

## Peace Journalism in theory and practice: Kenyan and foreign correspondent perspectives

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### Abstract

Peace journalism (PJ) is a framework intended to improve conflict coverage by challenging traditional news values. Our study aimed to compare the use of PJ in the local and foreign coverage of two key violent events in Kenyan history—the 2017 election violence and the 2019 Dusit attack—as well as collecting reporters' views and understandings of the concept. A content analysis of 257 articles across 10 legacy newspapers from Kenya, the US, the UK and South Africa were supplemented with 14 semi-structured interviews with local and foreign reporters. We found war journalism (WJ) to be the prevailing frame, with no significant difference in the use of PJ between Kenyan and international newspapers apart from a few variations of individual indicators. The interviews exposed a lack of awareness of PJ in the case of foreign correspondents, and an interpretation that fundamentally differs from traditional understandings of the concept in the case of Kenyan reporters. We conclude that PJ is not a one-size-fits-all approach and needs to be embraced and transformed in cooperation between journalists and academics before it can become a reality in mainstream newsrooms.

Keywords: Peace journalism, conflict, violence, Africa, Kenya, mixed methods research, content analysis, semi structured interviews

### Introduction

Western media coverage of Africa is often criticised for being too negative (Nothias, 2018). As a concept that challenges the traditional news values proposed by Galtung and Ruge (1965), peace journalism (PJ) is an alternative approach for local and foreign legacy media. As a relatively stable country compared to others nearby, Kenya is generally underexamined when it comes to conflict reporting. And yet, the former British colony has a history of political violence and more recently,

has been subject to the threat of terrorism from al-Qaeda affiliated group al-Shabaab. Moreover, the capital Nairobi is a regional hub for many international media organisations, making Kenya a compelling case study (von Naso, 2018). Prior studies look into the relationship between PJ and foreign correspondents in the region (Rodny-Gumede, 2016), and others focus on Kenya's local press (Ojwang, 2009; Onyebadi and Oyedeji, 2011; Weighton and McCurdy, 2017). However, as yet there has not been a comparative study between local and foreign coverage, valuable "for better understanding the various forms of production, content and uses of journalism across the world" (Hanusch and Hanitzsch, 2017:525).

Even if PJ research has grown and diversified in the last two decades (e.g. Gouse et al. 2019), we suggest the need to supplement the focus on journalistic content with studies including the production process to gain deeper understandings of conflicts coverage. The comparison between local and foreign correspondents is, indeed, part of the added value here. Its relevance, though, lies more in its analysis of articles to find dominant frames; its chief contribution is to add further insight into peace journalism – and perhaps into journalism more widely - by examining the thoughts and reflections of journalists themselves. By combining content analysis with in-depth interviews, we shed light into the existing gap between PJ as a theoretical concept and its use/acceptance among practicing journalists, at least in the Kenyan context.

After introducing the concept of peace journalism, we consider its main critiques and some groundbreaking empirical studies. Thereafter, as our main focus, we examine the status of PJ in Kenya.

### **Peace journalism**

Johan Galtung first coined 'peace journalism' as a framework to potentially challenge the news values he had previously developed with Mari Holmboe Ruge (see Galtung and Ruge, 1965). His PJ thesis is that media are too absorbed with war and violence, and that peace narratives are marginalised (Galtung, 1993). PJ was further popularised by Lynch and McGoldrick (2005:5), who defined it as an editorial choice for society "to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict".

Such a definition has met with both scholarly and practitioner resistance. Kempf (2017:2), for instance, proposes an alternative elucidation of PJ as "when editors and reporters are aware of their contribution to the construction of reality and of their responsibility to give peace a chance". It is not, he suggests, about choosing the right stories, since an "explicit decision on which stories to report" could be interpreted as journalists possibly manipulating their work against the profession's

values. Instead, PJ is about asking the right questions (ibid.), or framing the same issues differently. Four of PJ's main characteristics are its orientation towards peace, truth, people and solutions (Galtung, 2006). Proponents of PJ suggest that most journalism being produced is actually war journalism (WJ), biased "in favour of war" (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005:xvii).

PJ's normative essence emboldens those less convinced of its merits (Hanitzsch, 2004; Lee et al., 2006; Loyn, 2007; Shinar, 2007). While some consider it "unhelpful" and "misleading" (Loyn, 2007:2), others do not so fully reject it but claim nonetheless that PJ "diverts political responsibilities from politicians and policymakers to journalists" (Hanitzsch, 2004:484). Moreover, even if PJ's aims are valid, it seemingly ignores the structural limitations facing journalists. These include, among others, insufficient personnel and time, inaccessible sources and established editorial procedures, formats, space and deadlines (Hanitzsch, 2007; Lee, 2010; Rodney-Gumede, 2016; Weighton and McCurdy, 2017). In interim conclusion, for PJ to succeed, individual and institutional norms and culture must change (Kelling and Horvit, 2017).

Within PJ-related empirical research, Lee and Maslog (2005) were among the first to operationalise the concepts. Their content analysis focusing on four Asian conflicts set a precedent that others followed (see, inter alia, Lee et al., 2006; Shinar, 2009; Ersoy, 2010; Lee, 2010; Fahmy and Eakin, 2014). In total, Gouse et al. (2019:440-441) identified 41 PJ-related published papers that used a quantitative content analysis, most of them published between 2009 and 2015. Generally, most conclude that WJ is still the predominant frame, although the type of story, whether by local or foreign news outlets, production sources, length and type of conflict all affect the existence of certain PJ indicators to varying degrees.

More recently, this homogeneity in empirical studies has led some scholars to propose alternative methodologies, frameworks and topics to diversify the study of PJ. Nohrstedt and Ottosen (2015), for example, presented critical discourse analysis as an alternative method. Then, Tenenboim-Weinblatt et al. (2016, 155) proposed a more nuanced approach to PJ in particularly stark contrast to WJ - an "actor-event framework" facilitating the exploration of how different dimensions are linked. Neumann and Fahmy's (2016) survey embraced the perspective of practicing journalists; Adegbola and Zhang (2020) expanded and combined this with interviews and concluded that group of Nigerian journalists subscribe more to PJ principles than to those associated with WJ. In an attempt to move beyond the traditional focus on content and production, Bastian et al. (2019)

considered distribution practices, finding that algorithmic systems of news personalisation sometimes facilitate PJ by diversifying conflict coverage and countering effects of self-censorship.

Still, to date, most PJ research has focused on 'hot' conflicts, or "coverage of wars or other forms of direct violence" (McMahon and Chow-White, 2011:991). But the approach might also address prolonged 'cold' conflicts (ibid) such as ethnic divisions and the "earlier stages in the conflict escalation" (Nohrstedt and Ottosen, 2015:232). PJ can potentially halt combat before it happens (Adebayo, 2018), and is consequently "a powerful tool when reporting elections and politics", particularly in Africa (Youngblood, 2017b:436). Our research examines both 'hot' and 'cold' conflicts, using electoral violence and a terrorist attack in Kenya as pertinent case studies.

Examples of PJ studies in African contexts are increasing. For instance, responding to the critique of foreign coverage, most journalists interviewed by Rodny-Gumede (2016) recognized the need to prioritise peace narratives, and to include a wider range of sources and alternative views, even if PJ was unfamiliar. While the reporting of Africa by international media is often researched, the role of local journalists is not (Bunce, 2010) albeit a few scholars are active therein (see, inter alia, Hyde-Clarke, 2011; Youngblood, 2017b; Adebayo, 2017, 2018; Demarest and Langer, 2018, Ogenga, 2019). Broadly speaking, these studies conclude that notwithstanding advantages and limitations, certain aspects of PJ are worth implementing when reporting African conflicts and other sensitive issues. What follows is a closer look at existing literature related to PJ in Kenya.

### **PJ in Kenya: electoral violence and terrorism**

In late 2007/early 2008, the rivalry between the two candidates bidding to become the next Kenyan president stirred along ethnic lines. Altogether 1,200 people were killed, several thousand were injured, and over 300,000 were displaced amid post-election violence (Youngblood, 2017b). The media were largely blamed for escalating the violence, particularly the local language radio stations (Onyebadi and Oyedeji, 2011; Youngblood, 2017b) providing Kenyans "ready-made" platforms to "vent their anger against the government and against other ethnic groups" (Adebayo, 2018:49).

To avoid future crises, Kenya introduced a new constitution in 2010, and in 2012, its media adopted "election coverage guidelines", asking journalists for sensitivity "during times of conflict" (Weighton and McCurdy:652,653). Several organizations provided PJ training for reporters and despite some procedural irregularities, there was little violence associated with the 2013 elections, some arguing that media had adopted practices consistent with PJ (Adebayo, 2018). Others, however, criticized

reporters for going “too far in the other direction”, and self-censoring and under-reporting in the name of promoting peace (Weighton and McCurdy, 2017:649; Youngblood, 2017b:436).

Weighton and McCurdy (2017:655) explored how the violence in 2007/2008 shaped coverage of presidential voting in 2013, concluding that reporters faced structural restraints related to ownership and advertising, and societal constraints linked to traumatic memories of past elections and “collective guilt”. Some respondents did not consider this censorship, but as a responsible practice in line with PJ (ibid.). This understanding resonates with Onyebadi and Oyediji’s (2011:215) approach to PJ and their assertion that reporters should be “moral witnesses”, and not ‘objective’ bystanders simply watching humanity disintegrate. Such “interventionist” perspectives, argue Weighton and McCurdy (2017:654), are problematic since they resemble PR more than “contemporary journalism practice”.

The August elections of 2017 were highly contentious. Although won by incumbent President Uhuru Kenyatta, opposition leader Raila Odinga disputed the outcome, complaining of inconsistencies and fraud in the electoral process and counts. The Supreme Court ruled in his favour, and the election was repeated in October. Odinga withdrew from the second election days before it was staged, and Kenyatta won again, the victory marred by protests and violence with over 100 deaths reported (The Carter Center, 2018). The media, once again, were accused of “downplaying irregularities” (Adebayo, 2018:83). Local press coverage sparked “larger questions about the applicability, even desirability, of PJ in an electoral setting” (Youngblood, 2017a:440), because of the relationship between PJ, self-censorship and an interventionist approach. Youngblood (2017a) however, contends that PJ is misunderstood because it does not question whether violence and protests should be covered, but instead concerns the best *mode* of reporting them. If the media avoid or dismiss news, then they are not properly fulfilling their role as journalists, and their practice cannot be regarded as PJ (Youngblood, 2017a; Adebayo, 2018).

Adebayo (2018) proposed PJ as an alternative approach to cover electoral violence in Africa and uses Kenya as a case study. Because media had been accused of inciting ethnic disputes, he asserts the importance of training journalists in “conflict-sensitive” reporting and provides an updated list of Lynch and McGoldrick’s 17-point guide to PJ, adapted for an African context. Our own study develops this further, providing empirical evidence regarding the coverage of the 2017 elections but also embracing the role of the foreign media.

We also analyse the Dusit attack coverage which has attracted less scholarly attention. In January 2019, terrorists attacked the Dusit hotel complex in Nairobi. Al-Shabaab, an Islamist militant group from neighbouring Somalia with links to al-Qaeda (Cannon and Plaut, 2019) claimed responsibility for the attack in which 21 people died. It was the latest in a series of events to have “shaken” Kenya (McConnell, 2019).

There is little academic literature regarding the media coverage of the most recent attacks. There are, nonetheless, some earlier examples. Schaefer (2006:587) for instance, looked at how Kenyan newspapers covered the 1998 and 2002 terror attacks in Nairobi and Mombasa and concluded that many Western “news values” are present, albeit the presentation of the attacks “is still coloured by paradigms or worldviews derived from their structural position in the developing world”. More recently, Ogenga (2012:12) examined the coverage of ‘Operation Linda Nchi’<sup>1</sup> and concluded that mainstream newspapers missed an “ideal opportunity” to practice PJ.

## **Methodology**

We aimed to analyse and compare how newspapers in Kenya, the US, the UK and South Africa covered the 2017 electoral violence and the 2019 Dusit attack. These legacy news providers were chosen because most traditional newspapers share similar organisational structures, professional norms and brand reputations (Nielsen and Nicholls 2016, 11-12). The selection of these two particular events was made on the basis that they drew attention both from local and international media, which enabled comparative analysis. Our research questions are: **Does the coverage of the 2017 electoral violence and the 2019 Dusit attack in Kenya by local and foreign newspaper reporters present mainly PJ or WJ framings?**

and

## **How do journalists perceive their reporting of these events?**

Much existing PJ-related literature uses content analysis and, to a lesser degree, qualitative interviews (Neumann and Fahmy, 2016). Our mixed methods approach first incorporates a content analysis of newspaper articles allowing us to determine how journalists reported these events. The

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<sup>1</sup> This was the operation whereby Kenya Defense Forces entered and attacked southern Somalia in 2011. Later the KDF joined AMISOM, the regional peacekeeping mission in the country led by the African Union.

trends and themes we identified then informed the questions for our semi-structured interviews with local and foreign journalists.

### *Content analysis*

We selected the digital editions of legacy newspapers from each of the four countries on the basis that they extensively covered both key events. Articles published in Kenyan newspapers (*Daily Nation* and *The Standard*) were also included to examine the role of the local press in covering these events. While each country has its own journalistic culture and it is naïve to generalise (de Vreese et al., 2001; Hanusch and Hanitzsch, 2017), the UK and US tend to be considered as main referents in the media tradition of the West, and accordingly, we examined *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post* from the US, and *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph* and *The Times* from the UK. Lastly, we chose *The Times* and *Mail and Guardian* from South Africa to incorporate another African nation, facilitating some nuancing of the 'Kenya versus the West' discussion. In addition, apart from South Africa, all have Nairobi-based correspondents (or Johannesburg for *The Guardian*) that published original, on-the-spot coverage. Tabloids or smaller outlets mostly relied on desk reporting or news wires. All publications in our sample report in English.

The unit of analysis were news stories, feature articles, opinion columns and editorials which enabled us to determine whether the article type affected the presence of PJ indicators. During the long 2017 election period, all the analysed stories were published during four particularly eventful weeks: July 31-August 14, October 10-17 and October 25-November 1. For the Dusit attack, we analysed articles issued from the day of the event and the following week—January 15-22, 2019. The data were retrieved from *Nexis*, supplemented by online search engines provided by each outlet. We used key search terms 'election violence', 'Dusit attack' and 'Riverside attack' to find stories in local outlets. For the international coverage, we used 'Kenya election violence' and 'Nairobi attack'. Photographs and visual aspects were disregarded. In total, 257 articles were analysed.

### *Framing*

PJ has been linked to framing theory (Lee and Maslog, 2005; McMahon and Chow-White, 2011; Neumann and Fahmy, 2016), since it represents organizing news stories "to convey a specific storyline" (Lee et al., 2006:501-502), to promote "a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (Entman 1993:52).

We adopted a deductive approach, starting with a 'list of frames' (Tankard, 2001:102), to operationalise PJ and WJ. As variables within a broader content analysis, we used 12 of Lee and Maslog's (2005) 13 PJ/WJ indicators. We omitted the 'continuity of reports' since our study did not consider the aftermath of trigger events. Another category was modified from the original 'zero-sum' or 'win-win' orientation to 'solution' or 'victory' oriented. Our final analytical framework looked like this:

**Table 1. Framing categories**

<b>War journalism</b>	<b>Peace journalism</b>
1. Reactive	Proactive
2. Reports only on visible effects of war	Reports also on invisible effects of war
3. Elite-oriented	People-oriented
4. Focuses on differences that led to conflict	Finds areas of agreement
5. Focuses on the here and now	Also focuses on the causes and possible consequences
6. Dichotomizes: good versus bad	Avoids dichotomy
7. Two-party orientation	Multiparty orientation
8. Partisan	Non-partisan
9. Victory-oriented	Solution-oriented
10. Uses victimizing language	Avoids victimizing language
11. Uses demonizing language	Avoids demonizing language
12. Uses emotive words	Avoids emotive words

Again, following Lee and Maslog's (2005) model, each indicator was assigned a score of 1 if found within a text, or 0 if absent (Fahmy and Eakin, 2014:95). Each article was classified as 'peace journalism', 'war journalism', 'mixed' or 'none', based on the cumulative score. An article was labelled PJ if there were at least 6 x PJ indicators or 5 or less WJ indicators. Similarly, an article was labelled WJ if there were at least 6 x WJ indicators or 5 or less PJ indicators. In articles containing 5 or 6 points of both PJ and WJ, the story was labelled 'mixed'. Finally, when there were less than 6 points indicating either WJ or PJ, the article was coded as 'none'. Apart from the PJ/WJ frames, we also recorded the article type (news, feature, editorial, opinion) and the sources quoted within it. To test the effectiveness of the coding sheet, 10% of the sample was pilot tested and some categories and codes were added or adjusted accordingly.



### *Semi-structured interviews*

Interviewees were selected on the basis that all had written articles within the content analysis sample, and to ensure that all 4 countries were proportionally represented. Staff writers, freelancers, and Kenyans writing for foreign media were included to provide the widest range of perceptions. In all, 14 interviews were conducted; 5 were with full-time Kenyan reporters from the *Daily Nation* and *The Standard*, and other 5 foreign correspondents reported for British, US and South African outlets. Additionally, there were 2 freelance journalists working for foreign media as well as 2 Kenyans working for different foreign newspapers in the other countries within our sample. Five of the respondents were women, and 9 were men. Most outlets from the content analysis were represented in the interviews and their aim was to allow journalists to present their perspectives. Questions ranged from how the trigger events were covered, how interviewees understood and think of PJ, and what they felt were the main obstacles and challenges for practicing it. The majority of interviews took place in person in Nairobi in April 2019, but some were conducted via Skype.

### *Thematic analysis*

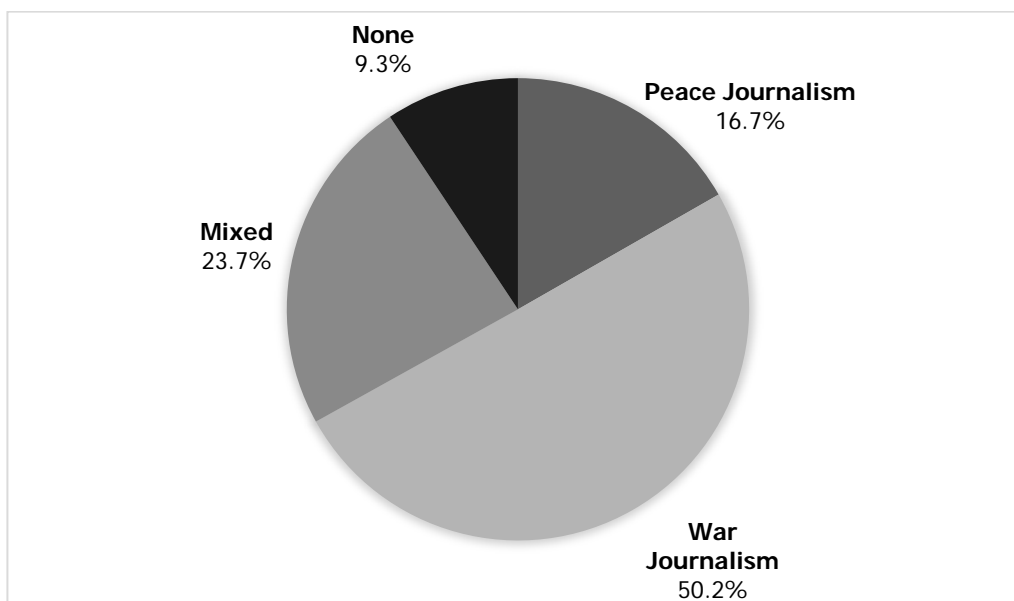
Interview transcriptions were examined using thematic analysis to identify and group themes and patterns within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006:6), and the first coding framework was generated inductively after reading the interview transcripts (Ibid). Relevant literature and prior PJ-related studies also informed our coding and these were revised multiple times and merged into wider themes. This process avoided data being unduly influenced by the researcher's preconceptions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The study also took a semantic approach in that the process evolved from description to interpretation, drawing on theory and previous literature, but "not looking for anything beyond what a participant has said" (Braun and Clarke, 2006:13). The thematic analysis synthesised three pivotal organizing themes: peace journalism, constraints and professional view.

### **Content analysis findings: WJ prevails**

Of the 257 articles coded, 61% related to the election violence and 39% to the Dusit attack. The majority of articles were news stories (76.6%), the remaining 23.3% being divided between 28 feature articles, 27 opinion pieces, 3 editorials, and 2 "other" texts classified (one was an analysis

of journalistic practice and the other was a historic timeline of previous events).<sup>2</sup> The events studied received a similar volume of coverage across all outlets in foreign media. In the Kenyan sample, for both events, the *Daily Nation* was more comprehensive in their coverage than *The Standard*. As we show in Figure 1, WJ is the dominant frame across the wider sample, representing 50.2% of the sample. The other half of the articles were divided between PJ (16.7%), mixed (23.7%) and none (9.3%).

**Figure 1. Overall analysis of frames**



The pattern is similar for both Kenyan and foreign media. Figure 2 shows the clear difference in articles with 'none' as their overall frame, where 19.7% of stories were found in Kenyan newspapers and only 1.9% in US newspapers, with none in the remaining foreign media. This could be explained by the majority of 'none' texts being short news pieces not containing many WJ/PJ characteristics; something more likely to occur in newspapers local to the trigger events where less context is needed, than in foreign newspapers that usually cover international issues with fewer, but longer stories. In contrast, as also shown in Figure 2, more 'mixed' articles were found in all foreign media (32.7% for US, 26.2% for UK and 33.3% in South Africa) than local media (19.7%). For PJ and WJ

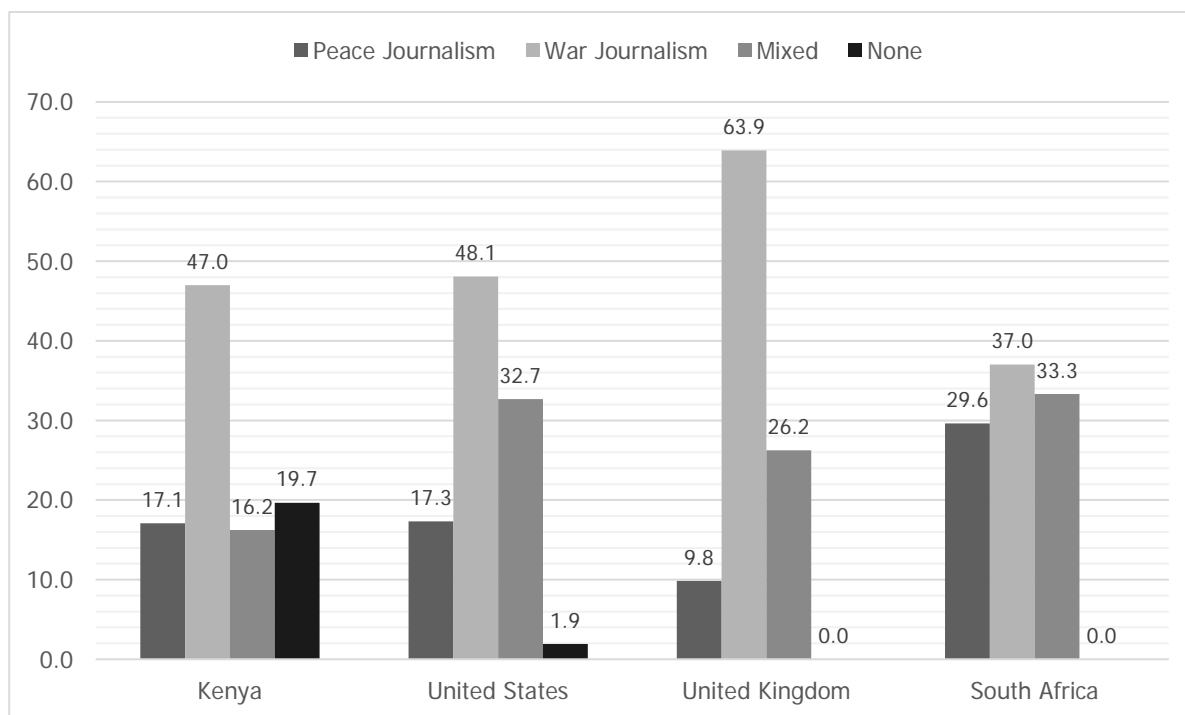
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<sup>2</sup> Opinions and editorials are usually specified over the headline. News tend to be shorter and follow an inverted pyramid structure, starting with the most recent and important event. Feature articles tend to be longer, character-driven and present a softer lead with a narrative style.

frames, however, the results were similar for both groups with no statistically significant relationship between local or foreign and PJ/WJ ( $\chi^2=0.197$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p>0.05$ ).

Figure 2 shows that UK coverage presented the most WJ stories (63.9%). For reports in the US and South Africa, on the other hand, there was a greater proportion of PJ articles (32.7% and 33.3%, respectively). South Africa was the only country to present a balanced quantity of PJ, WJ and mixed articles, however, the small frequency of cases (27) reduces the generalisability of the statement.

**Figure 2. Frame per country**



*Fisher's Exact=37.936;  $p<0.0001$ ; Cramer's  $V=0.223$   
PJ and WJ characteristics*

As Table 2 indicates, the three most recurrent PJ indicators related to language, including the avoidance of victimizing (94.2%), emotive (80.1%) or demonizing language (67.3%). Accordingly, Table 3 shows that the use of victimizing, emotive and demonizing language were the least observed WJ characteristics. Foreign and local media behaved similarly in terms of language, although there is a notable difference ( $p<0.05$ ; Cramer's  $V=0.130$ ) in the use of emotive words, these being higher for international newspapers (25.0%) than for Kenyan ones (14.5%). Repeated examples included "genocidal pogroms", "massacre" and "war" as descriptions of the election violence. Many such emotive references, however, came from direct quotes from political or voter sources including, for

example, an article published by *The Guardian* on October 27, 2017, entitled: "Kenya election: government accused of 'genocide' against ethnic minorities".

Moreover, if divided by case, the use of demonizing language was significantly higher ( $p < 0.001$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0.603$ ) in stories about the attack (68.3%) than for the election (10.3%). At least 59 articles (22.9%) used the word "terrorists", considered as demonizing by Lynch and McGoldrick (2005:29). "Long-suffering Kenyan people", "too traumatised" and "self-pity" were among victimizing expressions, although only 5.4% of articles used them. However, reporters in both Kenya and the foreign press avoided the use of WJ-related language, with some considerable exceptions in the case of the Dusit attack.

Besides the language indicators, non-partisanship (65.7%), the avoidance of dichotomy (49%) and a focus on causes and consequences (49%) were the most prevalent PJ characteristics. On the other hand, finding areas of agreement (7%), multiparty orientation (9.7%) and proactiveness (13.2%) were the least present PJ indicators. Given that only the week before the first vote was accounted for within our sample, and that the Dusit attack was unforeseen, 'proactive' coverage was expected to be low. For WJ, reactiveness (86.4%), victory orientation (79.8%) and two-party orientation (79%) were the most salient characteristics. Partisanship (33.1%), focus on the differences leading to conflict (41.6%) and the 'good versus bad' dichotomy (49%) were the least present WJ indicators, besides the language-related ones discussed previously. The percentages of these aspects, however, were still rather high.

Most articles were elite-oriented (73.9%) rather than people-oriented (24.1%). There is a significant difference between local and foreign media ( $p < 0.001$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0.215$ ) where Kenyan newspapers were more people-oriented (34.2%) than their foreign counterparts (15.7%). Nearly half the sample focused on causes and consequences (48.2%), but foreign media gave more relevance to the roots of the conflict and its effects (62.8%) than the local press (30.8%) ( $p < 0.001$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0.320$ ). Only 10.5% of the stories were solutions-oriented, with no significant difference between Kenyan and international publications. In contrast, 79.8% of the sample was victory-oriented, with a higher number in foreign cases (89.3%) than local ones (68.4%) ( $p < 0.001$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0.259$ ).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The two indicators do not add up to 100% because it was possible to code a story in the content analysis with a 0 for both solutions and victory-oriented.

**Table 2. PJ characteristics**

	Kenya		Foreign media		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
	(N=117)		(N=140)		(N=257)	
<b>Peace Journalism</b>						
Avoids victimizing language	110	94.0	133	95.0	243	94,55
Avoids emotive words <sup>a</sup>	100	85.5	105	75,00	205	79,77
Avoids demonizing language	74	63.3	98	70,00	172	66,93
Non-partisan <sup>b</sup>	61	52.1	108	77,14	169	65,76
Avoids good and bad dichotomy <sup>c</sup>	45	38.5	81	57,86	126	49,03
Focuses on the causes and possible consequences <sup>d</sup>	36	30.8	88	62,86	124	48,25
People oriented <sup>e</sup>	40	34.2	22	15,71	62	24,12
Reports also on invisible effects of war	20	17.1	24	17,14	44	17,12
Proactive	19	16.2	15	10,71	34	13,23
Solution-oriented	13	11.1	14	10,00	27	10,50
Multiparty orientation	10	8.6	15	10,71	25	9,73
Finds areas of agreement	7	6.0	11	7,86	18	7,00

<sup>e</sup>  $\chi^2=4.329$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.05$ ; Cramer's  $V=0.130$

<sup>d</sup>  $\chi^2=17.700$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.001$ ; Cramer's  $V=0.262$

<sup>c</sup>  $\chi^2=10.311$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.01$ ; Cramer's  $V=0.200$

<sup>b</sup>  $\chi^2=26.282$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.001$ ; Cramer's  $V=0.320$

<sup>a</sup>  $\chi^2=11.883$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.001$ ; Cramer's  $V=0.215$

**Table 3. WJ characteristics**

	Kenya		Foreign media		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
	(N=117)		(N=140)		(N=257)	
<b>War Journalism</b>						
Reactive	98	83,76	125	89,29	223	86,77
Victory-oriented <sup>a</sup>	80	68,38	125	89,29	205	79,77
Two-party orientation <sup>b</sup>	78	66,67	125	89,29	203	78,99
Reports only visible effects of war	84	71,79	112	80,00	196	76,26
Elite oriented <sup>c</sup>	74	63,25	116	82,86	190	73,93
Focuses on here and now <sup>d</sup>	76	64,96	51	36,43	127	49,42
Good and bad dichotomy <sup>e</sup>	69	58,97	57	40,71	126	49,03
Focuses on differences that led to conflict <sup>f</sup>	25	21,37	82	58,57	107	41,63
Partisan <sup>g</sup>	54	46,15	31	22,14	85	33,07
Demonizing language	43	36,75	42	35,90	85	33,07
Emotive words <sup>h</sup>	17	14,53	35	25,00	52	20,23
Victimizing language	7	5,98	7	5,00	14	5,45

<sup>a</sup>  $\chi^2=17.266$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.001$ ; Cramer's  $V=0.259$

<sup>b</sup>  $\chi^2=19.647$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.001$ ; Cramer's  $V=0.276$

<sup>c</sup>  $\chi^2=13.793$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.001$ ; Cramer's  $V=0.232$

<sup>d</sup>  $\chi^2=20.752$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.001$ ; Cramer's  $V=0.284$

<sup>e</sup>  $\chi^2=8.504$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.05$ ; Cramer's  $V=0.182$

<sup>f</sup>  $\chi^2=36.304$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.001$ ; Cramer's  $V=0.376$

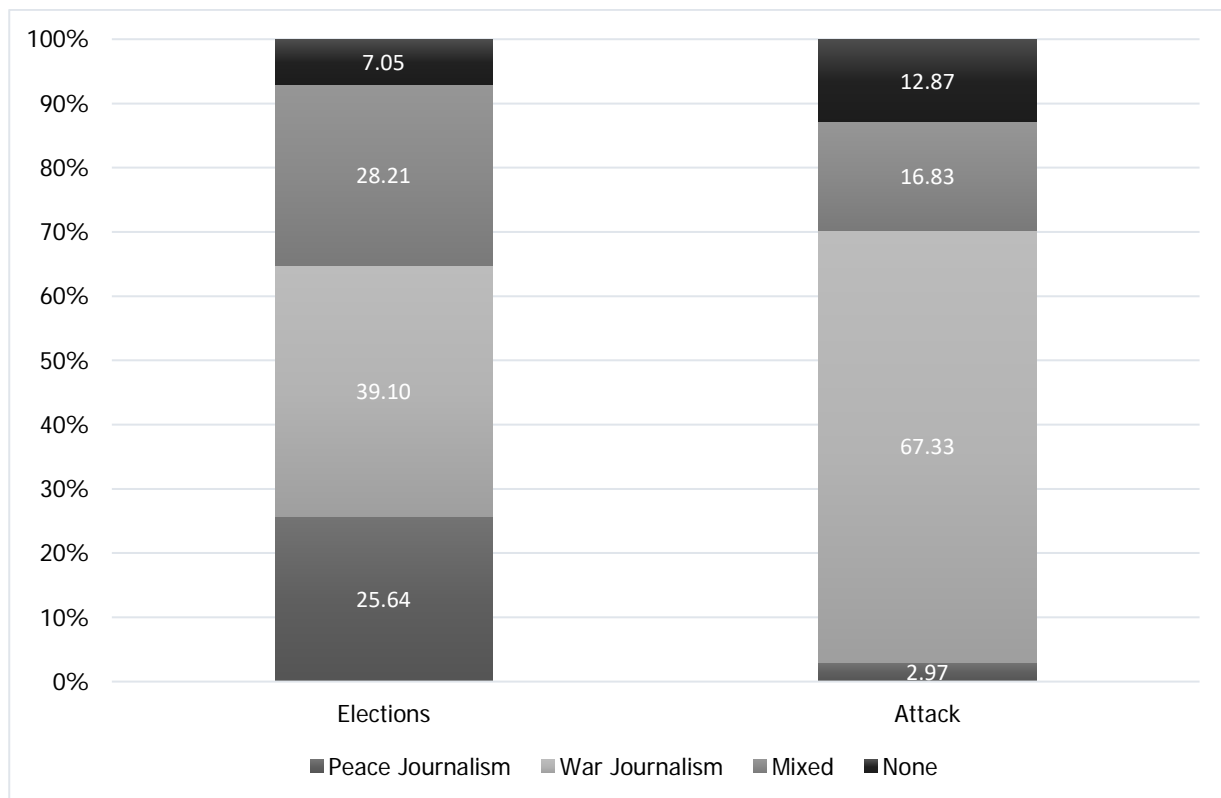
<sup>g</sup>  $\chi^2=16.600$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.001$ ; Cramer's  $V=0.254$

<sup>h</sup>  $\chi^2=4.329$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.05$ ; Cramer's  $V=0.130$

As demonstrated in figure 3, there were significantly more WJ-framed stories ( $p<0.001$ ; Cramer's  $V=0.364$ ) about the Dusit attack (67.3%) than for the elections (39.1%). When country of publication is accounted for, the coverage of the Dusit attack was similar in terms of the dominant

frame. Yet there are some subtle differences in the 2017 election coverage. Media in Kenya had more PJ-framed articles (34.5%) than the foreign newspapers (20.8%), whereas 47.5% of their stories were WJ-framed as opposed to 39.1% in the local press ( $p < 0.001$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0.433$ ).

**Figure 3. Frame per case**



$\chi^2 = 34.127$ ;  $df = 3$ ;  $p < 0.0001$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0.364$

#### *Type of article*

There is a relationship between the type of article and PJ/WJ framing ( $p < 0.001$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0.367$ ). While most news stories (56.9%) were dominated by WJ, only 28.3% of the other story types were so framed (Table 4). Contrastingly, 40.0% of these are framed as PJ, as opposed to 9.6% of news articles. The PJ frame predominated (57.1%) in feature articles, albeit the small  $n$  (28) reduces generalisability here. Overall, the content analysis revealed a preponderance of WJ-framed reporting in our sample, more so in articles related to the Dusit attack, with no significant difference between the local and foreign coverage despite some nuances in certain characteristics.

**Table 4. Frame per type of article**

	News stories		Feature, opinion, editorial or other		Total per article type	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Peace journalism	19	9,7	24	40,0	43	16,7
War journalism	112	56,9	17	28,3	129	50,2
Mixed	45	22,8	16	26,7	61	23,7
None	21	10,7	3	5,0	24	9,3
Total per frame	197	100,0	60	100,0	257	100,0

$\chi^2=34.645$ ;  $df=3$ ;  $p<0.001$ ; Cramer's  $V=0.367$

### **Interview findings: lack of knowledge and misinterpretation**

Overall, our content analysis confirmed the lack of PJ stories - and the prevalence of WJ - in local and foreign press coverage of electoral violence and terrorism in Kenya. This method was used to determine the degree to which PJ was being applied in conflict reporting, and to generate themes for the interviews. Thereafter, the interviews sought to uncover whether PJ-framed articles - even though relatively few in number - were due to a conscious decision on the part of the reporters who wrote them. In other words, the intention was to discover why PJ is not recognised or applied more widely. We present our interview analysis in three distinct sections: the knowledge and understanding of peace journalism, the views on solutions orientation and constraints in journalistic practice.

#### *Knowledge and understanding of PJ*

All Kenyan interviewees had heard of PJ. Most, however, defined it very differently to Galtung's original proposal. Five out of eight respondents with knowledge of PJ associated the term with self-censorship in order to prevent violence.

*... in one way or the other, you try to censor some information here and there to, kind of, encourage that kind of peace.*

(Journalist 7)

Despite Galtung characterising PJ as being truth-oriented, Kenyan respondents do not see these two concepts as aligned, and there is division among interviewees as to whether PJ is actually desirable or not. For some, "truth should not be compromised" (Journalist 12), yet others think that "at times



we need to compromise the truth" (Journalist 7). While J7 sees PJ as his "responsibility", the rest are less convinced, and J10 voices such doubts:

*I do not subscribe to the idea of peace journalism. Journalism is just journalism. So, if we stick to its foundations of accuracy, objectivity, of being fair...we have it. (...) But, PJ, in other words, is telling me to be cautious, to be sensitive to these things, which is dangerous.*

(J10)

The term 'dangerous' is used in the sense that PJ could become self-censorship, which works against journalistic values of neutrality and objectivity. Others, however, do not see this as critical, but argue instead that "there are people who get away" when the media "starts sanitizing things to that level" (J6). However, some respondents believe the concept applies to some topics but not others. There are "genuine cases", for instance, when "tribe A is fighting tribe B", but not when "the government wants to seal an election" (J9), or when "you are covering a terror attack", or when you are there "first of all as a Kenyan" and "not sympathizing with the terrorists" but representing "the other side of the story" (J7). Still, even when applicable, some respondents do not see PJ as a long-term answer; J9 for example describes it as using a painkiller "to treat a very serious ailment".

Two Kenyan interviewees working mainly for foreign media understand PJ in terms resonating with those described in mainstream literature. While one does not subscribe to it, the other suggests it is not the definition of PJ he objects to, but rather the way it is practised:

*I agree that there are responsibilities the media has not to (...) hype up stories that might lead to conflict, you know, to be careful about the nuances in how they report. But I don't think that extends to actually not reporting things, I don't think it extends to (...) changing the facts of what's going on. I think it is very much about the nuances you give it, the context within which you explain it.*

(J11)

In contrast, none of the foreign correspondents we interviewed knew about PJ. When introduced to its main characteristics during the interview, two respondents generally agreed to it, while the rest were mostly against it. Some, for instance, showed concern about its normative aspect:

*...I prefer practitioners to decide how to do their jobs. So, I don't think it's for academics to tell journalists how to cover events.*

(J3)

Furthermore, four respondents went further, asserting that there is nothing wrong with war being the predominant frame:

*Violence is often newsworthy. The word 'news' itself is something new. And if we consider most places to be generally peaceful, the 'new' bit is when violence is introduced.*

(J4)

However, two foreign correspondents agree - just having heard of PJ – that it raises some valid points. They noted that often the first line of a story will be the number of deaths, or the picture of “a youth hurling a firearm” (J2). Moreover, “too much attention is given to primary political players (...) and not nearly enough attention is given to communities that may be affected by whatever situation you are covering” (J5). The same interviewee also points out that, while the simple binaries of good versus evil need to be “undercut”, reporters are also responsible for describing events “as we see them, and not to present everything in the same dispassionate way” (J5). The majority of foreign correspondents in our sample, however, dislike PJ because some of its characteristics are simply “what journalism is supposed to be about” (J1). J13 meanwhile, suggests it simply describes the “the bleeding obvious” (J13) and that:

*I think it is impossible to look at conflict without looking at, yes, the people who are doing the shooting (...). But then, as far more interesting, the impact of that on people who are trying to live their lives. And that is certainly where most of my reporting exists (...). I guess that is PJ, in a way. But, if you ask me, it is just journalism, isn't it?*

These respondents seem to subscribe to many of PJ characteristics but disagree that it needs to be something different than just ‘good’ journalism. “Maybe” muses J1, “we are singing from the same hymn sheet” but “I just don’t like the term”. In other words, for some, actually calling it ‘peace’ journalism brings a certain bias to its practice.

### *Solutions-orientation*

There is deep disagreement on whether journalism should be solutions oriented or not. The extent of this debate ranges from “I have very little time for this kind of agenda-driven approach to journalism” (J13) to “my job should include a solution” (J14). Overall, four interviewees thought solutions-oriented coverage is desirable, but 9 believe otherwise. Many agree that the role of an on-the-spot reporter is to witness and report truthfully. Focusing on solutions risks bringing “too much

of the advocate or politician" (J4) and, thus, "taking sides" (J10). Nonetheless, the smaller group comprised mainly of Kenyans, believes that providing solutions and alternatives is desirable.

Some interviewees agree that while proposing solutions might not be a role for foreign correspondents, there are others "whose job is to take a more stand-back approach" and analyse what is going on and what can be done about it (J2). The problem with branding journalism as solutions-oriented, argues J11, "is not so much with the frame itself, but about with how then it becomes practised, and how it starts to legitimize certain things". This might involve understating problems in order to focus on more positive aspects of a specific issue.

### *Constraints in journalistic practice*

One of the main critiques to PJ as a theoretical framework is that it underestimates the role that structural constraints play in journalism practice (e.g. Hanitzsch, 2007). This means that even if journalists understood and supported the concept of PJ and wanted to practice it, external factors actually make it hard to achieve in an operational sense. Our interviewees mentioned a number of practical restraints, that can be grouped according to five subthemes: political, economic, cultural, resources and journalistic practice. When it comes to economic restraints, one challenge facing Kenyan journalists is ownership, since the majority of media organisations are owned by political families associated with particular ethnic groups. Moreover, the government is a major advertiser with many newspapers, meaning that there are topics and people they "can't touch" (J6). Accordingly, in terms of political constraints, reporters are vulnerable to pressures from the powerful, and this leads to self-censorship. Abuses from some parties, therefore, are unexplored and unreported. Furthermore, low rates of pay in Kenyan journalism perpetuates "brown envelope" corruption (J11) where reporters are bribed to suppress stories potentially damaging to certain groups.

Contrastingly, foreign correspondents appear exempt of such constraints and are able to "say things and explain them in a way that some of us cannot do" (J10). Outsiders do not understand context and nuance in the same way locals do, but they are often able to more easily articulate the bigger picture even if, as J2 suggests, they might be criticised on social media, which falls within the theme of cultural constraints:

*Kenyans on Twitter (...) get very aggressive, and you will end up getting bombarded with abuse if you say something that people don't deem to be correct.*

(I2)

In relation to resources, foreign correspondents agree that they could do a better job if more than one reporter was assigned to such a large territory. Many journalists for example, are responsible for reporting all 40 plus countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, meaning that much of the continent is hardly covered and proactive reporting before conflict breaks out and writing about the aftermath is almost impossible. As J2 admits, there are always “more compelling, immediate stories”. Moreover, promoting the region to remote editors with little knowledge or interest in Africa is also problematic. Often, editors argue that audiences are not interested in the region, or in the largely negative content, which can be considered a cultural constraint. J13, however, believes this misses the point and that “it’s not the people that aren’t interested in Africa”, it’s that stories are not “good enough”.

Political constraints, according to most interviewees, are related to the prevalence of propaganda in Kenya. Consequently, it is difficult to escape official accounts and offer balance. In the case of the Dusit attack though, due to a lack of official information, some journalists admitted to over-relying on survivors and victim families as their main sources. Kenyan respondents also suggested that the prestige of foreign reporters and the publications that work for mean easier access to those in power. Conversely, common languages and the perception of equality mean that local journalists often find it easier to access local citizens. Access, therefore, is variable; Kenyan respondents agreed that ethnicity is vital, given that “the kind of information that somebody shares with you is actually skewed depending on who you are and where you come from” (J7).

One other resources-related aspect - repeated mostly by Kenyan reporters - was the need for more training. Journalists need to be prepared for conflict situations but J5 referred to the “brain drain” of African talent, where regional reporters leave to work for international, better paid media outlets or other organizations. Low budgets and tight deadlines were mentioned by several interviewees, since they both determine the time and resources reporters have available. Some constraints linked to practice - for instance the space given to certain articles and genre specifications - are also problematic when trying to implement PJ characteristics:

*In a 200-word news story, you just have someone's outrageous quote, and that's it. Whereas in a 2,000-word story, you can have that quote, but you can explain around it, where it comes from, what it's intended to do, why doesn't make sense, etc.*

(J5)

In particular, Kenyan media is criticised for its “he said, she said” format (J11) based on an exchange of quotes from opposing views without any accompanying context, cause or consequence. The inclusion of more features, analysis and opinion pieces, especially when social media breaks the

news, was mentioned as a useful solution. J5 for example, suggested that “we all need to come down and stop churning out millions of short stories, and do longer stories, but tell them much better”.

### **A balance between theory and practice**

Previous literature (see Lee and Maslog, 2005; Shinar, 2009; Ersoy, 2010; Lee, 2010) has evidenced a clear pattern of WJ being the dominant frame in the coverage of different conflicts across the world. Our study confirmed this in the case of Kenya but we have gone further, comparing local and foreign journalist perspectives, and how they reported on two different events. Overall, the analysis revealed that even if the coverage by local and foreign reporters was relatively similar in terms of PJ/WJ frames (albeit some nuances found on specific characteristics or topic covered), their knowledge and understanding of PJ differed considerably.

From the content analysis, it is worth emphasising the notable difference in the framing of stories depending on the event. Articles related to the Dusit attack, for instance, were substantially more WJ-oriented than those focusing on electoral violence and many interviewees agreed that the two events were covered differently. Indeed, given such different types of conflict, it would be naive to believe that a fixed binary model like PJ/WJ would operate similarly for every event. Journalism varies in different contexts and we contend that “good” conflict reporting might vary according to situations, places and circumstances. PJ, consequently, is not a approach that can be universally applied. The particular conditions of every conflict and event could—and should—affect its characteristics, application, and even desirability. Rather than attending to the specific ways in which it is practised, PJ is a concept that should focus on outcomes.

Yet, perhaps, our main contribution here is to reveal the tension between the theoretical conception of peace journalism and its use—or lack thereof—by journalists. By firstly examining their reporting and then asking the journalists responsible to reflect on it more widely, we have been able to understand not only content, but the motivations and shaping factors that influence it. Indeed, our research gets to the heart of the natural jarring between the scholarly theorising about journalism and its practical application. Indeed, it seems that journalism theory and practise do not often converge. One of the reasons why previous literature has consistently concluded that WJ prevails over PJ is because journalists are either unfamiliar with PJ, or have heard about it but choose to not embrace it. In our Kenyan PJ context, our interview data shows, in common with Rodney-Gumede’s

(2016) findings, that none of the foreign correspondents (except for the regional freelancer) had heard of PJ before. Furthermore, with two exceptions, most local reporters in our sample actively chose not to practice it.

The fact that Kenyan reporters had all heard about PJ whilst foreign correspondents had not is possibly explained by the emphasis on conflict-sensitive training for journalists, organized by various organisations following the violent 2007 elections in Kenya. Conversely, as noted by Aslam (2014:121-122), only a handful of Western universities and institutions seem to offer courses or modules on PJ.

However, when asked to define PJ, most Kenyan reporters linked the concept to self-censorship and truth-picking in the name of preaching peace, similar to what Weighton and McCurdy (2017:653) call the “interventionist” approach. This is why, according to interviewees, many are critical of PJ, since it goes against their journalistic instincts to call “things as they are” (J6). And foreign correspondents, when presented with the dominant interpretation of PJ, have different assessments about its meaning. Respondents mainly emphasized that many of the characteristics of PJ are already what reporters should be doing in any case, and so there is no need to so specifically label it (J1), and this critique resonates with the work of Hanitzsch (2004), Loyn (2007) and Shinar (2007). Many of the interviewees believe that placing any adjective in front of ‘journalism’ is problematic since it implies that reporters should work towards a grand goal—peace, in the case of PJ—hence becoming moral witnesses rather than “objective” reporters. Indeed, some have argued for a concept of PJ that comes closer to advocacy for peace. Yet, as Shaw (2011:114) points out, there are two main “camps” in PJ scholarship, and most of its supporters instead insist that peace journalism is, and should be, faithful to the tenets of traditional or “good” journalism (e.g. Ersoy, 2010; Kempf, 2017).

Another of PJ’s oft-cited criticisms is also related to the tension between theory and practice, namely that it underestimates the role played by structural constraints impacting journalists’ operations (Hanitzsch, 2007; Rodney-Gumede, 2016; Weighton and McCurdy, 2017). Our study sought to identify some of those restraints. Building on previous work by Weighton and McCurdy (2017) and Adebayo (2018) — our interview data established that Kenyan journalists are mainly affected by political and economic factors such as the ownership of their newspapers, political pressures and corruption. Furthermore, foreign correspondents are limited by the vast territories they need to cover, on top of an apparent lack of interest in Africa on the part of audiences and editors (see also

von Naso 2018; Rodny-Gumede 2016). Finally, a precarity in resources, as well as cultural aspects of journalism practice affect both local and foreign journalists when speed and brevity tend to overshadow substantive content. Consequently, and so the concept can be applied by practicing journalists, PJ should not be seen as a one-size-fits-all approach but should take into account these constraints that vary according to each context and circumstance.

Also in relation to this, our content analysis results show a positive association between the type of story and the frame it adopts. PJ-framings for example, occur more regularly in features, opinion pieces or editorials than they do in news stories; this relationship suggests “longer stories allow journalists more time, room and effort to investigate an issue or event more fully and thoughtfully” (Lee et al., 2006:513). This claim is supported by some of our interviewees, who assert that the genre restrictions of traditional news stories sometimes make it hard to include PJ’s context and explanations. Indeed, at times when the news is broken via social media, some respondents advocate “a wider conversation” about “whether there should be a new approach in the media” (J2). Of course, this is not to imply that breaking news stories should cease, or that long-form pieces should be the only acceptable journalistic format. Even if the literature tends to assert PJ as the only preferred approach to covering conflict, Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) and Galtung (2006) have argued that a balance between WJ and PJ stories is preferable to a pattern of omission, where there is too much focus on conflict and not enough on more constructive framings. Future research might emphasize this balance.

Of course, our acceptable but still modest research sample focused on a few distinguished newspapers from four countries, and so we cannot generalise too far. Moreover, the analysis centred only on English language newspapers. Radio and television, as well as vernacular media, are influential in Kenya and could be taken into account in future studies. However, here we are more concerned with depth than breadth, and we shed light into the existing gap between PJ as a theoretical concept and the way it is used—or not—among practicing journalists (both local and foreign) in Kenya.

In conclusion, the coverage of the 2017 electoral violence and 2019 Dusit attack in Kenya by local and foreign newspaper reporters presented a predominance of WJ-framed stories. And, notwithstanding nuances between respondents, the journalists we interviewed demonstrated both a lack of knowledge and considerable misinterpretation associated with PJ. It is unsurprising perhaps, that the concept is yet to gain wide acceptance from both journalists and researchers (Lee

et al. 2006). Training and disambiguation of PJ, we suggest, are needed before reporters and editors will embrace it. Galtung (1993:xiii-xiv) admits that a list of “do’s and don’ts” of journalistic practice by itself will not drive change without “some kind of cultural transformation”, and a set of fixed indicators and characteristics crafted at a theoretical level has not necessarily served the PJ cause. The study of the Kenyan cases thus underscores the need for revisiting, updating and rethinking peace journalism as a more complex conceptualisation that better aligns with the diversity of present-day journalism. For innovative journalism to emerge and expand, it should come from “the inside” and not simply from academic theory (Hanitzsch, 2004). In other words, for PJ to become more flexible, nuanced and applicable for journalists, there is a need to bridge the gap between academia and practicing journalists. This is an observation that clearly goes beyond war/peace journalism paradigms, and more widely points to theory and practice in journalism often existing in parallel and perhaps not often intersecting. Theory-based research that also takes into account the perspectives of practicing reporters might be a way to bringing the two groups together, and the growing number of journalists-turned-scholars will undoubtedly also play a key role in doing so.

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