

Original article

Two models of journalism – in conditions of military operations and police activities

Marcin Krzysztof Konieczny 

Police College, Szczytno, Poland,

e-mail: markon7788@gmail.com

INFORMATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The article presents two models of journalism, i.e. concerning the presentation of operations carried out by the Armed Forces and the activities carried out by the Police. The author presents a way of re-reporting information by the media representatives from the so called “horse’s mouth” and the conditions of functioning of journalists, informing about military operations, as well as media representatives publishing information about police activities. He also notes how journalists should behave so as not to lose their integrity and credibility in the conditions under which they are required to comply with the rules governing military operations and investigations and, in particular, the information policy related to these areas of activity.

KEYWORDS

media, journalist, military operations, police activities



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Introduction

Since the press¹ existed, there has been a profession of journalist, i.e. a person whose professional vocation is to provide information to the public on a regular basis. Today, journalism, public relations (PR) and media relations are important factors in the development of society. Journalists create the so-called “fourth estate” and – together with the participants of interactions taking place in the global Internet network – co-create popular methods of understanding and interpreting the surrounding reality. An important role of media representatives is to exercise social control over the proper functioning of authorities, state institutions and other public bodies. The activities of journalists working for the radio, press, Internet and television are regulated by special acts written on the basis of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, which states that “everyone is guaranteed the right to the free expression of their views and to obtain and disseminate information” [1, Art. 54 (1)]. However, this right does

¹ The first magazine in Poland was established in the Enlightenment age in the 18th century and was called “Monitor Polski”. Interestingly, this name already contains a controlling and informative media function.

not include sensitive data, the expression of views inciting violence against any background, the promotion of anti-Semitic slogans or the promotion of totalitarian systems. A specific status is given to journalists publishing information on operations by the Armed Forces or the Police. On the one hand, such journalists should respect the basic ethical principles of their profession and inform the public objectively, and on the other hand, they should not publish data the public disclosure of which increases the risk of ineffectiveness, e.g. of military operations or police investigations.

Genesis of the development of journalism

Journalism is undergoing processes of change. In the past, as an innovative means of communication, it did not have as many restrictions and limitations as today, if only because of a lack of awareness of the significant influence of the press, radio or television on the audience. As time passed, awareness of the importance of journalism and its impact on society grew.

During the war, the possession of a radio was even threatened with death, because the Nazi occupants were aware of the significant influence of the radio on the audience. After the war, the communists knew the same thing, censoring many press publications preventively and repressively. For example, "Tygodnik Powszechny" was closed in 1953 for refusing to publish a special obituary after the death of the Soviet dictator, Józef Stalin [2].

Nowadays, access to the media and information is an integral part of the functioning of the political system in most countries of the world. Democracy presupposes the formation of a pluralist society, for which the availability of information is an important factor in development. Nevertheless, there are new challenges ahead of the progress in journalism. It is considered that not only the publication but also the acquisition of information, especially sensitive data, should take place within the limits of law and with respect for good manners. Therefore, there is an increase in knowledge of the need for journalists to apply ethical principles.

A journalist has now become a profession of public trust. Even adepts of journalism are obliged to build the prestige and trust of their profession. However, this change has not only had a positive impact. This was because journalistic ethics were abused – while in the past a journalist had to be objective and factual, neutral and could not subjectively assess reality and keep his own views to himself, nowadays the media have largely favoured journalists' private comments, and even given the media a role in creating reality and not just objectively communicating it. This has given rise to new social problems.

New problems with the function of the media initially included them distancing from their original role. While the period of the media magnificence peak as a factor in the development of civilization was based on the assumption that the media were not to create reality – they were only to describe it or objectively tell a story, and journalistic narratives were subordinated by the media to the social demand for realism and authenticity, thanks to which viewers, listeners or readers received information that they could interpret, compare with different sources and form opinions based on them, so under the influence of the expectations of various groups, and especially their lobbying, the media began to increase the role of subjective messages, imitating authenticity, but suggesting recipients to think.

In our country, the problem with the credibility of the media became widespread in the period of the Polish People's Republic. During this period, journalism created and popularized – described by Michał Głowiński [See: 3] – a “newspeak”, aimed at indoctrinating society in the spirit of the philosophy of historical and dialectical materialism, presented as the only correct way to interpret events. Against this background, the struggle of our compatriots for the democratisation of Poland, which began in the late 1980s and early 1990s, was all the more important. With the democratization process, high ethical standards for journalists became widespread on the one hand, while on the other hand journalists were ordered to present events in a reliable manner, but at the same time they were allowed to comment on them independently (subjectively), unless they attempted to imitate objective norms, and thus did not constitute propaganda or any other form of manipulation, separating subjective and objective messages as clearly as possible.

In the process of popularization of democratic standards in Poland, new problems related to the functioning of the media appeared. One of the biggest problems of this type became the models of journalism that included reporting on events from military operations, as well as information about police activities. This is because with the growing importance of security, all means of ensuring it became more popular, including the impact on the functioning of the mass media. Journalists publishing information on military operations or police activities are obliged, on the one hand, to provide objective data to inform the public and, on the other hand, to ensure that the information they publish does not unduly influence military operations or police investigations.

Journalism reporting on military operations

War conflicts are an inseparable background for events in peacekeeping areas. Like any major crisis, war conflicts involving different countries have always been, are and will probably be part of the events in which a society is involved. Despite the spread of the democratic system on a global scale, it is currently not possible to achieve a situation in which the risk of war in the world is completely eliminated. Although there is an attempt to develop an international diplomatic network aimed at resolving conflicts peacefully, and to inform in various parts of the world about lasting peace, denuclearization, elimination of both chemical and biological weapons, as well as to stop financing research on new, improved strategies and weapons of mass destruction, the risk of military conflicts still exists. This is confirmed by the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the conflict in Syria and the destabilisation of parts of Ukraine by Russia. The seizure of Crimea also took place with the involvement of the Army, although the event was carried out in a way that did not determine the direct military action in the area incorporated. Nevertheless, even the largest and most important states for world peace, such as the United States and Russia, are involved in military conflicts. This means that society expects objective information about the causes and course of such conflicts. This need is met by specialised journalists, the so-called “war correspondents” who are intended to provide recipients with information about the war, although they should not intensify hatred in society, especially since war is usually not accepted by the majority of society, and even more – they should not disclose secret information, if they enter in their possession and they do not obtain permission to publish them.

Traditionally, starting with the popularity of Andrzej Frycz-Modrzewski's² essays, a distinction is made between a just, defensive war and an unjust war (this type of war occurs when the state attacks another country, e.g. in order to exploit its resources or use cheap labour, due to the willingness of the representatives of the authorities of the attacking country to subjugate the attacked state). In any war, regardless of the classification associated with the distinction between types of war, there is, because of military conflict and armed action, a risk of death not only for soldiers but also for civilians. Due to the recognition of peace as a natural and proper state in democracy, war determines the interest in it among the members of society, but also creates reluctance, for example, to the authorities, if they have given their consent to the country's participation in a military conflict. Thanks to the media reports of war correspondents, the recipients thereof are able to form an opinion about the circumstances of the war.

War also poses a threat to the health and life of war correspondents. This is evidenced by the death of Waldemar Milewicz, who died in Iraq in 2004, in the course of his journalistic duties. In Iraq, W. Milewicz, a well-known Polish reporter famous for reporting on events in areas of military conflict and major disasters, found himself in Iraq precisely because of the attack of a coalition of international forces, led by the United States thereon. The reasons for the attack included, *inter alia*, allegations of mass destruction weapons being in the possession of Iraq, human rights violations, as well as allegations of the involvement of Iraqi capital in the financing of international terrorism (including in connection with the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on 11 September 2001). The vehicle used by Mr. Milewicz and other members of the Polish journalist group staying in Iraq due to information activities carried out, was shot on 7 May 2004, when Poles were on their way from Baghdad to Karbala and then – ultimately – to Najaf. A war correspondent who previously wrote reports from Chechnya, Kosovo, Cambodia, Somalia, Turkey and other countries, who wrote a series of reports entitled "Strange is this world", died as a result of his wounds [4, p. 110].

As the example of W. Milewicz's story shows, the profession of a war correspondent is dangerous, demands sacrifice and dedication. Admittedly, this profession results from journalistic rights in the era of democracy and pluralism, when journalists can legally inform about everything, which is guaranteed by the constitutional freedom of speech, freedom to collect, gather, present and share information as well as freedom of conscience and religion (excluding the possibility of showing support for totalitarian systems, such as communism, fascism or Nazism which are particularly dangerous to the life and health of individuals and nations). A war correspondent in a democratic state of law is a part of the concept of media freedom. It is also an important factor in educating recipients, e.g. it may sensitize them to the consequences of war, and at the same time, it is a factor in controlling the way in which public institutions, government or parliament exercise power and function. The control function of a war correspondent is particularly confirmed by the fact that war relations do not belong to a story of a positive connotation, but are inherently critical of reality, and thus leave a critical position in relation to the political and military decisions of the entities authorised to make them. Nevertheless, a war correspondent should not deliberately increase public reluctance

² This famous theoretician of law and state, a philosopher lived in the 16th century and created projects of a just state, following the example of ancient philosophers (e.g. on Plato's "State"). His original views were very progressive at that time and were part of the Renaissance humanism.

towards authorities or services, nor should he disclose strategic action plans or any other secret information about military operations.

It should be noted that the profession of a war correspondent can only be properly distinguished in democratic countries and in countries that have developed a norm according to which pluralism is one of the most important values. This is because the authority, which made a decision negatively assessed by a large social group, often by most of the state community – a decision, e.g. on the participation of a country in war or on supporting a decision of another country to attack a given state, should not only tolerate journalism reporting events from wars – often showing cruel scenes, informing about bloody fights, deaths and mutilations, including with the participation of civilians as a group injured by war, but even should support it. This is related to the information policy characteristic of democratic pluralist states, which, in order to neutralize the risk of reorganization into a totalitarian state and to prevent the lack of acceptance of some of the most important human rights, should agree on the participation of war correspondents in areas where military operations are ongoing, and what is more, support them. Informing citizens about military and war operations, including anti-terrorism, is the right of every journalist and the duty of a war correspondent, while allowing the public to be informed objectively in this regard is the duty of the entities in power. The authorities, as well as authorised military entities, are obliged to ensure that war correspondents are able to act and have access to information about their warfare in so far as this information can be disclosed and disseminated to the public. In democratic countries, society expects information on significant manifestations of public life and social events. Thus, it has the right to know what international activities and programmes the national Armed Forces are involved in abroad, and how their military operations are conducted, even if the war correspondents provide recipients with information critical of the objectives or conditions of the military conflict.

The role of journalism reporting on military operations in Poland increased even more in 1999, when our country became a part of the North Atlantic Alliance, and also in 2004, when Poland joined the European Union. Poland's participation in the international arena increased then, but our country also became a subject of international obligations. On the other hand, as democratic structures have developed, the importance of journalism, providing information about important events in the country that take place or may take place with the participation of the military, such as actions against terrorists, has grown. Today, in the era of the international concept of combating the Islamic state, the role of journalism in informing about the progress in fight against terrorism associated with Islamic extremists is growing. This is because citizens often do not even know what the fight is about, with whom or for what purpose. Often, there is informative chaos, escalating only tension and increasing negative emotions. However, the development of journalism specialising in reporting on military operations and other activities involving the army is an appropriate solution. This way, journalists are able to communicate objective information to the public as well as target interpretations when they witness events. They receive support from authorities and from legitimate military entities who accept the presence of reporters and even share information with them, for the common good and to provide society with the right to information. As a result, society gains a sense of stability in a democratic system, satisfies its curiosity and receives information instead of the censorship characteristic of totalitarian regimes. This

allows to build a modern pluralistic society, despite the involvement in even the most serious conflicts, including military ones.

In conclusion, journalists reporting on events concerning military operations, in particular war correspondents, risk their lives to ensure that the public has access to relevant information without which it is not possible to recognise a country as a fully democratic state. It is expected that the cooperation of war correspondents with government representatives, and in particular with legitimate military entities, which may be represented by press officers, the crisis staff or the press team, will proceed smoothly, to the benefit of society. This benefit stems from the fact that recipients are guaranteed the right to be informed of significant events involving the state and its Armed Forces. However, this cooperation requires improvement, mutual trust and appropriate openness – while protecting classified information against public disclosure.

Journalism reporting on police activities

The involvement of the Army in its main objectives, such as military operations, is much less frequent than the involvement of the Police in its objectives, such as protecting the safety of individuals as well as maintaining security and public order. The conviction of the society about the activities of particular formations – especially the Army and the Police – shapes, to a large extent, the sense of own safety of the members of the community, and this mainly depends – in a European democratic state, involved in international military alliances – on the Police, because the Army, if it performs its basic aims, is usually sent with individual missions to countries distant from us, located in a different culture, and the tasks of the Army are not associated with direct provision of current security to Poles located in our country. Exceptions include specific military tasks such as participation in the anti-crisis system and prevention of natural or regional disasters of major significance. Military missions are usually understood as stability tasks related to participation in transnational alliances.

Other tasks of the discussed formations – the Army and the Police, but also their counteracting threats of properties that differ, are the reasons for discrepancies in information about military operations and police activities. The type of tasks of these formations and the manner of performing them are of great importance in creating discrepancies between journalism related to military operations and journalism related to the course of police investigations or other police activities, as these factors influence the sense of security of the community members. An important role in causing differences between journalism related to military operations and journalism describing police activities is also played by the frequency of interaction between the representatives of both formations and members of society. The Police are more often involved in the affairs of citizens and other people living in our country than the Army. These issues also concern matters closer to the members of the public, since they include the protection of the security of individuals and the maintenance of security and public order, while the army engages in matters that are considered secondary by the public. Participation in international alliances, geographical location and geopolitics, as well as diplomacy are included in the category of factors providing security against aggression of foreign countries [5]. It is important for society to know whether the Army is operating efficiently. In addition, the daily sense of security is shaped mainly by issues that are most often considered by the Police. This has an impact on the identity of journalism reporting on police activities.

Media representatives who comment on the way in which the Police perform their duties adopt a different strategy than journalists who publish information on military operations. The information policy of the press services representing the Police is also different from that of the press services representing the Polish Army. The police press service is characterised by a much greater level of pluralism, while the units responsible for media relations in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland are more hierarchical, centrally managed and should occupy a uniform position. The Police operate at different levels, while the Polish Army has a higher level of centralisation of structures. Since the Police are used to protect the security of individuals and to provide security and public order, while military tasks are commonly associated with missions in remote parts of the globe – geographically and culturally distant – the public expects the press services representing the Police to provide more comprehensive information, as well as more frequent information, than those responsible for media relations in the Polish Army. The Polish Army may in fact limit itself to providing information rarely, especially if it is complementary. This information is largely indicative. Thus, they are the leading source of information from journalists reporting on the activities undertaken by the Polish Army. Police press services, on the other hand, provide information on an ongoing basis, every day there are announcements from police press teams. These communications do not constitute an exclusive source of information for journalists, they often even constitute only a point of reference for media representatives, as journalists collect information about the activities of the Police to a large extent independently. Representatives of the media who comment on military operations, if they are not involved in the information processes of the Polish Army, and even more so, if such journalists are not reliable war correspondents, have little chance to obtain attractive data that can be transferred to recipients. In the case of journalists reporting on the tasks of the Police and the way they perform these tasks, the situation is easier. Such media representatives often obtain information from various sources, they are even able to anticipate the official position of the Police and accurately suggest to recipients that the Police will take it.

Journalism reporting on police activities is characterised by a much greater level of pluralism in comparison with the possibilities available to war correspondents, limited in their activities to a large extent, by a centralised way of information, characteristic of the army. However, this journalism can also have a negative impact on investigations and thus impede the prosecution of perpetrators and the process of proving their guilt before the courts. Therefore, journalism commenting on the activities of the Police often requires cooperation therewith, so that information which could negatively influence investigations conducted by the Police is not made public. On the other hand, this journalism should be largely independent from the police's control and the comments of its press teams, as it largely determines the potential for democratisation of society, social progress and even the development of the civilisation stage. While in the past, excessively hierarchical and centralised systems of power prevented pluralism, the media now serve as the "fourth estate" [6, p. 224. See also: 7, p. 26-7] to shape both politics and society through the supervision of the legislative, executive and judicial authorities. An important role in this supervision is played by journalism reporting on police activities, because it should inform about abuses, corruption and other manifestations of improper functioning of the Police, as well as inform the public about the course of investigations conducted thereby. This information should not be subject to censorship and therefore should not be kept confidential unless it has an adverse effect on the quality of the police work.

Journalists reporting on police activities started to be perceived as media representatives dealing with criminal journalism. This journalism is a department that deals with individual and organised crimes in the region as well as in the whole country, ranging from treasury and tax crimes, through drug smuggling and arms trafficking, to human trafficking. It deals with reporting on the progress of the Police, Special Services and Prosecutor's office in criminal cases. Journalists representing this department, in order to meet the social need related to having knowledge about the progress of investigations, must be aware that – while performing the function of the “fourth estate” – they cannot abuse it, and in particular publish information through which the activities of law enforcement agencies will prove ineffective or whose effectiveness may be jeopardised. On the one hand, such journalists should satisfy the public, and on the other hand, they cannot disclose sensitive information, such as personal data (at least until a final judgment has been passed by a court under which such data – concerning e.g. the perpetrator – may be considered as possible to be published), technical details of the Police's activities or the manner of its work, any information potentially facilitating the perpetrator to avoid the penalty that would be imposed by the judiciary if it was not for the leakage of data, as well as other data requiring confidentiality, such as professional and state secrets, the publication of which could impede or, in extreme cases, completely prevent further activities of the services.

Journalism reporting on police activities, such as criminal journalism, seeks solutions based on a balance between satisfying social expectations in terms of obtaining details of police operations and ensuring that information, disclosure of which would involve a greater risk of failure of police tasks is not made public. Media representatives involved in criminal journalism should be familiar with the press law, have ethics and comply with the rules governing the protection of confidential information. They should inform the public objectively and seek out the truth in order to be able to present comprehensive information to the recipients, while at the same time they should cooperate with the Police and the public prosecutor's office in order to inform the public in such a way and to such an extent which will not reduce the potential of law enforcement agencies. There are also other responsibilities for journalists reporting on police activities. Such journalists must not expose individuals (whom they report in their communications) to the risk of losing their good name, nor should they disclose the image of officers or other entities involved in investigations and operational activities, nor should they complicate law enforcement agencies' ability to perform their tasks in connection with their information policy for the media. They should take care to protect the identity of victims, especially as they are important to the success of investigations, while by the leakage of data they would be exposed to threats or blackmail from the perpetrators, for example. Kidnappings for ransom are examples of situations requiring not only confidentiality from journalists, but also great care in the transmission of theoretically possible content that is not protected under the regulations on the protection of confidential information, especially since the kidnappers usually demand that those who provide the ransom should not inform the police under threat of injuring or killing the kidnapped persons. Other examples of such situations are hostage-taking or hijacking of aircraft with passengers on board. Journalists reporting on such events, although they have considerable capacity to obtain and publish data on such topics, should not disclose sensitive information, even if it is not protected under the rules governing classified information. Otherwise, they may expose to dangers the people about whom they informed in the published materials.

Criminal journalism is trying to fight the manifestations of excessive fascination with information about criminal events, which has now become one of the main challenges for the media. The media follow, obtain and publish sensational news because there is a high demand for this type of content from the public. Responsible journalists avoid publicity if it was only caused by sensational news. However, it has become common practice that media representatives, in order to satisfy the (often economic) expectations of their superiors, look for sensational information and then present it in a way that emphasizes it (since the greater the demand for particular materials, the greater the sales and market share of specific media). Therefore, press services of law enforcement agencies, including the Police, have begun to approach the process of sharing information with journalists with caution and try to disclose only facts that may be published at a given time in the light of recommendations resulting from the assumptions of the Police. On the other hand, press services of law enforcement agencies are obliged to provide reliable information. This creates a conflict of interest because it imposes different obligations on law enforcement press teams, which often conflict with each other.

Journalists are expected not to abuse a conflict of interest that involves law enforcement press teams. They should not make premature judgments or rely on speculation or ignore facts that do not correspond to the personal views of reporters or their superiors. They cannot make judgments, arouse fascination with violence or escalate negative emotions, even through understatements or overinterpretations. On the one hand, they should act ethically – informing the public, especially about the course of investigation, as well as about abuses, performing the function of the “fourth estate”, on the other – they should cooperate with the Police, primarily because they are obliged to preserve sensitive information in the confidentiality, the disclosure of which would impede the work of law enforcement authorities, and the mission of the Police is to protect the safety of persons and to maintain public safety and order, which is not possible without – adequate to the needs of law enforcement and justice – information flow.

Conclusions

Despite their different characteristics, both journalism reporting on military operations and journalism publishing information on police activities are essential forms of journalistic work of the 21st century. War correspondents and media representatives specialised in criminal journalism have an important role to play in society because, together with other reporters, they are the “fourth estate”. They are indispensable media representatives co-creating journalism capable of effective performance of this function, as they supervise the activities of such formations as the Polish Armed Forces and the Police, which are crucial for the security of the state and people. On the other hand, both war correspondents and journalists dealing with reporting on police activities, despite different tasks, are obliged to cooperate with these formations. They cannot disclose classified information, because their disclosure to the public may contribute to the reduction of state security and reduce the chance of success of military missions, as well as reduce the security of individuals and deteriorate the state of security and public order. Democratic countries cannot afford such consequences. On the other hand, these countries, including Poland, also need pluralism and social supervision of military and police operations. This leads journalists to a conflict of interest that can only be resolved on the basis of reason.

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Author contributions

The author contributed to the interpretation of results and writing of the paper. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Ethical statement

The research complies with all national and international ethical requirements.

ORCID

Marcin Krzysztof Konieczny  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1798-1509>

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Biographical note

Marcin Krzysztof Konieczny – Lt., PhD, lawyer, graduate of the Faculty of Law and Administration at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, National Defence Academy in Warsaw, Police Academy in Szczytno, the Military Academy of Land Forces in Wrocław, interested in criminology, internal security and crisis management.

Dwa modele dziennikarstwa – w warunkach operacji wojskowych i działań policyjnych

STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł prezentuje dwa modele dziennikarstwa, tj. takiego, który dotyczy przedstawiania operacji realizowanych przez Siły Zbrojne, a także dotyczącego działań prowadzonych przez Policję. Autor prezentuje sposób przekazywania informacji przez przedstawicieli mediów z tzw. „pierwszej linii” oraz uwarunkowania funkcjonowania dziennikarzy informujących o operacjach wojskowych, jak również przedstawicieli

mediów publikujących informacje o działaniach policyjnych. Zauważa także, w jaki sposób dziennikarze powinni się zachowywać, aby nie stracić rzetelności ani wiarygodności w warunkach, w których są zobowiązani do poszanowania unormowań operacji wojskowych, śledztw i dochodzeń, a zwłaszcza – związanej z tymi obszarami działań – polityki informacyjnej.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE media, dziennikarz, operacje wojskowe, działania policyjne

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