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Peace journalism in Turkish-Greek relations: A dream or a goal?

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Abstract

Several studies in the literature analysed the media coverage of Turkish-Greek relations both in Turkish and Greek press[1]. However, only a few attributions were made to the notion of peace journalism and its meaning in Turkish-Greek relations. This paper focuses on the notion of peace journalism and tries to define it both in literature and in practical terms. To do this, the paper also seeks to understand what is meant by pro-war journalism and what are its differences compared to peace journalism. The paper also presents the critiques on peace journalism and discusses if this type of journalism can be really useful in practice. Besides, the empirical work of the paper is based on the Turkish press coverage of Turkish-Greek relations. The news items focusing on Turkish-Greek relations and including the word "peace" will be examined by using content analysis. The time sample of the research will be between 2004 and 2017. As it is technically not possible to focus on all news items throughout the period, the news items will be chosen from different important political events related to Turkish-Greek relations (e.g. The Annan Plan period, bilateral visits of politicians). The papers selected from the Turkish press for this study are *Cumhuriyet*, *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Sabah,* and *Türkiye*. One can argue that the papers can represent different political stances and different media company ownership. All in all, the paper seeks to answer this main research question: "How does the notion of 'peace' is being used by the Turkish press in the news items about Turkish-Greek relations". As this paper presents the preliminary findings of the research, the findings in the paper are limited and do not represent the complete research.

Keywords:

Turkey, Greece, Turkish press, Peace journalism

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[1] Tılıç 1998; Özer, 1999; Ozgunes & Terzis, 2000; Gökalp & Panagiotou, 2006; Lazarou, 2009; Orhon & Dimitrakopoulou, 2009

1. Introduction

The first ideas on peace journalism originate from peace studies, not from the academic work on mass communication. The concept was coined by Johan Galtung in his works in the 1970s[2] and disseminated widely during the 1st Gulf War at the beginning of 90s. Then, the points raised by Galtung became popular among journalists thanks to the contribution of war correspondents Annabel McGoldrick and Jake Lynch[3].

Within the understanding of traditional journalism, news values such as unusualness, importance, and timeliness are the decisive criteria to decide whether a topic can be published as a news report or not. Receiving readers' attention is the priority in this understanding. Data and visual materials and discussions about battles and other conflicts include the news values of unusualness, importance, and timeliness. Therefore, these are unique ingredients for news coverage. Peace journalism differentiates itself from traditional journalism when it comes to the main criteria to decide whether a topic can become a news report or not. A journalist with an expertise on peace journalism prioritizes the question "do these news stories help to find a solution for the conflicts?" Peace journalists seek to contribute to peace while reporting the issues about conflicts and violence. "Peace journalism's priority is disseminating the peace initiatives and civil dynamics in the public opinion. Military, political and economic powers' voices have secondary importance"[4].

Peace journalism covers conflicts and tensions with a degree of consciousness and responsibility. The main target is to provide peace and reconciliation again. As a result of the news reports they created, peace journalists expect to see that media people, readers, and audience stand for the peace[5]. In this respect, it is hard to say that peace journalism is an impartial and unvarnished type of journalism. Peace journalism stands for peace. Therefore, peace journalists act according to this view and stand for peace while creating the language in the content but do not manipulate the coverage.

Peace journalists frame the issues with the knowledge that the continuing conflict and tension will not be beneficial for both sides. They put forth the solutions and the initiatives that try to solve the conflict without violence. Peace journalists do not focus on the physical violence which is mainly in the interest of war correspondence. Peace journalists tend to exceed the violence and focus on the solution possibilities. While doing this, the structural and cultural violence that can be the reason of the conflict is also underlined[6].

In summary, peace journalism holds a social responsibility and strives to transform conflicts into peaceful agreements. Peace journalism does not aim to be the winner of the conflict. Instead, it aims to be the mediator to end the conflict[7]. The aim of a peace journalist is to find out the reasons for the conflict and present this to the public opinion. Both sides of the conflict have right to speak in peace journalism. This will pave the way to find possible

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[2] McGoldrick and Lynch, 2000
[3] Hanitzsch, 2004a
[4] Çetinkuş and Keleş, 2018: 129
[5] Alankuş, 2016
[6] Hackett, 2006
[7] Galtung, 2002

solutions. One side of the problem is not presented as the reason for the conflict. Instead, the conflict itself is shown as the main problem. This fashion of peace journalism makes it possible to cover all initiatives for peace. Besides, the positive environment after the conflict is over is also in the interest area of peace journalists[8].

2. Peace journalism in practice

In the light of what has been defined and explained until here, it is crucial to emphasize some points to show how peace journalism is performed in journalism practice. Knowledge and rules about traditional news gathering and writing are useful only up to some extent. In her work "Handbook of Peace Journalism"[9], Sevda Alankuş claims that applying only 5W1H formula would not be sufficient to thoroughly perform peace journalism. Even though answering the most important 6 questions of journalism in a news item is sufficient for traditional news writing techniques, this item might still include a content that promotes violence and conflicts. According to Alankuş, in order to understand the factual truth, it is required to create a framework that goes beyond the 6 questions. Therefore, Alankuş proposes a more effective and expanded version of 5W1H. The proposal below shows the more detailed and expanded questions for 5W1H to be used by peace journalism:

Who?
– Who was affected by this conflict/tension? Who had benefits out of this result?
– What are the positions (in terms of power, impact, welfare, etc.) of this conflict's/tension's parties between each other?

What did happen?
– What was the reason for the tension? What is the reason that brings this issue to the agenda?
– What are the problems that must be solved by the parties?

When did it happen?
– When did the conflict start?
– How long has the reason for the conflict existed?

Where did it happen?
– Which geographic and political sides were affected by the conflict/tension?
– How was this kind of tensions/conflicts solved in other places?

Why did it happen?
– Which necessities, benefits, fears and concerns can explain the parties' positions during the conflict?

What will happen?
– Will they solve the problem by negotiations or mediation or refereeing or political power or jurisdiction or by weapons?
– What will be the price/result of the chosen method?

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[8] Hanitzsch, 2004a
[9] Alankuş, 2016

What are the possibilities?
- What choices/possibilities do the parties have for the solution?
- How much these possibilities are related to the conflict/tension?

What could be the common ground?
- What is the common ground among the parties? Is there any common interest to solve the problem?
- What are the topics/positions they have agreed so far?

The answers to the questions above will definitely provide more quality news content in peace journalism. Apart from the importance of asking this kind of questions, it is also crucial to highlight which journalism practices would be efficient for peace journalism. Tehranian proposes 10 important criteria that can be seen as an advice[10]:

1. Never reduce the parties in human conflicts to two. Remember that when two elephants fight, the grass gets hurt. Pay attention to the poor grass.
2. Identify the views and interests of all parties to human conflicts. There is no single Truth; there are many truths.
3. Do not be hostage to one source, particularly those of governments that control sources of information.
4. Develop a good sense of skepticism. Remember that reporting is representation. Bias is endemic to human conditions. You, your media organization, and your sources are not exceptions.
5. Give voice to the oppressed and peacemakers to represent and empower them.
6. Seek peaceful solutions to conflict problems, but never fall prey to panaceas.
7. Your representation of conflict problems can become part of the problem if it exacerbates dualisms and hatreds.
8. Your representation of conflict problems can become part of the solution if it employs the creative tensions in any human conflict to seek common ground and nonviolent solutions.
9. Always exercise the professional media ethics of accuracy, veracity, fairness, and respect for human rights and dignity.
10. Transcend your own ethnic, national, or ideological biases to see and represent the parties to human conflicts fairly and accurately[11].

The definition of peace journalism and how it should be applied in practice were explained above. The following sections will first discuss war or violence journalism which can be seen as the opposite of peace journalism. Thereafter, discussions and some critiques towards peace journalism will be presented.

3. War or Violence Journalism

In order to understand what peace journalism means, one should know that journalism can be performed with peaceful fashion and sometimes with pro-war fashion. By means of this contrast, the meaning and function of peace journalism can be better understood. According

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[10] Tehranian, 2002
[11] Tehranian, 2002: 80-81

to Arsan, "pro-peace journalist" puts forth the fundamentals of the conflict and do not overlook the historical background and the cultural past. A peace journalist would let both sides of the conflict speak. They see this conflict as a problem that must be resolved. A "pro-peace journalist" evaluates both parties of the conflict with a humane view. A "pro-war journalist" is interested in "who will win?" and "who will lose?" questions. Pro-war approach frames the parties as "us" and "them. The number of casualties is the important information for a "pro-war journalist"[12]. The journalism practice that is interested in the battle and violence prioritizes the conflict in the field. The reasons for the conflict and the solutions to stop it are also searched in the conflict itself. A journalistic approach that is interested in the conflict itself would inevitably focus on who is going to win and who is more powerful. This type of journalism is always constructed by a zero-sum game. In these circumstances, naturally, the news coverage would not present more than the number of casualties[13].

Pro-war journalism does not reveal its economic expectations from the content it produced about the fights and conflicts. Instead, it pretends to be in the middle of two parties and contributes to the continuation of the war by normalizing the conflict. The title "Who Will Win?" in Newsweek's cover page, just published before the 2ⁿᵈ Gulf War, is an example of pro-war coverage. The magazine normalizes the war and represents it as an exciting game happening somewhere far but can be watched in our comfortable living rooms.

4. "Us" and "them" binary

The values of peace journalism will probably not be meaningful for the political power which holds a pro-war approach. Battles and conflicts are empowered by the "us" and "them" binary. This is a motivation which is usually welcomed by public masses. Chomsky and Herman do not mention the concepts of "peace journalism" or "war journalism" but they criticize the political elites' views on the "us and them" binary and its reverberation in the media coverage. For instance, during the Cold War period, the US was always represented as the "right" side while the other side was portrayed as the offensive enemy. This situation carried on after the September 11 attacks even though the enemy had changed[14]. Moreover, the period following 9/11 is probably the time that the US media reached its peak in terms of national feelings and identities. For example, in this period, Mike Hennessy of the WFLA Radio said: "I am an American first, a journalist second". Ann Coulter, of *National Review*, went further in her column after 9/11 and said "We don't need long investigations of the forensic evidence to determine with scientific accuracy the person or persons who ordered this specific attack ... We should invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity"[15].

The power of pro-war coverage can also be seen in some examples in the Turkish press. Metin Ersoy's study on the fighter jet crisis between Turkey and Syria in 2012 and 2014 and its representation in the Turkish press shows that "blaming the other side" and "us-them binary" are the main framings in the Turkish press[16]. Similarly, Fulya Şen's research indicates

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[12] Arsan, 2003
[13] Hanitzsch, 2004a
[14] Chomsky, 2001 cited by Hackett, 2006
[15] Hanitzsch, 2004a: 487
[16] Ersoy, 2014

that the tension between Turkey and Syria was not represented with a peaceful language by Turkish mainstream media. Şen's analysis on the alternative media shows that their coverage is different than the mainstream media and framed by peace journalism's characteristics[17].

5. Some critiques about peace journalism

There are some discussions about peace journalism claiming that peace journalism's humane and peaceful stance is not realistic. These discussions mainly argue that peace journalism is overwhelmingly normative and the nature of journalism cannot overlook violence or unusualness in a conflict. According to this view, peace journalism is not applicable in journalism practice. The ones who think like this underpin their views according to these critiques:

Peace journalism "is an unwelcome departure from objectivity and towards a journalism of attachment; it mistakenly assumes powerful and linear media effects; it is a normative model, rooted in the discipline of peace research, that fails sufficiently to take into account the constraints imposed by the actual dynamics of news production (including professional values and organizational imperatives), and hence, may have little to offer journalists in practice"[18].

Apart from these fundamental critiques, another important point refers to the central role of journalism. Is journalism responsible for transferring information to its readers or establishing peace? The owners of this question see policy makers and politicians as the main responsible entities to sustain peace. Even though sometimes the media can contribute into sustaining peace, the main duty of journalists is observing events and sharing it with the public. There are some journalists who do not believe in peace journalism. Sonia Mikich, one of the editors of WDR, Germany, thinks that war journalism was already fed by the ethical principles of journalism. According to this approach, the contribution of peace journalism into journalism practice is disputable. David Loyn, a BBC correspondent, argues that journalists are responsible for reporting what is happening in the event. According to him, journalists do not try something to establish peace or end the conflict[19]. Moreover, Andreas Baum (*Stuttgarter Zeitung*, Germany) claims that war correspondents' do not only report the conflicts and fights in the field. He says:

"Being a war correspondent means nothing else than talking to the people behind the front lines, meeting refugees who move away from the danger zone and tell their story, their suffering. They tell what they have lost and what they have experienced. These are the much more important stories, the human stories. It is not about having one's nose in the front line and describing which cannon shoots in what direction and whether or not the front line has moved a few meters forward or backward. I think, if someone sees his job like this, he doesn't understand. It is really about human stories that happen out there"[20].

Having talked about the critiques towards peace journalism, can someone argue that peace journalism is for nothing? Absolutely no. Peace journalism still deserves respect and interest to work on it. For the solutions of the conflicts in the world, indicating peace journalism alone

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[17] Şen, 2013
[18] Hanitzsch, 2004a and Hanitzsch, 2004b cited in Hackett, 2006: 2
[19] Hanitzsch, 2004a
[20] Richter, 1999, pp. 202–3 cited in Hanitzsch, 2004a: 486

would not be meaningful. However, peace journalism still has the potential to contribute into peace together with other actors. The more important point in this argument is to evaluate what is this potential. Hanitsch argues that journalists are members of the society they live in[21]. Like other people in the society, journalists are also affected by the obstacles and temptations in their environments. Therefore, peace journalism cannot be artificially imposed on society. Similar to the necessity of democratic culture in the society and institutions for the formation of press freedom, the existence of peace journalism also requires a society with peace culture. Journalism and journalists are products of their societies[22]. Therefore, one cannot claim that peace journalism alone is able to solve the problems and conflicts in a society.

According to Tehranian "since ethics without laws and sanctions are largely pious wishes, media ethical codes for peace journalism should be considered necessary but not sufficient"[23]. Peace environment can be established by a more holistic structure with the support of political power, state institutions, public opinion, and the media. In a place where this environment is established, the impact of peace journalism will be much stronger. If the media is alone in its efforts to establish peace, the environment built on "us/them" binary will inevitably declare that the media is together with "them". The media environment that supports peace not war, the media coverage that focuses on tolerance, not hate must be enabled. To do this, we need journalists and media companies that promotes pluralism, not xenophobia or racism.

6. Method

The news items focusing on Turkish-Greek relations and including the word "peace" are examined by using content analysis in this paper. The time sample of the research is between 2004 and 2017. As it is technically not possible to focus on all news items throughout the period, the news items are chosen from different important political events related to Turkish-Greek relations (e.g. The Annan Plan period, bilateral visits of politicians). The papers selected from the Turkish press for this study are *Cumhuriyet*, *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Sabah,* and *Türkiye*. The newspapers represent different political stances and ownership. By looking at news items published in the chosen newspaper, the paper seeks to answer this main research question: "How does the notion of 'peace' is being used by the Turkish press in the news items about Turkish-Greek relations".

7. Peace journalism within the context of Turkish-Greek relations

Turkish-Greek relations within the control of the status quo approach will never allow solving problems of both sides. Most domination clashes in world history usually cause warfare. From this perspective, one can argue that being able to keep the peace while the domination issues between Turkey and Greece are alive is a success story of two countries and the international community[24]. When we look at the news coverage in the 1990s, during the time the status quo was dominant in both Turkish and Greek media, it is obvious to see

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[21] Hanitsch, 2004a
[22] Hanitzsch, 2004a
[23] Tehranian, 2002: 80
[24] Volkan & Itkowitz, 2002: 219

that the content was far from the peace journalism approach. The actual political relations between the two sides were not better than the media's overall stance. Both Turkish and Greek politicians were blaming each other by unthinkable accusations and conspiracy theories. For instance, Andonis Samaras, former Greek PM and the then Foreign Minister in the early 90s, claimed that Turkey followed conflictual policies towards Greece by using Muslims living in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo and Western Thrace[25].

The reason for the tense conditions in the 1990s should be firstly searched in the politicians' general approach. The decisions made by the politicians and their speeches appeared in the media coverage had an immense impact on the crises that happened throughout 1990s. Even though the media in both countries cannot be a threat to the peaceful environment by only itself, the Kardak (Imia) crisis in 1996 was a strong example of how media can be an active actor in political clashes[26]. If the media is not on the peace camp during tense periods, the issues inevitably become bigger and unsolvable. As claimed by Marthoz[27], during a period of conflict, journalists do not only play with the words but also bullets. This situation strongly appeared itself strongly during the Kardak crisis in 1996.

In addition to the impact of politicians and media's views on the tense relations in the 1990s, it is also crucial to remember the media environment in the 1990s in both countries. Journalism practice in the 1990s has a connection with superficiality and pro-conflict coverage. Both Turkish and Greek press in the 1990s was in crisis. The newspapers were losing their power and private TV channels newsrooms were becoming more popular. This motivated the press to produce sensational and speedy but less careful news items. A Greek journalist claimed that it is not easy to produce news coverage in Turkish-Greek relations while there is no crisis or conflict[28]. This proves that journalism on Turkish-Greek relations was only fed by the crisis in the 1990s. The darkness of that period left the stage to a hopeful term in the 2000s. It was easier to see more news items referring to peace in the new period. The main reasons for this change originate from Turkey's EU will, earthquakes in both countries, and the governments' motivation for a change in relations.

Compared to the 1990s, one can argue that the Turkish press discourse since the 2000s is more positive to be hopeful about peace journalism on both sides. Some stronger peace journalism examples in the Turkish press appeared in the coverage in the last two decades. The examples below show the degree of positive language. As this paper presents the preliminary findings of the research, the examples below are limited and do not represent the complete research.

"Erdoğan: 'Let's make Cyprus an island of peace'"[29].
"Erdoğan: I will be in Athens even if the referenda says 'No'"[30].
"Children destroyed the wall"[31].
"Let's bring the peace for the future"[32].

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[25] Volkan & Itkowitz, 2002
[26] Ozgunes and Terzis, 2000
[27] 1995 cited in Ozgunes and Terzis, 2000
[28] Ozgunes and Terzis, 2000
[29] Türkiye, 21.04.2004
[30] Hürriyet, 22.04.2004
[31] Milliyet, 26.04.2004
[32] Türkiye, 26.01.2008

"Friendship message arrives before him"[33].

"The souls of Atatürk and Venizelos are in charge"[34]

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[33] Sabah, 23.01.2008
[34] Milliyet, 07.12.2014

"Erdoğan referred to dialogue as the only way to finish problems in the Aegean Sea. He said "we should not even emphasize the word 'war'"[35].
"Erdoğan: 'We are 2 nations, interlocked throughout the history'"[36].
"Pavlopoulos: 'The things unifying us are more than the things dividing us'"[37].

Cumhurbaşkanı Pavlopoulos ve eşi tarafından, Erdoğan ve eşi Emine Erdoğan onuruna Cumhurbaşkanlığı Sarayı'nda resmi akşam yemeği verildi. Yemek öncesinde "Biz, iç içe geçmiş iki milletiz ve yıllara sari bir kadim tarihimiz var" diyen Erdoğan, Yunanistan'ın AB sürecinde bugüne kadar Türkiye'ye verdiği desteğin bir kenara konulamayacağını belirtti. Erdoğan, "Terörle mücadeledeki dayanışmamızı da ifade etmeden geçemeyeceğim" dedi.

8. Conclusion

The examples above depicted that both politicians' discourse and media coverage tend to contribute to the values of peace journalism. This situation does not originate from only politicians' remarks of goodwill. Bilateral relations after the 1990s were mostly based on respect and trust. This change shows itself in the news coverage as well. The main reasons why peace discourse became more powerful in the coverage can be explained by these points:

− In recent years, Turkish and Greek politicians met in person much more than the past,
− Peace messages from key politicians were more visible in the last two decades compared to 1990s,
− Not only politicians but also Turkish and Greek public also came together by cultural events, art festivals, tourism, academic and educational co-operations,
− Rise in economic relations,
− Turkey's recent focus on the problems in the Middle East, especially Syria in recent years; and Greece's issues in the Eurozone.

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[35] Sabah, 07.12.2017
[36] Milliyet, 08.12.2017
[37] Hürriyet, 08.12.2017

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