



PEACE JOURNALISM – A PANACEA FOR POST-CONFLICT COLOMBIA?

Periodismo de paz: ¿La panacea para la Colombia del posconflicto?

Jornalismo de paz: é a panacea para pós-conflito da Colômbia?

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RESUMEN

Colombia está a punto de firmar un acuerdo de paz después de largas y difíciles negociaciones entre el Gobierno y las FARC. Durante los últimos dos años, la Administración del presidente Juan Manuel Santos ha desarrollado una campaña discreta pero exitosa con el fin de persuadir cada vez a más periodistas de cambiar sus costumbres y comenzar a producir lo que se denomina periodismo de paz. ¿Esto se dio por accidente? Probablemente la respuesta sea no porque comenzó poco tiempo después de que las FARC exigieron la “democratización de los medios de comunicación” en Colombia como el cambio necesario para llegar a un acuerdo de paz. Este trabajo examina cómo tal estrategia de los medios de comunicación estatales ha sido exitosa y no ha sido retada por los mismos periodistas que aseguran que el Estado “continúa ejerciendo actos violentos, restrictivos y coactivos” en su contra, así como las posibles consecuencias que puede haber para la libertad de prensa a largo plazo. Pero ¿qué sucedería si el Gobierno no tiene segundas intenciones y simplemente está promocionando el periodismo de paz como la panacea potencial que Colombia necesita? Por este motivo, también se identifican las ventajas y las desventajas del periodismo de paz en situaciones después del conflicto. La hipótesis de base es esta: el periodismo de paz, a pesar de todos sus beneficios teóricos, está muy lejos de ser la panacea perfecta para Colombia. El periodismo de paz puede enriquecer el trabajo de los periodistas e incluso en algún nivel puede contribuir a construir la paz, pero se necesitan cambios más grandes y radicales en la industria de la comunicación y es indispensable implementar prácticas periodísticas antes de que los periodistas puedan contribuir significativamente a la paz en Colombia.

PALABRAS CLAVE: paz, periodismo, después del conflicto, Colombia, conflicto armado, FARC.

ABSTRACT

Colombia is on the verge of signing a peace treaty after long-lasting and difficult negotiations between the government and the FARC-guerrillas (for its name in Spanish.) During the last two years, the administration of President Juan Manuel Santos has carried out a discrete but successful campaign to persuade more and more reporters into changing their practices and start producing what is known as “Peace Journalism.” Has it happened by accident? The most probably answer is not because it started short after the FARC presented their demands for a “democratization of the media” in Colombia, as a necessary change in order to reach a peace settlement. This paper provides an examination about how this state-run media strategy has worked out successfully, without being challenged by the same journalists that claim the state “keeps running multiple violent, restrictive and coercive actions” against them, and what possible consequences it can have for press freedom on the long term. But, what if the government has no hidden agendas and is just doing right in promoting Peace Journalism as the potential panacea Colombia needs? Therefore, I also try to identify here the merits and limitations of Peace Journalism in post-conflict situations. The hypothesis I depart from is that Peace Journalism, despite all its theoretical benefits, in itself is far from being a flawless panacea for Colombia. Peace Journalism can enrich reporters’ work and even at some degree contribute to peace building, but larger and more radical changes within the media industry and journalistic practices need to be introduced before journalists can contribute to peace in Colombia meaningfully.

KEYWORDS: peace, journalism, post-conflict, Colombia, armed conflict, FARC.

RESUMO

A Colômbia está prestes a assinar um acordo de paz depois de longas e difíceis negociações entre o governo e as FARC. Durante os últimos dois anos, a administração do presidente Juan Manuel Santos tem desenvolvido uma campanha discreta, mas exitosa com o fim de persuadir cada vez a mais jornalistas de mudar os seus costumes e começar a produzir o que denomina-se como “Jornalismo de paz”. Isto se deu por acidente? Provavelmente a resposta seja não porque isto começou pouco tempo depois de que as FARC exigiram a “democratização dos meios de comunicação” na Colômbia como o câmbio necessário para chegar a um acordo de paz. Este trabalho examina como esta estratégia dos meios de comunicação estatais tem sido exitosa e não tem sido desafiada pelos mesmos jornalistas que asseguram que o estado “continua exercendo atos violentos, restritivos e coativos” na sua contra, assim como as possíveis consequências que pode ter para a liberdade de imprensa em longo prazo. Mas, zo que aconteceria se o governo não tem segundas intenções e simplesmente está promovendo o *jornalismo de paz* como a panacea potencial que a Colômbia necessita? Por este motivo, também se identifica as vantagens e as desvantagens do jornalismo de paz em situações depois do conflito. A hipótese de base é: o *jornalismo de paz*, a pesar de todos os seus benefícios teóricos, está muito longe de ser a panacea perfeita para a Colômbia. O *jornalismo de paz* pode enriquecer o trabalho dos jornalistas e incluso em algum nível, pode contribuir a construir a paz, mas precisa-se de câmbios maiores e radicais na indústria da comunicação e é necessário promover práticas jornalísticas antes que os jornalistas possam contribuir significativamente à paz na Colômbia.

PALAVRAS CHAVE: Paz, jornalismo, depois do conflito, Colômbia, conflito armado, FARC.

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III.1] INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY STATEMENT

This study builds upon the following three research questions:

1. Why are journalists in Colombia talking so much about Peace Journalism?
2. What can Peace Journalism mean for Colombia after a peace treaty is signed?
3. Why is Peace Journalism being encouraged and sponsored by the Colombian government?

Peace Journalism has been presented more or less as a panacea for alleviating the consequences of traditional war journalism, and for creating the ideology base for a new, more fruitful and less vicious, public sphere (Galtung 1965 & 2002, Kempf 2003, Becker 2004). On March 23, 2016, the Colombian government and the Farc guerrillas will sign a peace agreement which will end a very old armed conflict. Some of the main causes of the armed conflict in Colombia are state weakness, unique landscape features, and powerful economic forces with multiple groups using violence to further their own interests (Gray 2008, p 82). The ongoing peace talks in Cuba is the “*Colombian state’s most cost-effective strategy to end the long-running conflict*” and to start delivering real results in the guerrillas’ areas of influence (Delgado 2015, p 410).

Colombia’s 2014 presidential election was a referendum on the peace process with the FARC. The election was “*an ideal test of the relationship between bullets and ballots*” and “*featured two candidates with diametrically opposed positions on the peace process*” (Weintraub et al. 2015, p 6). President Juan Manuel Santos, the pro-peace candidate and the winner in the election, performed better in communities with moderate levels of insurgent violence and poorly in communities with both very high and very low violence. “*Colombians re-elected Juan Manuel Santos, giving him more time and a mandate to pursue peace. Colombia is at an auspicious moment in its history*” (Rollow 2015, p 88). The peace negotiations have lasted for three years and the need of media democratization and the role of the press is one of the themes that have been discussed. During this time, both researchers, journalist organizations and the government have praised the virtues of Peace Journalism both as a system of ideas and as a convenient box of tools for the post-conflict ahead in Colombia. Therein lies the reason behind my interest in the topic.

I have spent many hours searching on the web for relevant information about the ongoing peace process in Colombia and its future implications for the work of journalists after the treaty is sign on March 23, 2016. The more information I gathered, the clearer it became for me the kind of strategic campaign the government of Juan Manuel Santos has launched in order to get the greater number of journalists to side up with the official ideology and in particular with journalistic practices that, despite the lack of enough evidence for such claims, are believed to have the power to improve reconstruction and enhance peace development.

In order to be able to grasp how the Government has been working to persuade journalists about the merits of Peace Journalism, I had to search for all kind of conferences, seminars and other meetings involving journalistic debates about media’s role in the post-conflict that has taken place in Colombia during the peace talks in Cuba. Once I had done that, I listed all the events chronically, categorized them roughly after theme and kind of speakers, and put the information in a map of the country. It was first then, I had the possibility to recognize the governmental campaign’s nationwide bearing and to try to identify its methodology and possible goals and hidden agenda.

At the same time, and because of my preliminary lack of knowledge about Peace Journalism, I have spent as well many hours searching in academic journals about the topic. My goal was to be able to understand why just Peace Journalism has tacitly been adopted as a state policy in Colombia. I focused my efforts on finding research about journalistic practices in places after armed conflicts have settled. The specific case of South African journalism after the Apartheid was abolished captured certainly my attention, because it has been promoted by the Colombian government as a positive model to be followed. In total, 120 related academic articles were gathered, and I read about 60 of them in detail and structured them in three different categories: (1) articles about Peace Journalism’s advantages or weaknesses, (2) articles about specific cases of Peace Journalism around the world, and (3) articles about journalism and/or press freedom in Colombia.

This text is constructed as follows. I will next present a summary of the situation of press freedom in Colombia and what implications the peace negotiations could

have for the media. After that, I will review some of the research done about Peace Journalism's virtues and shortcomings, and I will focus on the case of South Africa since its example has been presented by the government as suitable for the development of Peace Journalism in Colombia.

Those readers who think they know enough about the first two themes, can save time by jumping directly to chapter III. I will namely there engage into explaining how the Colombian government's successful campaign for spreading the practice of Peace Journalism journalists has worked out.

Finally, after presenting a set of conclusions, I will discuss (1) why I think Colombians journalists should be more suspicious of the government's media strategy. The latter is more a kind of invitation to my colleagues to keep on questioning power – and even more when it suddenly starts playing the role of the good guy.

WAR ON PRESS FREEDOM – BUT PEACE AT SIGHT?

The Article 20 of the Constitution of Colombia states that “*the media is free and has social responsibilities. The right to correction under the same conditions is guaranteed. There will be no censorship*” (OAS 2005, p 18). Article 73 says that the “*journalistic activity shall enjoy protection to guarantee its freedom and professional independence*” (Oxford University Press 2015, p 19). But what the law says is not what the reality of being a reporter in Colombia is about. In the first semester of 2014, a total of 116 journalists and social communicators, whose lives were at great risk, were approved as beneficiaries of the services of the National Protection Unit¹ (UNP 2014). The Colombian Federation of Journalists, FECOLPER, sums up the situation for the press: “*At present the various armed actors, including the state, keep running multiple violent, restrictive and coercive actions that seek to limit the exercise of freedom of the press and generate media blackouts on certain issues. At the same time, the elites by controlling the political and economic power, which in many cases takes the form of ownership of the mass media, promote*

¹ The National Protection Unit (NPU) in Colombia articulates, coordinates and implements the service of protecting the rights to life, liberty, integrity and security of persons, groups and communities who are in situations of extraordinary or extreme risk as a direct result of the exercise of its activities or political, public, social or humanitarian, as established by Decree 4912 of December 26, 2011 which was compiled by Decree 1066 of May 26, 2015

strategies of censorship and obstruction of journalistic work” (Fecolper 2014, p 4).

After decades of armed conflict, violence has a huge influence on how most of Colombians live. Violence regulates how they vote in elections (Weintraub et al 2015), who keeps the power and at what extent media can act as a watchdog of their rights. The armed conflict has triggered a wide range of emotions among mass media consumers, being patriotism and fear two of the most prominent. Journalists and their readers share the same kind of emotions and have been victims of the same institutional corruption, criminality, and violence). In times of war, journalists must relate to two disputing forces, namely the professional desire for objectivity and the national desire for solidarity (Zandberg & Neiger 2005, p 131).

In a country like Colombia, it is accurate to say that the conflict and the institutionalized violence also have had and still has an impact on journalism. So, it is difficult even for the best trained journalists to remain impartial, and plenty of them have chosen or have been forced either to cover the conflict through the lenses of the elites, or to adopt the governmental framing of it.² And sometimes they have gone even longer and promoted official propaganda; put in other words, they using the kind of “patriotic journalism” that seldom serves the public and is a “*worldwide, well-documented, and controversial phenomenon among journalists as well as in the academic and public-societal arenas*” (Ginosar 2015, p 229).

One of the most comprehensive conflict studies done in Colombia so far, “*El conflicto, callejón con salida*” by the United Nations Development Program, defines the responsibility of the press as being located in their way of perceiving reality and telling it: “*The Colombian media tend to focus more on the violent act than in the context, or in its causes or its solution*” and “*the media, in effect, listen more to the armed groups that the unarmed, sometimes heedless of being manipulated*” (PNUD 2003, p 427). The media has been reactive, not proactive, when addressing the conflict. It has worked for private interests, not for the sake of the public. And it bet on “*short-term solutions, simplistic, improvised and oscillating between peace (negotiated, prompt and cheap) and military victory (quick*

² Colombian journalists have been categorized into two groups: the “patriots”, i.e. those who sing in the same political chorus of the Government, while critics and independent journalists were labeled as servile to “terrorism”. URL: <http://prensarural.org/spip/spip.php?article3838>

and easy)”, failing at the same time to understand the rationality of the conflict’s actors and producing a coverage that “*was disconnected from economic, social, political and cultural developments that actually govern the evolution and incidence of violent acts*” (PNUD 2003, p 429).

In some judgments by the Colombian specialized courts of Justice and Peace, the media have been strongly questioned for having served as a tool of spreading hate speech against sectors of society, or for having legitimized the use of violence by illegal armed groups, as paramilitary groups (Fecolper 2015, p 62). In order to be able to do their job, many journalists go beyond normal news coverage in their daily work. As a Colombian media researcher explains: “*The profound contradictions in Colombian society have made journalism to be combative, resourceful, and committed to its audience*” (Barrios 2015, p 4).

The partial agreements reached in the framework of the talks in Havana have incorporated several proposals relating directly or indirectly to freedom of speech and the press. On August 7, 2013, the FARC published a list of ten “minimal proposals for democratization of the media” in Colombia (FARC 2013). Their list looks as follows:³

1. Social participation in the design, implementation and control of information and communication policies.
2. Democratization of the ownership of the media and strengthening of state and communal public property.
3. Democratization of radio spectrum and equitable distribution of radio and television frequencies.
4. The right to accurate and timely information, further liability and right of reply.
5. Access to the media by the political and social opposition.
6. Special access to the media by peasant, indigenous, Afro-descendant and excluded social sectors, especially young women and the LGBTI community.
7. State and private financing of alternative and community media.
8. Universal access to information technology and communications.

9. Improving of the working conditions of workers within the information and communication sectors.
10. Special program of information and communication for reconciliation and building peace with social justice.

The discussion about the “minimal proposals” did not start at a national level until two years later. It was like no one was interested in giving it a debate space in the public sphere. It happened first on October 2015 after the Inter American Press Association, IAPA, rang the alarm bells saying the FARC’s demands could turn into censorship. The IAPA position is that press freedom is inalienable and goes hand in hand with the rights of citizens to access information: “*We know that what they want is to control the flow of information and impose censorship*”, said Claudio Paolillo, chairman of the IAPA’s committee on press freedom⁴. A large number of newspapers and news programs on television and radio reported about this. The guerrillas understand both democratization of media ownership (point 2 in the list), as “*one of the pillars of the political and social participation*”. Therefore, FARC explains, measures “*will be taken to the de-concentration and special regulations will be in place to prevent economic groups from monopolizing the property and abusing their dominant position*”. It is perhaps in itself not surprising that the powerful media companies do not want to discuss the FARC’s idea to increase competition and diversify the media sector. But what about the other nine points of the list? Well, silence has predominantly been the answer.

As I will show in the third chapter, Colombian journalists have instead been busy discussing Peace Journalism and how to report the peace talks and the post-conflict, despite the fact that their precarious working conditions need to improve⁵, media concentration is indeed a real problem⁶, and the alternative and community media (specifically independent local radio stations)⁷, could have a larger impact on the conflict settlement. For instance, the biggest radio network in the country is composed by radio stations controlled by the national

⁴ As reported by RCN Noticias on the evening of October 5, 2015. URL: <http://www.noticiasrcn.com/nacional-dialogos-paz/sip-alerta-democratizacion-medios-propuesta-las-farc>

⁵ As shown by the Foundation for Press Freedom, FLIP’s map. URL: <http://flip.org.co/es/cifras-indicadores>

⁶ As it was clearly demonstrated in an analysis about media concentration published by Poderopedia Colombia on September 10, 2015. URL: <http://apps.poderopedia.org/mapademedios/analisis/2/>

⁷ List of community radio stations in Colombia: http://issuu.com/redial/docs/listado_emisoras_comunitarias

³ The guerrillas’ arguments for each one of their ten proposals can be accessed at <https://pazfarc-ep.org>.

army. That specific network is funded with the taxpayers' money, has the latest technology and reaches all the regions, and two questions that should be asked are: Who should control it once the war is over? And how and for what goals should its content change? But, of course, those are questions not so many politicians and media actors are willing to raise.

On the other hand, it is accurate that the peace negotiations in Cuba have posed new challenges to journalism in Colombia. Journalists need now to reflect more about how the coverage of the armed conflict is done, how their work fits within the dynamics of the ongoing peace process, and what their role could be like in a post-conflict scenario. The negotiators recognize in the agreement that the media “contribute to citizen participation and especially to promote civic values, different ethnic identities and cultural, political and social inclusion, national integration and overall strengthening of democracy”

(Fecolper 2014, p 5). The Colombian Federation of Journalists, FECOLPER⁸, acknowledges two possible ways of meeting those challenges: either the media understands that it “can play an important role in building a society that travels toward a social reconciliation process of strengthening its democratic institutions”, or the media “may prefer to concentrate on deepening political polarization levels” and, as a consequence, “obstructing the transition to a stable and lasting peace to Colombia” (Fecolper 2014, p 5).

PEACE JOURNALISM - THE PANACEA FOR COLOMBIA?

As we could see in the chapter before, the Colombian Government has launched a campaign to convince journalists about the potentials of Peace Journalism in helping to end the conflict and to facilitate the reconstruction of society. In times of post-conflict, shared emotions and memories, as well as shared improvements and disappointments, can bring readers and journalists closer together. And the closer journalists are to their readers the more Peace Journalism can trigger citizens to transform their country: “The hope for social mobilization based on constructive emotions such as compassion may help to start healing the deep wounds and scars left by the

⁸ The Colombian Federation of Journalists is a social organization which brings together 29 associations of journalists, more than 1,200 journalists and employees of media in Colombia. FECOLPER is the only organization in Colombia affiliate of the International Federation of Journalists, based in Brussels.

political and structural violence in the soul of every Colombian citizen” (Barrios 2015, p 15).

Protracted armed conflicts and how the media deal with and influence them, is today a very central issue within the field of journalism and conflict studies. Peace Journalism has been hoisted by peace researchers as an effective way for editors and journalists to help readers and audiences take political decisions backing peace and repudiating war (Shinar 2004 & 2007). Peace Journalism has been defined as a “remedial strategy and an attempt to supplement the news conventions to give peace a chance” (Lynch 2008). There is today plenty of research about the roles played by Peace Journalism in transitional risk societies or countries after conflicts have settled (see for instance Jaeger 2003, Andresen 2009, Lee 2010, Ryan 2010, Friedman 2011, Gavra 2011, Milton 2015, Prakash 2013,

Wasserman 2011 & 2013, Volcic 2014, Rao 2015, Rodny-Gumede 2015).

In 2008, the Czech media professor Vladimir Bratić, invested time and energy in searching for theoretical evidence and practical case studies describing media promotion of peace across the world. He could document 40 media projects in 18 countries, and he examined two case studies in detail. But one of the most significant lessons of his analysis was that “just like pro-war propaganda did not single-handedly cause the war, peace-oriented media cannot single-handedly end a conflict” (Bratić 2008, p 500). Four years later, Jake Lynch, at that time the Director at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney, felt that he had evidence enough to proclaim that Peace Journalism really works in making a difference. He did that based on the results of his and Annabel McGoldrick’s study on how

550 participants in four different countries (Australia, the Philippines, South Africa and Mexico) had reacted to different versions of 21 television news stories – one version of each news story was produced as war journalism, whilst the other version exhibited Peace Journalism: “Our research shows that Peace Journalism works. It does indeed prompt its audiences to make different meanings about key conflict issues, to be more receptive to nonviolent responses” (Lynch 2012).

Peace Journalism's specific theoretical problems, its fundamental methodologies and its political mission, have been discussed by many researchers (for an overview of it in Spanish see Espinar Ruiz & Hernández Sánchez 2012). The idea of media as a democratizing and liberating force has attracted many scholars and seduced journalists around the world but, as Emrys Schoemaker and Nicole Stremlau recently showed in their systematic review of some of the most significant papers on media and conflict, there are serious gaps on the evidence used for supporting claims about media's important role in "informing, influencing political choice and the broader empowerment of end-users" during conflicts, transition periods and post-conflict time: "And while media as a liberating force has developed a body of expertise, approaches and 'best practices', there remains little substantive evidence beyond anecdote and the reliance of normative indicators for the actual impact of this work." Their conclusion is indisputably uncomfortable for many media researchers: "It is not that these claims are untrue, but that they are unproven" (Schoemaker & Stremlau 2014, p 187 and 191).

The criticism against Peace Journalism's prophets and ideology is also profuse for being a sort of "sunshine journalism" with clear limitations because, among several fragile features, it fails to take into account the dynamics of news production, and it supports an "unwelcome departure from objectivity and towards a journalism of attachment" (Hackett 2006, p 2). Research done using critical race theorist has for example demonstrated that "putatively self-reflexive, reconciliation-oriented news representations (including those that may be employed under the broad rubric of 'Peace Journalism') can at times negate their stated precepts, instead working to perpetuate systemic domination of racialized communities" (McMahon & Chow-White 2011, p 1004). Another detractors like Thomas Hanitzsch argue that the key mission of journalism is not to free the world from conflicts. Journalists' potential for influence in the settlement of conflicts is narrow, partly because they are the products of their societies and their cultures and, as a result of that, the majority of them are not better humans than media consumers in general: "We should, therefore, not see journalism or the journalist as the problem; we need to see society and culture as problems" (Hanitzsch 2004, p 491).

As I mentioned in the preceding section, something that particularly caught my attention after searching for information about conferences and seminars on

Peace Journalism in Colombia, is that both government spokesmen and academic lecturers⁹ have highlighted the role the media played in the South African post conflict, as a good example that should be followed by the country's journalists. Before I finish this chapter, I want hence to complement it with a brief evaluation about what the academic literature say about it. During the Apartheid, most of the media in South Africa helped to support the ideology that put whites as superior and blacks as inferior. It has been a racial change in the media since 1994, but sixteen years later whites still retained significant decision-making power in the press and it mainly ignored the experiences and perspectives of people outside the white middleclass' suburban realm, which scholar Steven Friedman could conclude as late as in 2011: "In reality, it informs only some citizens of only some realities" (Friedman 2011, p 110).

The killings of 36 mineworkers at the Lonmin mine at Marikana in North-West Province, South Africa, in 2012 exposed how far the media in the country is from reaching a high level of non-racially biased professionalism. The mainstream media avoided to talk to the mine workers, as Jane Duncan showed in her analysis of the sources consulted by journalists (Duncan 2012). The Marikana killings revealed as well, according to Herman Wasserman, that "there is much room for improvement in terms of news coverage of labor action, so as to provide a wider perspective on events, in keeping with the ethical concepts of fairness and balance within the current normative framework" (Wasserman 2015, p 69).

To a similar conclusion arrived senior lecturer, Ylva Rodny-Gumede, who discerns the news practices shaping the media coverage of the massacre through juxtaposing war journalism with Peace Journalism. She did that by building on Duncan's study and by analyzing 162 news articles and her findings are that the mainstream media "created a rather limited, if not distorted view of what happened" at the mine and, "by and large, journalistic principles of fairness, balance, truth and ethics were neglected in the reporting of Marikana in the lead up to, and the immediate aftermath, of the massacre" (Rodny-Gumede 2015, p 371).

⁹ In the first week of May, 2015, the Foundation for Press-Freedom in Colombia, FLIP arranged a three days long conference called "Diálogos de Paz y Libertad de Prensa". One of the key lecturers was Willem Esterhuysen.

Associated professor, Viola Candice Milton¹⁰, stressed also recently that “20 years after democratization, South Africa is in the midst of a crisis of accountability” and that “to effect an accountable democracy in contemporary South Africa, it is not enough for the media to provide citizens with the means to express their voices: it should also provide the means for those voices to be listened to and to be acted upon” (Milton 2015, 163 and 167). And having those researchers’ conclusions and opinions in mind, how relevant is it for Colombian journalists to follow the example of their South African colleagues? Well, the Colombian government thinks it’s relevant. But should the journalists just swallow that without giving it at least a second thought? As we will see in the next chapter, Peace Journalism has become a kind of state strategy in Colombia and maybe it is time for reporters to ask that very simple question every one of us learnt at school: Why?

PEACE JOURNALISM AS A STATE STRATEGY

The discussion about media’s role in the conflict and as a facilitator for peace development is an old one in Colombia. In the late 1990s the media’s role came under critical scrutiny and the self-image of journalists started to change. One of the first spheres of debate for the theme was the private initiative called “Medios para la Paz” (Media for Peace, MPP), which was started in 1998 by journalists who, networking and exchanging information via the Internet, kept involved in a constant analysis and reflection on the Colombian reality and the daily events of peace and war. MPP’s goal was to be an instrument for building a culture of peace and coexistence among Colombians by encouraging ethics and social responsibility in the media.¹¹ As early as on November 2003, the newspaper El Tiempo, the most important of Colombia, launched a manual with the principles that should govern its journalists in covering war and peace processes (Cajiao & Rey 2003). One judgement by the authors was that the media in Colombia generally cover the war, but it not as good at narrating it. The manual was presented by El Tiempo as an attempt to formulate basic rules “to ensure a truthful, objective, factual and decontaminated information about the Colombian armed

conflict”, and those rules must “be observed by journalists who, regardless of their personal sympathies or newspaper editorial stance, do not assume another commitment than to inform completely independent.”¹²

Colombian journalists have in latest years been “revising their self-image, at the same time developing a problem consciousness in their own work, and are actively trying to correct the deficiencies” (Legatis 2010). As Rousbeh Legatis concludes: “a critical dialogue arose on both the practical and the academic levels. Weaknesses in journalistic work skills were identified, action alternatives developed, and programs launched for eliminating or dealing with them” (Legatis 2010, p 4)¹³. This internal dialogue and the need of training have resulted in the publication of handbooks offering guidelines about how to report on conflict and peace (Abello Banfi et al 1999) and about the best way to report on internal displacement (2004).¹⁴ During the last two years, the debate has been amplified to almost all the mainstream media in Colombia. Universities, private foundations, media businesses and organizations have put a lot of energy trying to get more and more people involved in the discussion. In 2014, the organization Consejo de Redacción, with funding from Germany, arranged workshops in five cities and a result of that was the publication of a guide about how to report and write a story, narration tools, techniques of investigative journalism and, obviously, a set of recommendations for what they define as “responsible coverage in conflict zones” (Consejo de Redacción 2014, p 10). And all of it has happened with the political blessing and in some cases with the economic support of the Colombian government, which already in 2010 through a cooperation agreement between the Ministry of Information Technology and Communications (MinTIC) and the University of Antioquia started the cost-free training of reporters on the “social commitments” of journalism.

¹² When presenting the manual, El Tiempo’s editorial leadership acknowledged that war polarizes society and that is reflected in the newsrooms, but it proclaimed solemnly that the door into the newspaper’s offices were going to be closed for the ongoing war. The latter implied that journalists’ personal position could not be extended to the newsroom and they were not allowed to act as unofficial spokesman for the security forces or any guerrilla, paramilitary or other groups. To fail to remain detached was classified as a ground for dismissal. URL: <http://www.eluniverso.com/2003/11/06/0001/14/244E3B4ADE8A4C9D80488B2F1D46D917.html>

¹³ In the study “Conflict fields of journalistic praxis in Colombia”, Legatis identifies several reasons why the media is significant in the area of peace building: (1) media assume an intermediary connecting role; (2) journalists’ work can exert a significant influence on the further course of conflict; (3) media provide the affected population with information that is important for their lives; and (4) media perform a watchdog function (Legatis 2010, p 3).

¹⁴ Convened by Media for Peace (MPP) and with the support of UNHCR, the European Union, USAID and the International Organization for Migration, groups of 38 journalists gathered at weekends between May and December 2004, to consider how to report the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of Colombians victims of the conflict. The discussions resulted in the handbook “Cubrimiento Periodístico Responsable del Desplazamiento Forzado Interno”.

¹⁰ South African emeritus professor of philosophy and business ethics, columnist and critic of the system of Apartheid.

¹¹ One of Media for Peace’s contributions was the book *Desarmar la Palabra* (To disarm the word), which is a dictionary of 600 terms related to conflict and peace, and published with the purpose to help journalists to understand the immense power of the word in armed conflicts. URL: http://old.redtercermundo.org.uy/revista_del_sur/texto_completo.php?id=707

The MinTIC has created a social network in which, it claims, more than 10,000 journalists are part of today¹⁵, and hundreds of them have been trained in workshops about issues such as the responsibility of journalists in the conflict.

On April 28, 2014, the relation between journalism and post-conflict was for instance the main subject of discussion at a conference organized in Bogota by the Association of Communication Faculties and Media Programs in Colombia. Special guest lecturer at the event was the Spanish media researcher Xavier Martí Giró.¹⁶ In his lecture, he established some tasks that he considers are mandatory for journalists who want to contribute to peace and coexistence in the country, those being:

- to verify all information;
- to seek a more precise language as possible;
- to explain the context in which the conflict had developed; to identify the actors involved and the interests they defend;
- to encourage dialogue, empathy and understanding between the opposing parties; to highlight the invisible effects of violence and report the suffering of all parties; to give priority to those working for the transformation of violent conflicts; and
- to focus on the process of reconstruction and reconciliation once the peace treaty is signed.

The Colombian government celebrated Giró's recommendations as being just of the kind Colombian journalists need to follow.¹⁷ The discussion continued the following month at Javeriana University in Bogota¹⁸ and the main objective was "to reach greater clarity about the new journalistic agenda in the post-conflict facing Colombia". After that, journalists and media students from all over the country engaged in virtual conversations aimed to clarify the concepts of "Forgiveness", "Reconciliation" and "Memory", and on what the contribution of journalism could be now and in a post-conflict stage. The discussion continued at the eighth national meeting for investigative journalists in Colombia which was

dedicated to the challenges of journalism in post conflict time.^{19,19}

During 2015, the Colombian government's Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, which handles all peace policies being developed by the government of President Juan Manuel Santos, has arranged at least twelve workshops, five of those virtual, about the role of the media in the post conflict, and they claim to have "trained" more than 600 journalists from all over Colombia.²⁰ The workshops were offered in cooperation with the independent media institute Foundation for New Journalism in Latin America, which has a big trustworthiness among media workers in the country. The government's campaign has also targeted students of social communication and journalism, who have been taught the practices of "good journalism" in relation to armed conflicts and peace.²¹ Besides, several famous journalists and editors have also adhered to the philosophy of Peace Journalism, stressing the need for a big change of journalistic practices in the time ahead.²²

The Colombian government has certainly been successful in framing the discussion about what's important for journalists to discuss, and about what kind of journalism is recognized as the best one to end the conflict in the country.²³ The government has also sponsored the production of academic knowledge about the quality of journalism in Colombia, which is used to support the official crusade for practices changes. At the end of August 2015, journalists from national and regional

19 On March 20-21, 2015, investigative journalists met at a conference organized by Consejo de Redacción and sponsored by Open Society Foundations, Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, and the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung. Several of the invited speakers pointed out the role the media had both during conflicts and after those settled: a constructive role in South Africa and El Salvador contra a destructive in Rwanda. URL: <http://www.viiiencuentrodeperiodismo.com/>

20 URL: <http://www.altocomisionadoparalapaz.gov.co/herramientas/prensa/Pages/2015/octubre/historias-de-paz-para-la-red.aspx?ano=2015>

21 On April 10-11, 2015, the first workshop for students of social communication and journalism careers in the Caribbean coast was held in Cartagena. The workshop was attended by Mario Puerta from the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace. Puerta explained that one of the strategies developed by the government is "to impart the pedagogy of peace among the Colombian youth and specifically within communication students". URL: <http://www.afacom.org/asamblea-nacional-afacom-cartagena-de-indias/1574-asesor-de-la-oficina-del-alto-comisionado-para-la-paz-dialogo-con-afacom>

22 On May 19, 2015, the D'Artagnan III Forum for Freedom of Expression in Bogota tried to answer the question "What is the narrative of post-conflict in Colombia?" - Former newspaper Editor, Rafael Santos, who belongs to the President's powerful family, opened the forum stating that "In a post-conflict context, journalism cannot remain the same; journalism has to rethink its habits and redefine its traditions." URL: <http://www.reconciliacioncolombia.com/historias/detalle/224/los-retos-que-plantea-el-posconflicto-al-periodismo>

23 On May 29, 2015. Conference about the role of institutional communication and the media in the Colombian post conflict. According to lecturer Carlos Villota Santacruz "communication is called to play a key role in forming citizens committed to their environment, while opening the door to provide society with consultation scenarios, democratic participation and strengthening of the social networks". URL:

15 URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IpngS-pe0c>

16 Xavier Martí Giró is doctor in Information Sciences, director of the Observatory of News Coverage of Conflicts, and co-director of the Master in Communication of Armed Conflict, Peace and Social Movements at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (Spain).

17 URL: <http://www.reconciliacioncolombia.com/historias/detalle/236/-como-fomentar-la-reconciliacion-desde-el-periodismo>

18 The conference topic was "Journalism and peace: The new agenda to narrate the realities of the country."

newspapers gathered in Cartagena once again to discuss and reflect about the negotiation between the government and the FARC. The journalists were then given access to a national study about news coverage during the three years long peace process. The study was done by media researchers at Javeriana University but is part of a project developed by the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace and the Foundation for New Latin American Journalism.²⁴ Around 12,000 journalistic pieces were analyzed and the conclusion is that the Colombian media is far from reaching the level of professionalization needed to cover such a complicated peace negotiation.²⁵ This sort of research based knowledge has even been used to persuade journalists to start designing and producing more peace enhancing narratives.²⁶

In 2015, the Foundation for Press Freedom (FLIP), in partnership with the Human Rights Directorate of the Interior Ministry, has conducted workshops with journalists in conflict areas about the limits on freedom of expression, the right to reply and correction, and the ethical duty of avoiding stigmatization of communities and individuals.²⁷ As a complement to the governmental policy, the Directorate for Democracy, Citizen Participation and Community Action of the Interior Ministry has also developed a comprehensive communications strategy for national and regional coverage through mass media and community media, focusing on significant experiences involving social and community organizations and their leaders. The media strategy aims to the consolidation of peace and reconciliation scenarios, and it includes the radio program “Voices and Regions” which wants to “strengthen the construction of common sense, exalting the social fabric and the cultural framework through a solid, responsible, positive and revolutionary

information space constructed from the voices of organized social leaders”.²⁸

In the autumn of 2015, two new programs were launched by public broadcasters to try to explain what is being discussed in Havana to a wider audience. “Hablemos en Paz” (Let’s talk in Peace) at the Canal Institucional, and “Paz en Foco” (Peace in focus) at the Canal Capital, have very similar goals but are not traditional talk shows. Their intention is to teach the audience to listen to different opinions and not only to raise opposing views and confront them. The president of Colombia has taken active involvement in “Hablemos en Paz” listening to, among others, victims of the conflict and religious leaders. Maria Alejandra Villamizar, Director of Education for Peace of the Presidency of the Republic, explains: “When you hear what the other says, it helps to build, but that’s a methodology to practice. The conversation in Colombia has been caught by a social, economic and media elite. There is not a general conversation.”²⁹ The latter has been presented as a way of answering one of the major criticisms to the peace process, which emphasizes the Colombian government’s lack of education about what is happening in Havana.

In addition to the media strategies settled by the Interior Ministry and the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, the Culture Ministry has also arranged the “Forum of Communication, Culture and Innovation in Post-Conflict” in several regions all over Colombia. This forums aim to “create a space for reflection, exchange of experiences, dialogue and collective construction to identify issues and challenges in communication and culture for the post-conflict.”³⁰ At the same time, the special Unit for Restitution of Dispossessed Land, which is an entity under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, has organized several meetings in different cities to raise awareness among journalists about their complex role when reporting about land restitution to victims of the conflict: “As we get more clarity on how the Unit for Land Restitutions is working, we can focus better our news. Hopefully this training will continue, as it still exists – especially in terms of media – much ignorance about

24 URL: <http://www.altocomisionadoparalopez.gov.co/herramientas/prensa/Pages/2015/agosto/periodistas-de-prensa-escrita-reflexionaron-sobre-el-proceso-de-paz.aspx?ano=2015>

25 Leading researcher Mario Morales sums up the results of the study with the words: “We have not done the job well. Neither the government with the political communication about what has happen in the peace process. Or those in charge of the pedagogy to know where the negotiations are heading to. Neither the journalism to tell what is happening – as the hackneyed, failed slogan of some media states.” URL: <http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/los-medios-deuda-articulo-600588>

26 This was for instance the case in October 15–17, 2015, during the “Journalism, Peace and regions for Internet journalists” workshop, in which 30 journalists from around the country gathered in Cartagena to think about how to produce journalistic material based on the stories of individuals and territories. URL: <http://www.altocomisionadoparalopez.gov.co/herramientas/prensa/Pages/2015/octubre/historias-de-paz-para-la-red.aspx?ano=2015>

27 URL: <https://www.mininterior.gov.co/sala-de-prensa/noticias/mininterior-y-la-flip-sensibilizan-periodistas-y-funcionarios-de-uraba>

28 URL: <https://www.mininterior.gov.co/direccion/funciones-de-la-direccion-para-la-democracia-participacion-ciudadana-y-accion-comunal>

29 URL: <http://www.reconciliacioncolombia.com/historias/detalle/1043>

30 According to the Culture Ministry, other purposes with the forum are “to identify challenges for communication and culture in the post-conflict”, and “to display synergies, innovative proposals and commitments for building a regional agenda of communication and culture for peace.” URL: <http://www.eventosmicultural.com/foro-bogota-2015>

this process”, journalist at the newspaper El Herald, William Colina, said.³¹

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But the so far biggest hit by the Government’s crusade for Peace Journalism was on November 20, 2015, during the so called Seminar Series Colombia 2015: “*Media, peace and democracy in Colombia*”.³² The High Commissioner for Peace, Sergio Jaramillo, invited journalists and opinion leaders to think about the role of the media in building peace and national reconciliation. “*Peace is a great act of imagination, we need to imagine this country at peace, that the media have a role not only in the coverage but in the debate done about this, the most important debate for our generation*”, said Jaramillo in a televised message from Cuba, and he stressed that the Colombian press “*have to work on the recognition of the others, the acceptance of the others, and in building a project for the whole Colombian society*”.

According to the Colombian government, the role of the media is going to be absolutely definitive so that the country can thoroughly seize the big opportunity ahead. Sergio Jaramillo identifies three media actions that are crucial for peace building:

Integration, understood as a decentralization of journalism so that national media companies start covering all the territories and communities of Colombia;

Participation, which means opening spaces for discussion to new voices and mobilizing as many citizens as possible around regional projects of peace construction; and

Discussion about the concept of “Justice” and how it will be assumed and applied by the negotiators and which, as Jaramillo himself is aware of, “*will not be possible to reach consensus around*”.

In his message to the Colombia media magnates and workers, Sergio Jaramillo³³ pointed out how their

colleagues in South Africa played an important role during the period of transition from Apartheid to democracy, specifically in the way how they covered the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.³⁴ The example of the South African media is one that keeps coming back in the Colombian debate and therefore I decided to examine that closer in the second chapter.

CONCLUSIONS

In the first chapter, it was demonstrated that the Colombian journalists have not had it very easy. When they have wanted to make a difference, they have then been persecuted and forced to censor themselves or to leave aside standards in order to survive or keep their jobs. The Colombian media is far from reaching a high level of professionalism. Despite all the training and the many guidelines produced on how to do a good job, lack of civic courage and dishonesty still is a big problem among journalists. For instance, in the latest national survey of journalists’ opinions about freedom of expression and access to information, 60 percent of the respondents say they know of cases of media changing their editorial stance in exchange for public advertising, 50 percent know of cases of journalists exercising pressure in

order to get more advertising, and 30 percent know of cases about media accusing others of committing crimes without proof of their guilt (!).³⁵

But it is correct to blame journalists for all those inaccuracies? A further discussion about this will be required even long after peace is achieved in Colombia. Professionalism and commitment to objectivity and so on are not enough: “*Building a democratic society necessarily implies the existence of guarantees for the exercise of independent journalism*” (Fecolper 2014, p 5). The Colombian

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31 As quoted in: URL: <http://www.contrastes.com.co/web/index.php/region/1621-periodistas-y-unidad-de-restitucion-de-tierras>

32 The Seminar Series Colombia 2015 was organized by Partners Colombia, the Ideas for Peace Foundation and the Antonio Restrepo Barco Foundation, with the support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), USAID, the Swedish Embassy, the magazine *Semana* and the national newspapers *El Espectador* and *El Tiempo*. URL: <http://www.altocomisionadoparalapaz.gov.co/herramientas/prensa/Pages/2015/noviembre/la-paz-es-un-gran-acto-de-la-imaginacion-sergio-jaramillo.aspx?ano=2015>

33 The power of Sergio Jaramillo and his influence on Colombians’ opinion about the peace process took him to the front page of magazine *Semana*’s special issue about the most important persons of the year 2015. URL: <http://static.iris.net.co/semana/upload/images/edition/x1754.jpg.pagespeed.ic.KGzgp9nJCw.jpg>

34 The whole talk can be accessed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULPnyhB65zI>

35 The survey was commissioned by the Proyecto Antonio Nariño, which is an interagency partnership working since 2001 for freedom of expression and access to information in Colombia. URL: <http://goo.gl/3GiCBJ>

government has yet lots to do before press freedom is secure in Colombia. It has instead of working harder for improving the living conditions of journalists, as I showed in the chapter III, with the help of universities, media companies, journalism organizations and even foreign aid, managed to sell Peace Journalism as a panacea for the branch and for post-conflict Colombia, as well as the best kind of journalism ideology reporters must adhere to. And it has been done despite research showing that there is a lack of enough evidence supporting claims about Peace Journalisms' benefits, as the literature review in chapter II showed.

This state strategy came after the FARC guerrillas started to talk about the imperative need of democratizing the media and making it more accessible for the millions of Colombians without economic and political power. With its list of proposals/demands, the FARC calls attention to several of the biggest problem the media sector and the journalistic work face in Colombia. Certainly the issue of mainstream media power concentration in the hands of a few moguls and its negative impact on press freedom, should get many journalists to be interested in debating the guerrillas' ideas.

Colombian journalists should be talking about that and, what is even more urgent, both they and academics should be questioning equally the FARC's plans and the Government's intentions, no matter if any of those sounds conceivable and seems above suspicion. So far, and as much as I could see in my undersized study, there is no academic research done about this state indorsed media strategy, its motives and its possible consequences for press freedom. And the latter is something that frankly surprises me.

FINAL DISCUSSION

Colombian media has in the past taken advantage of the conflict and of polarization in society. The reason is that polarization feeds on inequality and the latter is the source of many news. Journalists will have lots to do if the future peace accord fails to extensively change political and economic inequality affecting the life of millions of Colombians. If this were to occur, as Rollow explains, it would mean (according to Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung) that Colombia would achieved "negative peace". A cease-fire would have been achieved, but the actual causes of the conflict would not have been

addressed, which is necessary for positive peace (Rollow 2014, p 95). If a period of negative peace follows, the journalists will go out hunting news about the fiasco and hereafter reinforcing the picture of a deeply divided nation, where the system is manipulated by the wealthy elites for their own benefit and where business will be conducted as usual but the same crooks as ever.

So, how big is the risk for a fiasco? The answer is not encouraging at all, but Colombians will hardly live in peace so long as criminal syndicates involved in the drug trade are allowed to build up powerful private armies and co-opt the state authority in their regions of influence, redefining relationships, values and hierarchies and providing stability, security and social mobility that the established order cannot offer (Delgado 2015, p 219). After March 23, 2016, it could of course follow a time of ceasefire and harmony, or it can be just the opposite with new waves of violence and new sources of insecurity because, as a matter of fact, the FARC is only one of many obstacles for peace in Colombia, as researchers already have observed (Waisbord 1997, Valenzuela 2010, Ince 2013, Jounes 2014, Tobar Torres 2015).

As shown in this article, the Colombian government has put in work a strategy to get as many journalists as possible to adjust to the ideology of Peace Journalism. That kind of governmental missionary effort is not new. For instance, the United States of America has funded the training of reporters in Peace Journalism in countries like Kenya and Kuwait. In Kenya, the training program for journalists was set up as a consequence of the post-election violence that left more than 1,300 people dead in 2008 (Laker & Wanzala 2012)³⁶. The British government has funded workshops about media and peace for journalism students in Lebanon. And the Germans have funded Peace Journalism courses for Afghan reporters. Rotary International has been another funding source for peace journalists around the world.

The issue of who is funding the training of peace journalists and why they are doing that, should be critically examined by the very same journalists who decidedly claim that it is wrong to let outside forces have influence on the news, and that they "don't act as platforms for politicians or governments to spread propaganda" and

³⁶ Media played a role in that violence and Joshua Arap Sang, radio journalist and head of operations at Kass FM in Nairobi, ended up facing charges of crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court at Hague. URL: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/doc/doc1037044.pdf>

“don’t let powerful organizations push them around” (Peters 2012). Colombian journalists, who are aware of the strong relations between President Juan Manuel Santos and the power elites in the country, should be asking questions about why his government is so enthusiastic about spreading Peace Journalism. Certainly when it comes from the same regime that in

2014, according to the national federation of journalists in Colombia, was part of a group of players who “*keep running multiple violent, restrictive and coercive actions*” against press freedom (Fecolper 2014, p 4). No doubt, the government has put money on journalist training and it has financed some of the conferences arranged and handbooks written by journalism organizations, but it is really that all is needed to stop being suspicious about it?

Maybe I am too distrustful and the answer to all questions may be as simple as that President Juan Manuel Santos is just a good leader working for the best for peace and media development – but it could also be a less pleasurable and noble cause behind it. Not to question the strategy, cannot be the answer. Santos has for many years played important roles in the conflict that is about to end. A kneeling media that peacefully looks forward without digging up more blood spilled in the past, will help indisputably more him and those of his kind, than it will help the Colombian people. Therefore, and I’m sorry about that, I am not done yet with my questions.

Peace Journalism sounds indeed great in theory, but is it really imaginable to put it in practice at large in a country like Colombia? Is it possible to boost the doctrine to such an extent within the media actors and along its consumers, so that it really changes the way how problems are described, understood and finally solved in conciliatory terms? Well, as a Colombian born journalist and expatriate, I should hope that to be the case – but, honestly speaking, I don’t think it will ever happen. When it comes to this particular conflict, life has taught me not to dream too much in order to avoid disappointments. Thus, I prefer to stay on a more realistic and bulletproof ground.

I must recognize that I at first was positive about Peace Journalism, but it was before I started to learn more about it. In the three weeks I’ve spent doing this study, I

have come to the same perception as former Director of Article 19³⁷, Andrew Puddephatt, once did, namely that the “*media must be wary of identifying themselves too closely with any side — even the apparent victims*”, and that “*even Peace Journalism begs the question of whose ‘peace’ and in whose interest*” (Puddephatt 2003, p 111). Recent research has shown that many young Colombians do not have the civic knowledge necessary to participate in their democracy (Quaynor 2011, p 39) – but citizenship education is a task for governments, not for the media. Before falling in love with a biased self-image as champions of peace building, and before leaving professional principles in the name of a higher moral duty, Colombian reporters should start to do a better job as traditional journalists.

Hopefully, my dear Colombian colleagues will one day grasp what the political and media commentator Michael Kinsley so cleverly recognized in a column many years ago, explicitly that “*the difference between fact and opinion is not a bright line: it is a spectrum*” and that even if different reporters draw their lines on different places of that spectrum, they can all be equally right. In the real world of news making, Kinsley clarifies, “*even where objectivity, balance, and all those good things are possible, they’re not always wanted — even by those who preach them the most*” (Kinsley 2008, p 115).

At the end of the day, there is nothing wrong with pure and simple plain journalism. It is a profession, or handcraft if you prefer that definition, which never has been and will never be a flawless panacea, and that includes “Peace Journalism”, “Conflict Sensitive Journalism”, “Journalism of Attachment” or whatever the designation you put on it. Journalism is about telling news and it is the duty of journalists, which means of humans whom as such usually are deficient. The well-meaning guidelines and techniques developed and professed by Peace Journalism advocates, are just about using your commonsense when you have the time and opportunity to do that. Those advices and procedures have not the value of holy scripts that could change the world. Peace Journalism is just an alternative way of doing the job, nothing more. Or it could be for instance just another approach by the Colombian government and the political classes to seizure the press and to get it to carry out partisan agendas by masking it as positive societal tasks.

37 Article 19 is a British organization working on behalf of freedom of expression worldwide.

Yes, it has happened before in other places, and it could as well be happening in Colombia right now. This sophisticated way of coercing journalists can be done “by redefining journalism in terms of some positive adjective”, as the passionate ambassador of press freedom, Ronald Koven,³⁸ observed almost a decade ago in his analysis of what he labelled “*adjectival journalism, prescribed by quack doctors*”. World history offers plenty of examples showing how “*politicians that cry loudest that the press needs to act responsibly are the very ones that want freedom to act irresponsibly without the press reporting their deeds*”... Despite all the concepts and theories we can embroider the profession with, the reality is that “*the practice of journalism needs no justification. As a service to society, journalism is its own justification. It doesn't need to dress itself up with adjectives*” (Koven 2006, p 117, 180).

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