The Role of Media in Conflict Resolution: With Particular Reference to Print Media
A Case Study of Katunayake Incident

Dr. Ranjan Hettiarachchi
Dept. of Mass Media, Sri Palee Campus

Background

Though the post war Sri Lanka witnesses a peaceful atmosphere since the end of the war in 2009, it was suddenly disturbed with the recent uprising occurring in the wake of a disputed private sector pension scheme at Katunayake Free Trade Zone (FTZ). Although the government media points its fingers at some political parties over the clash between thousands of workers and the police at the Katunayake FTZ, the protest campaign seemed to reflect the workers' own fear and distrust of the Pension Bill, introduced by the government for private sector workers. A young worker died and hundreds were injured because of police gunfire, enraging trade unions, opposition parties and the critical public including some sectors that even supported the ruling regime. Reacting to this emerging opposition, the Rajapaksa regime has had to be on the defensive for the first time since its victory over the LTTE, and was forced to retract the present Pension Bill and promised a new one. However, the death of Roshen Chanaka made the co-workers ingnite anger and frustration against the police who shot him. The government and the opposition parties cast blame on each other for causing this conflict in the first place.

In a situation of conflict, the local media can play a major role in preventing the conflict. The public relies on the media to separate facts and tangible realities from assumptions and spin, to provide a reliable account of what is really going on. Audiences should receive an intelligent account that enables them to form their own views. However, it is believed that the media largely failed to deliver on this promise. In this research, the main aim was to investigate how local media behaved in news reporting on this situation.

Theoretical Background

The theoretical framework of this study was based on Galtung's peace journalism which emerged in 1970s as a new concept and a set of pioneering ideas was developed by Galtung in order to criticize the preferences given by mainstream journalism around the world to war, violence and propaganda, to causes promoted by elites and establishments, and to simple and polarized victory/defeat reality construction. He distinguishes peace journalism as opposed to war journalism as follows.

Research Problem

Does the local newspaper reporting follow the modal of peace reporting or war reporting on the Katunayake incident?

The objectives of the study were to:

1. explore the modals that journalists apply in propaganda and conflict reporting
2. unveil how propaganda works in any conflict to bamboozle their audience through their reporting
3. investigate the importance given to incidents based on their ideologies and interests.

Peace/Conflict Journalism	War/ Violence Journalism
Peace/Conflict - Oriented	*War/ Violence – Oriented*
Explore conflict formation, x parties, y goals, and z issues. General win/win orientation.	Focus on conflict arena, 2 parties, 1 goal (win),
Open space, open time; causes and out comes anywhere, also in history/culture.	Closed space, closed time; causes and exit in arena, who threw the first stone.
Making conflicts transparent, giving voice to all parties, empathy (emotional understanding of another's feelings or problems), understanding. See conflict/war as a problem, focus on conflict creativity. Humanization of all sides, prevention before any violence.	Making wars secret. "us - them" journalism, propaganda, voice for "us", sees "them" as the problem, focus on who prevails in war. Waiting for violence before reporting.
Focus on invisible effect of violence	Focus on visible effects of violence
Truth – Oriented	*Propaganda – Oriented*
Expose untruths on all sides	Expose "their " untruths/help "our" cover ups
People – Oriented	
Focus on suffering all over; on women, aged, children, giving voice to the voice less, Focus on peace makers	Focus on "our" sufferings, on able-bodied elite males, being their mouthpiece, focus on elite peace makers
Solution – oriented	*Victory- oriented*
Peace = non-violence + creativity.	*Peace = Victory = ceasefire*
Highlight peace initiatives, prevent more war, focus on structure, and culture, the peaceful society. Aftermath: resolution, reconstruction, reconciliation.	Conceal (hide) peace initiative, before victory is at hand. Focus on treaty, institution, and the controlled society. Leaving for another war, return when old fires flare up

Methodology

Three news papers, *Divina, Dinamina* and *Lankadeepa* were selected on their news coverage of the incident on the grounds that they represent three ideologies. All news reports on the front pages connected to the death of Roshen Shanaka from the 2nd to the

6th of May, 2011 were analyzed. Content analysis was used in the study as it can indicate pertinent features such as comprehensiveness of coverage or the intentions, biases, prejudices, and oversights of authors, publishers, as well as all other persons responsible for the content of materials. It helps detect the existence of propaganda, identify the intentions, focus on communication trends of media institutions, describe attitudinal and behavioral responses to communications, and determine psychological or emotional state of persons or groups. In addition, semiotic analysis was used to analyze and understand how meaning is generated in photographs.

Findings

It was found in the study that the newspapers have built-in agenda and they represent these personal/political agendas and/or biases when they report facts. The study seemed to reveal the fact that it was the ownership of the media that decided what, when, where, why and how to report. According to the findings, two newspapers used subtle propaganda techniques representing intentional dissemination of their 'claims' to support/ justify both government's and JVP's political actions or ideologies regarding the Katunayake incident. Their biased reported facts with no reliable account of sources and all parties involved in the conflict represented propaganda jounalism and seemed to 'expose their untruths' or 'help cover ups' according to propaganda-oriented journalism. The newspapers ignored identifiable sources that might have cast doubt on the claims, while featuring unidentified sources that supported the claims. In contrast, the other newspaper among the three showed a tendency toward neutral reporting. Though it was not very neutral as they were expected to be, neutral reporting about the incident could leave readers confused about where the truth lay and more likely to doubt their own ability to ever determine it.

Key words: FTZ, Propaganda Journalism, Conflict, War Reporting, Peace Reporting

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Transnational Media and its Influence on Rural social Integration of Rural Masses in South Asia (A case Study in Sri Lanka)

Dr. DharmaKeerthi Sri Ranjan
Faculty of Mass Media
SriPalee Campus

Abstract

The emergence of new digital technology has greatly altered and made a revolution in telecommunication by providing new media for long expanse communication. It has provided the opportunity to masses for interactive communication and for speedy communication that help to deserve for the potential postmodern public sphere.

The agrarian rural social structure of South Asia was channelized and regulated by the traditional mechanism of caste, economic divisions of labor, social categories and arrangements on land in relation to the means of production within the structure of land control and land uses. Transnational media from the center has power enough to unshackle these traditional communication patterns, social bonds and the cultural guidance largely of the anonymous audience in the periphery of the South Asian audience considerably over three ways. They are C-Band spectrum (delivering row substances to the newscasters), KU-Band spectrum (that allows reception with miniature roof antenna) and over the formatted programs of the media co-operations in a massive scale of the South Asian whole. In this milieu, the media owners are consolidating their power and authority to control the periphery masses which is increasingly difficult.

The ultimate effect of these uncontrollable occurrences is homogenization of the media content that engrossed audiences as well rather than enlightened them among the masses. This perception is largely the outcome of the pervasive nature of the broadcast media. The fact that television has come unswervingly into the home of the rural masses and that viewers are to some extent a captive audience let them feel that they are being stripped of