories right now are terrorism but also El Niño, both stories with a direct link and relevance to American domestic coverage and politics." (CBS respondent)

5.5. Framing

The idea of news frames and the fact that stories have to conform to certain frames or pre-set news evaluation/worthiness criteria is confirmed by all interviewees. This is exemplified through the following responses:

"There is always a domestic angle to consider unless the story is pitched for the world news. Domestic stories are often hinged on a clear relevance angle, world news of course less so and this is where we see the conflict, terrorism or natural disaster stories." (BBC respondent 1)

Likewise another journalist states:

"We do have to conform to certain frames or angles. War and conflict might feature prominently and will always make headlines, however there is an increasing focus on economic news, often dependent on a clear domestic angle though." (*LA Times* respondent)

Correspondingly, arts and culture, the environment and sport coverage is not viable unless connected to the thematic issues set out previously; for example, conflict, elections/leadership change, natural resources, natural disasters, and domestic political interest. This journalist says:

"Of course sport is a beat on its own, art and culture less so. There is space for this as well but only if there is a real angle to the story that talks to something already known to our readers. Artists struggling amidst war, artists highlighting aspects of political conflict, etc." (AFP respondent)

All interviewees also confirm that pre-planned events get more and "better" coverage unless there is an imminent crisis or disaster with clear domestic angles or long-term global implications, as with terrorism and stories related to terrorism.

Furthermore, 12 out of 17 interviewees say that human-interest stories are often disregarded, unless directly related to broader thematic issues, as in the case of art stories or coverage of sports men and women. However, it is interesting to note that human interest stories about terrorism are actually sought in order to set out, explain, and profile who the terrorists are and to give a "human" face to the threat. In particular, the foreign news media seems to focus on issues of new recruits to terrorist organisations on the continent. This journalist says:

> "We have done a few stories on terrorists themselves and there is definite interest in new recruits and people who have been radicalized, particularly if these are people from communities known to the audience. I guess these are human-interest stories to a certain extent." (AP respondent 2)

Another journalist expands on this:

> "The terrorist story is frightfully compelling. It is the girl or boy next-door analogy that is so frightening; people that our audiences have refused to see and relate to: The new immigrant wave into Europe, but also the unexpected housewife, the radicalized suburban working classes etc." (BBC respondent 2)

Many interviewees acknowledge the presence of thematic frames as an impediment to alternative coverage and also say that conflict is covered to a higher extent than other topics. However, it is not necessarily over-emphasised; for example, coverage is proportionate to issues observed "on the ground". As this journalist says:

> "We cannot disregard the problems on the ground; the fact is that the African continent remains the poorest. If we did not recognize this something would be wrong. Coverage would be very skew if we ignored the plight caused by wars on the continent. This also stands as a counter argument to the fact that Africa gets little or no coverage." (CNN respondent)

Further, there is an acknowledgment of the fact that there is little space or grounds for coverage of interludes of peace or absence of war, or as phrased by Pearce (2005) "outbreaks of peace"; 13 of the 17 interviewees state that "peace", peace negotiations and absence of open conflict is not newsworthy. As this journalist says:

> "South Sudan is a brilliant example of a story that comes and goes and then wears off the radar again. It is difficult to establish where one conflict ends and another one takes over. Sure we could cover interludes of peace or transitional arrangements but there is little space and interest for this." (*Guardian* respondent)

Another journalist adds:

> "It might seem crude, but much reporting is reactive, as such coverage is centred on breaking stories unless there is an ongoing conflict. Peace has to be contrasted and juxtaposed to something. The South African transition was a peaceful one, however, even with regards to this story there was an element of something out of the ordinary, a civil war that did not happen." (Reuters' respondent)

Interesting to note, however, is as the Swedish Public Broadcaster's correspondent says:

> "Sweden by virtue of being a smaller country with a well defined and quite homogenous audience, actually has more space for more nuanced stories and analysis. There is also a real focus on positive news from the Continent in terms of development in various areas." (SVT respondent)

5.6. Role Conceptualizations

While most of the interviewees firmly see themselves as journalists in the liberal tradition of journalism as a watchdog, 11 of the 17 interviewees acknowledge that there is less emphasis on the watchdog role, because there is no one to hold directly accountable, compared to domestic coverage. For example, this journalist argues:

> "There is not much scope for investigative work. Most stories tend to rely on reporting of facts, scenarios and sometimes an historical expose. As much as you want to hold governments and corrupt leaders including international organizations and institutions accountable, there is little room for arguing a direct link to holding elected leaders accountable. Of course the watchdog role is important but different from domestic coverage." (DPA respondent)

However, all interviewees are clear on their role with regard to reporting in the public interest—this is somewhat contradictory to the idea of not emphasizing the watchdog role where no one is to be held directly accountable. This journalist says:

> "Of course foreign reporting is in the public interest as much as domestic coverage. Let's face it; despite

increased online and social media activity, foreign news is often seen as more reliable and factual. I guess we act as intermediaries." (Deutsche Welle respondent)

However, this view is also somewhat negated by this journalist, who argues:

"I sometimes wonder if my role is not rendered obsolete by the fact that people can now access information online, direct accounts of events by sources on the ground. This said, I also know that editors back home and audiences I suppose like an intermediary, someone who speaks the same language and shares the same conventions for reporting." (*Dagens Nyheter* respondent)

From the interviews, it appears that most of the interviewees feel that they contribute to a knowledge base for domestic audiences that would not have been there unless domestic coverage was also complimented by foreign coverage; 13 out of 17 interviewees specifically state that they have a direct mandate to educate and to bring issues otherwise not covered to the attention of domestic audiences. Two journalists argue:

"With resources scarce and less commitment to foreign coverage, the work that is being done is even more important. There are issues that risk sliding off the agenda unless there is a concerted effort on our behalf to keep them there." (*Guardian* respondent)

"During the world cup in South Africa in 2010, I had many comments and questions from people. Everything from questions such as, what is the Capital of Ghana, does it snow in South Africa, to highly complex questions around the African economy and the environment. Of course there was an increased focus on Africa and South Africa then but it goes to show that audience interest is piqued when stories are covered more prominently, it generates interest." (BBC respondent 1)

Of the 17 interviewees, 12 also state that they are seen and sought after as experts; as such, they are often asked to contribute commentary and analysis to other media outlets and domestic current affairs programming. Many are also asked to contribute analysis to organizations and institutions outside the news media.

What then of alternative models and practices that could contribute to a different coverage?

5.7. Awareness and Openness to Alternative Practices

All interviewees explicitly acknowledge that they would like to cover stories other than "the run of the mill war,

conflict and human suffering" (BBC respondent 2) and that when they do, this coverage should be given more prominence. This journalist says:

"Of course I would like to do a broad range of stories, and I would like to contribute to a better understanding of the region or continent as a whole. Yes, we need different stories to counter certain stereotypical narratives." (Reuters' respondent)

Similarly, another journalist says:

"My sense is that you have to continue to pitch the 'alternative' stories, often you can pin a smaller story to a bigger one. I try to make sure that when I travel I always have a few stories lined up. I realize though that these can be inane, there is always one or two stories on the once flourishing city, hotel etc.; however, I try to do the stories that will add to the overall coverage and that hopefully will give people a better understanding of a particular country and the politics of any one situation." (Al Jazeera respondent)

In this regard, all interviewees acknowledge that interest and new agendas have to be fostered. This journalist says:

"The more coverage the better, and the more we focus on the real issues, the more interest it will generate. With regard to viewer fatigue, I am not so sure this is correct, the real issue probably has more to do with how things are covered." (BBC respondent 1)

And while most interviewees acknowledge the need for change and broader coverage, the idea of PJ as an alternative practice is little known. Of the 17 interviewees, 10 are aware of the notion of PJ as an alternative journalistic model, and four have a clear idea of the main tenets of PJ, as it has been articulated in the scholarly literature as well as in more popular discussions around the concept. Eight out of the 17 interviewees also express real skepticism towards the notion and see it as little else than "an idealistic academic exercise of little relevance for facilitating any real change" (AP respondent 2). This is also exemplified by the following responses:

"I am not sure what you mean by Peace Journalism. I recognize the need for alternative stories and for broadening the scope of stories, but I am not sure you can always set up models for how things should be done. There are often ethical questions that come up but these are often not universal and have to be attended to within the context of a particular story. Most of us already adhere to fairly strict

regulations as to what we can and should do within the realm of our profession and the stories we cover." (AFP respondent)

"I am not entirely sure what Peace Journalism portends to be. Many of my colleagues are fairly seasoned journalists and many of us train and mentor younger colleagues and the knowledge required in the field is often very different from what you might be able to set up as the norm. I would rather say that we need to tap in to this knowledge base when we train new journalist and younger colleagues rather than spending time setting up theoretical models for how things ought to be done." (Reuters' respondent)

However, 14 out of the 17 interviewees also acknowledge some of the ideas of PJ as interesting and valid. In particular, ideas around sources and the inclusion of a broader range of views in media coverage are emphasised by the interviewees. These two journalists say:

"I think it is an interesting model and we need to take the criticism on board and change coverage for the better. I am not saying that all coverage is bad but there is always room for improvement. Maybe because I am an old hand at this, I can see the resistance to change. I think younger colleagues however a probably more open and more critical." (BBC respondent 2)

"I can see the need for changing some of our practices and there seems to be a strong argument in Peace Journalism for a broader more inclusive way of engaging sources. We know women are underrepresented in news coverage and less used as sources for stories." (*LA Times* respondent)

This also links to the acknowledgement that comes through in the interviews with regard to how stories often emphasize conflict through pitting differing views against one another, emphasizing a conflict frame, rather than common ground. These journalists say:

"It is true that much coverage is either one sided or steeped in a way that might trump up competing views. However, conflicts are not based on agreement but disagreement. It is difficult to see how some stories could be covered differently. This is not to say that there isn't room for a wider spectrum of views and that we sometimes could do a better job at seeking out alternative views." (AFP respondent)

"We could do a better job seeking out new views points and sources, or even make a point out of ascertaining where there is consensus. I have done

several stories on the ANC and the EFF and how found many commonalities in the ways in which they articulate certain political issues, this has been missed all together in the coverage here; instead they are just seen as constantly being at each others' throats." (AP respondent 2)

As much as the interviewees acknowledge that biases towards one party or one single view should be avoided, all say that official sources are often more accessible. However, this does not seem to spring from an idea of embedded journalism or a fascination with the army or military; instead, 16 out of 17 interviewees state that there is a real need to try to capture the views of the warring or opposing factions, in order to give an accurate account of a situation. This journalist says:

"It is true that we often have to rely on official sources. However, we also engage 'militia men' and other parties involved. These are people who can give one perspective that is as valid as any other even if perceivably wrong. If we didn't we would not do a proper job" (AP respondent 1)

In addition, all interviewees say that they always ensure that they capture the view of people directly affected by a conflict even though not directly involved—this may include civilians, peace negotiators and representatives from international organizations and institutions. This journalist says:

"You have to make sure that you reflect the views of all stakeholders, opposition parties, aid organisations, the international community etc. as well as the views of ordinary people who are directly affected and who often bear the grunt of conflict and war." (CNN respondent)

Of the 17 interviewees, 14 argue that it is difficult not to take sides, particularly in a war zone. This journalist says:

"I interviewed some of the mothers and families of the abducted girls in Nigeria and it was interesting to note that many of the women did not lash out against the abductors; instead their concern was solely focused on getting their daughters back. Meanwhile, I could not help but feeling absolutely full of hatred." (Reuters respondent)

Similarly, a colleague argues:

"It's difficult not to take sides but sometimes necessary. I generally think we should take the side of civilians and victims, not one armed faction or another. I prefer journalism that allows the victims to

do the talking rather than shows too much attitude." (Guardian respondent)

Furthermore, 14 out of the 17 interviewees agree that while there might be a need for the visual aspects of stories to be down-played and narratives strengthened in some instances, more often than not they do complement each other.

"Of course much of the audience view of the continent is based on visuals of wars, poverty and famine. These images stay and without proper contextualization and narration coverage will be superficial. However, visuals also do provide context and both print and television are reliant on good photographers and cameramen. We cannot only rely on footage though and need to make sure we employ reporters who knows their stuff and who can set a story out in such a way that footage does not mislead." (BBC respondent 2)

This also links to the seeming consensus that emerges from the interviews; giving the idea that contextualization is more important than solely reporting facts. This is exemplified in this response:

"Foreign reporting gets less space than domestic news coverage and in broadcast bulletins even less so. And as short as an insert might be, context is everything. You need to become a master at getting as much information in as possible. If you don't you end up simplifying and cementing stereotypes."(CNN respondent)

While there may be a lack of knowledge around the notion of PJ in particular, there is an overall openness towards alternatives and new ideas and practices. Many of the comments and responses from the interviewees also relate to ideas of PJ, although not always articulated as such by the journalists themselves. Most recognize the need for giving peace—and narratives about peace and peaceful resolutions—a greater place in foreign coverage. However, time and lack of resources are often cited as major impediments for seeking out alternative stories and implementing new ways of reporting.

6. Concluding Remarks

This article assesses awareness towards the critique levelled against coverage of the African continent, as well as alternative narratives and news frames, practices and models for journalism among a select group of foreign correspondents covering the African continent. Particular attention is given to ideas and responses to PJ as an alternative model for reporting.

The interviews show that there is a clear sense that much of the critique levelled against the reporting of the African continent is valid and recognized as such by the interviewees. The interviews confirm—from studies that have established—that there is an overwhelming emphasis on war and conflict in the news media. However, while studies have focused on the idea that the news media thrives on a logic that seeks out conflict and emphasizes "bad news", many of the interviewees instead articulate ideas that—rather than over-emphasise conflict—the role of journalism is to report what is seen and experienced. There is little ground for reporting peace or absence of war, as the reality often looks very different. Whether these perceptions hold up or not, on the one hand they perceivably refute the idea that the news media only seeks out "bad" news, and on the other hand they confirm the idea that the media does give conflict more attention than peace and absence of war.

There is also a real sense from the interviewees that the focus on conflict rather than peace has little to do with a lack of knowledge of the conflicts and countries that they cover, and that they are aware of staying clear of stereotyped and sensationalist coverage. However, the interviewees all agree that more could be done to broaden the scope of stories and to make sure that a multitude of voices and sources are included in coverage, in order to avoid an overt polarisation of the views of main stakeholders. However, and in addition to this, all interviewees say that they try to make sure that they also capture the views of people on the ground, civilians, peace negotiators and representatives from international organizations and institutions. Many also refute that there is what Galtung (1986) labels a "militarist bias" favouring official sources, and instead argue that ideas of relying on official sources or quoting army sources or "militia men" springs from a need to reflect underlying causes of conflict and ideas of parties that perceivably are driving forces behind a conflict. This of course contradicts the critique levelled against foreign coverage for neglecting to report on underlying causes of conflicts and for simplifying these.

Many of the interviewees also say that they feel "trapped between the need to contextualize events and at the same time recognizing that space and time is limited" (AFP respondent), independent of reporting for print, radio or television. The interviewees are all acutely aware of their roles as intermediaries and interpreters of events to audiences often far removed from the issues on the ground, both geographically and perceptually, often with little or no knowledge of the continent, let alone the events taking place.

Reporting also seems to be emphasized over investigative journalism, while the watchdog role is less pronounced and pre-planned events are given priority over ad-hoc stories pitched by the individual journalists. There is also less competition, and as such scoops are less relevant to beat a competing news outlet. This

said, all interviewees acknowledged the need for research and pointed out that with regard to how they see their own role, serving in the public interest is no less important in foreign reporting than in domestic coverage whether working for a global or national media organization.

With regard to news frames and reporting conventions that emphasize conflict over conflict resolution and polarization of views over common ground, most interviewees argue that while it is not their role to acts as "peace-makers" and that there is little room for covering absence of war or conflict, more could be done to reflect alternative views that might reflect that consensus or common ground exists, even between two warring or opposing factions. However, many also point out that this is made difficult, as sources are often hard to reach, particularly in situations where there is little time to prepare and do the research needed to find alternative sources—as with "breaking stories". This is also where foreign correspondents often become heavily reliant on so-called "fixers"; for example, people on the ground with particular knowledge or contact networks as confirmed by Murrell (2015). Fixers then become the main gatekeepers of sources of information.

Overall, many of the interviewees acknowledge some of the problems with regard to foreign reporting—and the reporting of the African continent in particular. Lack of resources is quoted as a major impediment towards changing reporting. Time constraints seem to be the major obstacle, as is the lack of human resources and funds for research to cover all parts of the continent and all stories in equal measure. It is interesting to note that while smaller national news outlets emphasize a lack of resources and a perceived disadvantage compared to larger news organizations—which are perceivably better staffed and better funded—many of the larger media organizations will report more or less the same constraints in terms of funding and other resources, such as staffing and infrastructure.

It is interesting to note that while lack of resources is quoted as an impediment to better and fuller coverage, there seems to be no lack of knowledge of the broader issues on the ground and or problems and opportunities on the continent. This is seemingly confirmed by the fact that the majority of the interviewees have some prior knowledge of and interest in the African continent and/or specific regions or countries. Many also show a genuine interest in the job and a commitment to giving their audiences nuanced and well-informed coverage of the continent. Many also reject the idea of "pack journalism" and instead argue that often the idea of "pooling together" is prudent in order to share resources and information.

Most importantly, the interviewees all acknowledge much of the critique levelled against the coverage of the African continent and foreign reporting and coverage more generally. However, with some reservations, and while many acknowledge the need for change in some areas, the idea of adopting new models for reporting seems less of a priority than strengthening particular areas where a re-thinking of practices might be needed. PJ, as a model for reporting, is seemingly given little credence. Many would also agree with some of the injunctions made against PJ for being too idealistic and removed from some of the realities of journalism and the stories and story angles deemed to be in the public interest.

However, many of the interviewees also quote many of the tenets of PJ as desirable and already in place, even though they are not always articulated as such. There is a sense that actual practices, as well as some of the desired changes to the same, are less contradictory than they are made out to be in scholarly arguments that juxtapose practices in terms of "war journalism" vis-à-vis "peace journalism". As such, the discourse around, and the critique levelled against foreign reporting might have more to do with a disjuncture between theory and practice—the academy and industry—and the two would do well to engage with each other. This is where PJ as a model might open up a space for this engagement. PJ is not only a theoretical model to be tested against examples of coverage, but addresses practices and offers advice on how reporting can be done.

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