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# Mass Communication As A War Provoking Instrument

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## Abstract

Mass media of the late modern era have a far-reaching impact on society at large via the concept of temenos. The news media have a significant impact on society as a whole because of the news they report, the information they share, the stories they tell, the public opinion they help shape, the discourses they generate, and the propaganda they produce. It is also well known that in the modern day, news coverage has a major impact on the dynamics of social and political life as well as human conflicts on a variety of scales. Popular culture and public opinion are shaped in part by the media, both real and misleading, notably news media like newspapers, television, and the Internet. The media often, and sometimes purposefully, ignores certain details of a narrative. Electronic or digital media, together with traditional print publications like newspapers and television networks, have come to play a significant part in modern society's knowledge-building efforts. The media's influence may be understood in part by considering its role in bringing modern battles into the living rooms of people all around the globe.

**Keywords:** Mass communication, Television, Newspaper, Magazines, Internet, News, Information, propaganda, global polities.

## Introduction

Even while propaganda or war journalism are not new phenomena, they take on greater significance during times of conflict. Online news outlets have given readers a fresh perspective on the coverage of war and conflict. The necessity

for nonviolent conflict resolution, education on peace plus nonviolence, and the development of a more peaceful global community have all contributed to the rise of peace journalism alongside war journalism. The media may be a force for good or evil in efforts to maintain peace, depending on how it is used. The media's destructive involvement in the Oslo negotiations has been studied by Gadi Wolfsfeld, while their positive contributions to the peace processes in Israel and Jordan as well as in Northern Ireland have been documented.<sup>1</sup>

Approaches to the media's function in times of peace and conflict, how governments or terrorist organisations utilise media for their aims, and the successes of conflict and peace journalism will all be discussed in this chapter. In addition, we'll examine the media's role in legitimising militaristic governmental policy. The instances and cases will range from the Islamic State to al-Qaeda to the Russo-Chechen War.

**War Journalism in the Late Modern Times:** Wars are still being fought, despite the belief that they are no longer necessary, and the field of war reporting continues to thrive. Despite the name, "war journalism" is not limited to times of conflict; it may occur during periods of relative calm as well. Due of the unique and stressful circumstances that characterise violent wars, war journalism makes some sense at these times. The fundamental issue is the prevalence of war reporting at periods of relative calm. The concept of peace may have both bad and good implications, which helps explain why war journalism flourishes during periods of peace. One of the causes for the rise of conflict and its reporting is the obvious fact that peace does not automatically imply justice. Even in the late modern era, it is clear that the politics of dominance in the global domain has triumphed over the politics of peace. Globally significant events like the Crimean crisis disprove the claim that the state's role is diminishing in the modern era as a result of the globalisation process. The state apparatus played the major destructive role in destroying the economic, political, and social harmony of the region through both military and non-military but antagonistic means. The media plays an important part in this, as it may either evolve alongside the dynamics of conflict, lag behind when necessary, or even leap ahead of them to excuse the impending bloodshed and injustice.

Conflict circumstances provide unique challenges for the media since they are sometimes used by political authorities to further their own interests. Because news is also a weapon of war, it is not always possible for media outlets to show conflict in a neutral light. International crises swiftly elevate the profile of war journalism, prompting governments to implement novel media rules and increase spending on propaganda.

Since it is not always simple to oppose the strong political machinery, the concept that independent journalists are neutral in crisis circumstances is not entirely accurate. The nature of news policymaking and reporting from combat zones has been impacted by the rapid growth of technology. The emergence of the cyber warfare may be directly attributed to the shift towards more modern military doctrines and media techniques.<sup>2</sup> However, changes in politics and international relations in the modern period have shifted the media's attention away from technology and towards politics. Media coverage, with its emphasis on politics, makes it clear that war is a politicised process and institution. The importance of the technological side of the war journalism is further explained by the emphasis on technology.

**Advent of Technology and the Media War:** According to Andrew Hoskins and Ben O'Loughlin, the evolution of communication technology has mediatized war, to the point that it is impossible to describe the conduct of war intelligently without considering the role of media in it.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, breaking down the news according to the media's basic building blocks is essential.<sup>4</sup> Access to the Internet and other forms of modern communication is now equally available to legal and non-legitimate entities like nations and terrorist organisations because to technological advancements. The Internet has allowed for the rapid and unrestricted dissemination of any kind of information.

Television had a key role in bringing the people closer to the realities of war during conflicts like Vietnam and the Persian Gulf War of 1991. According to Cumings, television was first used as a weapon during the 1991 Gulf War.<sup>5</sup> The Internet has matured to the point that it now outperforms all other forms of mass communication. Due to its universal accessibility, the Internet now serves the informational demands of both legitimate state actors as

illegitimate terrorist organisations during times of conflict. In particular, terrorist organisations have launched a cyber war, compelling state players to create cyber defence tactics. The Internet is also utilised for peace journalism, but to a far smaller extent.

**Role of Media in curbing Terrorism:** Terrorism in the contemporary era is characterised by extensive use of the media.<sup>6</sup> The newsworthiness of terrorists' atrocities has prompted media outlets, particularly television studios, to highlight them for the sake of ratings. Terrorist groups have a desire in having their operations widely publicised, and a rapid and spectacular broadcast serves this purpose. This has ironically led some to doubt the role that free media plays in fueling modern terrorism.<sup>7</sup> Terrorists may now broadcast their own operations to a wider audience and use this publicity for a variety of ends, all thanks to the proliferation of current communication technologies. Terrorists are able to do more with the aid of the media than with any other single resource.

Terrorist groups make extensive use of the media because they see it as a game-changing medium for spreading their message and growing their membership. Terror and media politics, according to Manuel Castells, are the two principal tools of modern terrorist organisations.<sup>8</sup> Terrorism's strength is in its capacity to foster the networks that allow for self-assured coordination among its members, therefore the latter is just as crucial to them as the former.<sup>9</sup> To this end, media, particularly the Internet, play a crucial role in the operations of terrorist groups, allowing them to recruit members from far-flung communities and spread their ideology. In the postmodern era, when anybody with a cheap and accessible method of mass communication may spread their violent ideology, this has taken on added significance.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) might serve as an example of this strategy, since it uses online video to disseminate its message to supporters all over the globe. Terrorist group ISIS has found several uses for the Internet, and it has been quite useful to them. Terrorists' true success may be gauged by their capacity to inform wider audiences about their brutal acts and the motivations behind them.<sup>11</sup>

Communication has always been at the heart of terrorism, and terrorist groups have always used established news outlets to legitimise, justify, and publicise their activities.<sup>12</sup> Terrorists, like any other group, now have the same communication tools at their disposal, thanks to the proliferation of platforms like the Internet. Terrorists make heavy use of the Internet for a wide variety of purposes, including but not limited to: psychological warfare; propaganda; data mining; data sharing; fundraising; recruitment; coordination; and building a network.<sup>13</sup> Terrorists also utilise the Internet to reach people in other parts of the world and convince them to join their cause.

**Case Study-1 of the ISIS Terror and Social Media:** With the development of ISIS, a new era of media use in contemporary conflict began, reviving the topic of how far the media has evolved into a weapon of terrorists. ISIS has quickly become a global phenomenon due to the widespread support its ideology has garnered from people throughout the world. Its campaign relies heavily on internet misinformation spread through social media platforms. It skillfully used social media platforms to disseminate its message to a global audience. Through their Twitter and Facebook accounts, ISIS terrorists have sent pleas and threats in an effort to recruit new members and raise funds. They have rapidly evolved this technique into a well-developed campaign in an effort to remove any barriers to direct communication with their target demographic. They may now reach people all over the globe with their message thanks to social media.

Recently, ISIS militants have used the Internet and social media to try to influence public opinion on the fight in Iraq and Syria. To strengthen its armed forces and weaken its enemies' defences ISIS has used social media to spread the word about its killing spree, with varied posts aimed at different demographics. The terrorist group has specifically focused on intimidating local opponents to prevent counterattacks and other overt military actions against its rebels. As a result of ISIS's tactics, many members of the Iraqi military have fled the country rather than face them, destabilising the country's armed forces and leaving behind weaponry the terrorists might use. Since the two groups separated in 2006, ISIS has used social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook extensively in its battle with al-Qaeda for control of Iraq and Syria. ISIS has skillfully exploited social media to build its identity and

achieve legitimacy in the eyes of local people living in the regions under its control.

Terrorists now have access to previously unimaginable tools for carrying out their missions, thanks to the proliferation of digital media.<sup>14</sup> Above, I claimed that the leadership of ISIS has utilised the Internet to obtain legitimacy and build its own identity at least within the local Sunni Muslim population of Iraq and Syria by participating in the discursive construction of the events they engage in as significant and current.

ISIS has used the media to its advantage, establishing itself as a viable alternative to the corrupt governments in Iraq and Syria in the territory it now rules. ISIS has devised a plan to win the hearts and minds of the local community by using digital media to spread the message that it arose to safeguard the rights of the oppressed from the oppressors. Despite lacking the prerequisites for statehood, ISIS militants have effectively campaigned to achieve their aim of being called as a state (Islamic State). Fox News and other major Western news sources have started referring to ISIS as the "Islamic State," which is exactly what the terrorist group wants to be labelled. This puts Islam itself in the spotlight rather than the terrorists who practise it. Terrorists from ISIS have been using social media to spread information about the persecution of Sunni Muslims in Iraq and Syria. Furthermore, their calls have been carried over both Arabic and Western networks, giving the ISIS terrorist group a much-needed political identity. The media and social media have helped ISIS achieve some legitimacy to behave and govern as a political force rather than a terrorist organisation by publicising its military successes in the territory it occupies.

As ISIS's internet presence grew rapidly, so did the number of those working to shut it down. Twitter and YouTube have deleted several ISIS-related accounts and videos, and users have started their own private hashtag campaigns to challenge the group.<sup>15</sup> Twitter and other social media platforms have deleted hundreds of accounts for having terrorist ties. However, it seems that none of this can be effective in countering online extremism because of the malleable nature of ISIS's messaging. When one is shut down, another quickly takes its place, often under a different name or on a different website.

The United States Department of State established its own Centre for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications in 2011 to combat internet terror.<sup>16</sup> The police have admitted that it is very difficult to stop people from being radicalised online and joining ISIS.<sup>17</sup>

Using a dynamic approach, ISIS has seized upon major global events to spread its message. This terrorist group used the Internet to spread panic during the 2014 FIFA World Cup. In a similar vein, ISIS threatened retaliation against the United States through social media immediately after President Obama ordered airstrikes in Iraq and Syria. Terrorists sent tens of thousands of tweets in a single day when Mosul, the second biggest city in Iraq, fell to ISIS in June 2014, and were quickly followed by tweets depicting an ISIS flag flown above Baghdad. The evolution of media transmission technologies has unquestionably given terrorists another tool in their toolbox. <sup>19</sup>

**State and Wartime Discourses:** Mass media is often used by political entities as a tactic to achieve their goals. The news media's effect extends well beyond its audience, permeating the whole social, cultural, political, and economic infrastructure. The forms and methods of discourses, as well as their relationships to institutional arrangements and the audience, are crucial to comprehending the news media's function and the messages it conveys. Discourses on war often centre on the idea that it can be controlled morally and institutionally.<sup>20</sup> Typically, governments or interest groups shape the necessary structural features for news coverage to serve their own ends. It's not unreasonable to assume that viewers' interpretations of the news—and their subsequent persuasive effects—are influenced by factors such as the content, format, and technique of delivering the information. In times of high political, economic, or social tension, the media has been known to use subtle forms of manipulation to influence their audience. The decision to conceal certain news from viewers might also aid in the development of niche discourses.<sup>21</sup> Wars provide governments the excuse they need to develop the discourses that justify their actions.

During times of conflict, governments and militaries increasingly use the media as a tool in their propaganda campaigns.<sup>22</sup> In times of warfare, governments try to stifle the free press in order to prevent news from the front

from making its way out to the rest of the world through independent media outlets. Some political forces and media moguls may invent alternative discourses to justify their media agendas. When politicians have greater influence on the political climate, they may more readily impose their will on the media.<sup>23</sup> An example of the state's involvement in limiting free media while bolstering the role of state-sponsored media to spotlight the parts of the conflict the state apparatus desired may be seen in Russia's treatment of Chechnya in the early 2000s.

**Case Study-II: Media and The Chechen Wars :** Despite Russia's defeat in the First Chechen War (1994–1996), information about the conflict spread via a variety of outlets, including the free Russian media, international media, and local Chechen media. The Russian government adopted a new Chechnya strategy in 1999, when the Second Chechen War broke out, by increasing the state's administrative control over the media. On September 9, 2000, with approval by President Vladimir Putin, the Russian Security Council adopted the "Information Security Doctrine of the Russian Federation" as the first formal step towards this goal. This ideology, which reflected the Russian government's stated policy for protecting sensitive data, gave the Kremlin more influence over how the media covered the conflict in the North Caucasus. State Duma passed "On Counteraction of Extremist Activities" in June 2002. The "dissemination of extremist materials through the mass media and the conduct of extremist acts by the mass media" are both illegal under the new legislation, significantly restricting the role of the free press.<sup>24</sup> These legislative papers had a chilling effect on Russia's free press, making it impossible for journalists to report openly on the situation in Chechnya. Despite widespread anti-war sentiment in Russia, the Kremlin's media and war strategy remained unchanged. Instead, the new approach from Moscow had a chilling effect on movements for democracy in Russia. Dmitry Kholodov, Yury, & Olga were among the bravest journalists to be murdered for opposing the cruel governmental and military policies of the Kremlin. However, in accordance with the official policies that improved Russia's prospects of winning the war in Chechnya, the Kremlin had expanded its assistance to the state-sponsored press of Russia to report from the battle zone. <sup>25</sup>



**Peace the Journalism of Peace:** Peace journalism, a term established by Johan Galtung, is committed to raising public awareness of the potential for peaceful conflict resolution via fair and constructive reporting. The demand for the peaceful settlement of conflicts is growing, and with it the prominence of the area of peace journalism, which has received relatively little attention until recently. Jabri has maintained that the goal of peace journalism is liberating peace, which challenges the discursive and structural underpinnings of war as a social continuity.<sup>26</sup> Peace journalism, in contrast to war reporting, does not see the fight as a zero-sum game in which one side's victory inevitably results in the defeat of the other side. The media may help peace efforts by shining a light on perspectives that are trying to find workable solutions to the conflict. The media's function in this sense would change depending on factors including the local political and broadcasting climate. In most cases, finding the issues' origins and effectively resolving a dispute depends on the efforts of a free press and independent journalists who seek the objective truth. However, it is also plausible that governments, in order to promote the peace that they have built for themselves, might organise state-sponsored media inside discourses formed by the government.

Despite the fact that most people would agree that peace is preferable than conflict, peace journalism has yet to mature. Obviously, this prompts certain ethical and societal concerns concerning the duties of the media.<sup>27</sup> The people on both sides of a dispute are just as important as the governmental forces on either side when it comes to preventing, de-escalating, and resolving violent conflicts. Instead of exacerbating nervous political conditions and marginalising discourses seeking to calm down violent conflicts, journalists could play a positive role by providing environments that promote constructive conversations between the parties to achieve peace. Peace journalism doesn't pretend to be romantic by believing in a future without war, but it does recognise and encourage good answers to violent conflict. Generally speaking, the goal of peace journalism is to foster a peaceful mindset.  
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**Media Stresses Benefits of Peace:** If political pressure could be eliminated or reduced, the media would be free to focus more on the positive effects of peace on both sides. It is evident that the political climate, particularly in places with

weak democratic institutions, affects the role of the media in peace processes. If governments aim to legitimise war and conflict by exaggerating hazards, then cultivating a media that is focused on peace may be fraught with difficulty. Galtung and Vincent propose creating media with a focus on peace. Media outlets are expected to represent the advantages of peace and provide both sides of a dispute a fair chance to be heard. They should also do their best to define and explain the environment in which a conflict arises.<sup>29</sup> Rather than relying on the limited obstinacy of two or more warring parties, which often shapes news discourse, the media may play a role in building and expanding peace consciousness by raising public consciousness and awareness more broadly. So that diverse viewpoints may bloom

Journalism for peace, as Galtung argues, must prioritise the truth and exclude any disinformation. War journalism often seeks to obscure the facts with propaganda. When seeking the truth, peace journalists hold objectivity in high regard as a key to providing fair and balanced news. Peace journalism seeks to reveal falsehoods on all sides of a dispute by placing itself in a neutral position.

Peace journalism is people-centered because it seeks to provide a voice to those on all sides of a conflict who are suffering. Instead of creating, alienating, dehumanising, and demonising the other, it gives voice to the voiceless by shedding light on all the facets of the weak and needy's concerns. Peace journalism does not discriminate between righteous people and bad ones. Human rights activism becomes an integral aspect of peace journalism's larger aim.

Peace journalism, in particular, is distinguished by its focus on potential resolutions to conflict.<sup>31</sup> It promotes peaceful methods of settling disputes without resorting to violence. By shifting the context in which a topic is presented, peace journalism works towards a "win-win" settlement of disputes.<sup>32</sup> A media focused on finding solutions would constantly promote actions that foster peaceful communities. Since peace is not seen as an end state in peace education, the problem is not abandoned after the conflict is resolved. Instead, it seeks to foster continuous improvement in harmonious coexistence.

Peace journalism has the potential to be an important part of peace education, which is defined as "the process of enabling people with the abilities and expertise to create a world that is better and more secure through the teaching of peace and the creative treatment of conflicts." Because of their shared mission of enlightenment, peace education & peace journalism have many similarities. Nonviolence, affection, empathy, and reverence for all forms of life are some of the core concepts of peace education. 34 Peace journalism, by taking on a constructive role in the media, would help advance all of these progressive ideals.

Because of their shared goal of altering the underlying social structures and mental models that contribute to perpetuating conflict, peace education and peace journalism are powerful tools for resolving violent conflict. Conflict transformation is predicated on the idea that disagreements between people are inevitable and, in fact, may be transformative.<sup>35</sup> Conflict transformation is a process that allows one to see the transition from one environment to another; it may even be seen as a metaphor for modernity itself, which implies a break with the past and its discouraging & enslaving dogmas and customs.<sup>36</sup> Journalism, education, and conflict resolution that focus on peace view it not as a destination but as a means to a goal. All three seek to affect people's awareness, schooling, values, and ways to resolving problems in an effort to bring about good change. The two are fundamentally distinct in their approaches to dispute resolution.

**Contrasting Peace Journalism or War Journalism:** It may not be too difficult to tell if peace journalism versus war journalism is more effective. A basic comparison of war and peace journalism reveals that the former is significantly less effective than the latter. Finally, peace journalism, in contrast to war journalism, attempts to identify and address the underlying causes of the problem, report on it honestly, and propose practical solutions for both the immediate de-escalation and its long-term transformation, rather than focusing solely on its temporal aspects.

It is simpler to produce war discourses using war journalism than peace discourses using peace journalism. This is achievable for reasons unrelated to power's meddling in the media: peace journalism does not try to hide its true

motivations in order to influence political outcomes.<sup>37</sup> Rather, it is primarily concerned with the cultivation of moral principles and the expansion of journalistic duty that are integral to the emergence of a society capable of handling disputes in a healthy manner.

Peace journalism, in contrast to war media, focuses on nonviolence, people as opposed to violence, and solutions rather than victories.<sup>38</sup> Journalists working for world peace take a holistic view of the issues at hand, digging deep into the origins of conflict in order to craft an all-encompassing strategy for resolving it. Furthermore, peace journalism acknowledges peace as a dynamic, ongoing process. Media that promotes peace works to strengthen interpersonal bonds.

## **Conclusion**

Depending on who creates, communicates, and uses it, news may be a weapon of both war and peace. The news has a significant impact on public sentiment, government policy, soldier morale, and daily life. Politicians often attempt to steer the media in the direction they want. But the free press is also there to get the word out, shed light on the nuances of conflicts, and provide a platform to those whose voices are often silenced. The evolution of technology has had a profound effect on the modern media landscape. In particular, the past two decades have seen a rise in the significance of digital media. Terrorist groups in the present period are able to more successfully spread their message to vast audiences all over the globe because to the rise of digital and social media. This is undeniable proof of the significance of digital media, especially for terrorist organisations that want to earn credibility and develop an identity online. The media may serve as a weapon or a peacemaker. Peace journalism seeks to bring about constructive change via accurate and educational media, while war journalism seeks to create and sustain conflict. Unfortunately, in today's world, war media is more effective than peace journalism.

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