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The Kosovo War in the Media - Analysis of a Global Discursive Order

Kurzfassung: Der vorliegende Aufsatz diskutiert Untersuchungsergebnisse zur Medienberichterstattung über den Kosovo-Krieg aus diskursanalytischer Perspektive. Die zugrundeliegenden Studien umfassen das gesamte Spektrum von der Nachrichtenproduktion bis hin zur Rezeption. In theoretischer Hinsicht werden dabei verschiedene, wenngleich verwandte Diskurse zusammengeführt: der Nachrichten- und Propagandadiskurs und der Diskurs des globalen Mitgefühls. Auf Grundlage von Fairclough´s Konzept der "globalen Diskursordnung", wird herausgearbeitet, wie diese Diskurse miteinander vermischt sind und wie sie miteinander interagieren. Im ersten Teil des Aufsatzes werden die sozialen und historischen Kontexte der genannten Diskurse diskutiert.
Der zweite Teil des Aufsatzes referiert die Ergebnisse eines Forschungsprojektes, das aus einer Reihe von Einzelstudien zur Medienberichterstattung über den Kosovo-Krieg besteht. Ziel des Projektes war es, zu untersuchen, wie die Medien und die Leserschaft mit diesem globalen Ereignis umgingen und wie sie es interpretierten. Die Studien wurden in Schweden (einem nicht-NATO-Land) und in Norwegen (einem Nato-Land) durchgeführt. Darüber hinaus wurde auch eine britische Studie zur Nachrichtenproduktion mit eingeschlossen. Der journalistische Prozess wurde mittels Interviews untersucht, die Medienberichterstattung mittels Textanalyse und die Rezeption mittels Fokusgruppen. Einige Ergebnisse:
Der Diskurs des globalen Mitgefühls hatte einen starken Einfluss auf die Medienberichterstattung. Medien in Schweden und Norwegen waren gleichermaßen vom Schicksal der Zivilbevölkerung eingenommen und thematisierten ihr Leiden, sowohl unter dem Terror am Boden als auch unter den NATO-Luftangriffen. Die Leserschaft reagierte auf das von den Medien angebotene emotionale Engagement in unterschiedlicher Weise: entweder mit Mitgefühl oder mit Indifferenz und Desinteresse.
Die Medien stellten die Alleinverantwortung des Feindes Milosevic und die von der NATO proklamierten Motive des Kosovo-Krieges niemals ernsthaft in Frage. Dasselbe gilt für die Leserschaft. Allerdings zeigte die norwegische Öffentlichkeit generell größere Bereitschaft, die NATO Propaganda zu akzeptieren, als die schwedische Öffentlichkeit.
Im Vergleich zu den norwegischen Medien hatten die schwedischen Medien zu Beginn eine weit stärker artikulierte kritische Stimme. Aber unter dem Einfluss der folgenden Ereignisse, insbesondere den irrtümlichen Angriffen auf albanische Flüchtlinge, zeichneten die Medien in beiden Ländern ein überwiegend kritisches Bild der NATO-Bombenangriffe. Eine gewisse Ambivalenz gegenüber den Bombenangriffen war auch unter der Leserschaft in beiden Ländern verbreitet.
Hinsichtlich anderer Aspekte, z.B. bezüglich der Darstellung der Rolle Russlands in dem Konflikt, blieben die Unterschiede zwischen den norwegischen und den schwedischen Medien während des gesamten Krieges bestehen. Die Unterschiede spiegelten die verschiedenen sicherheits- und außenpolitischen Traditionen der beiden Länder wider.

Abstract: This article, which has a discourse analytical perspective, discusses findings from studies of the Kosovo War in the media covering the whole process from production to reception. Theoretically, a set of different, albeit related, discourses are brought together. It is the discourses of news journalism and propaganda, and the discourse of global compassion. Fairclough´s concept "global discursive order", implying a certain complex of discourses, is used to emphasize that discourses are mixed and interact with each other. In the first part of the paper the social and historical contexts of the mentioned discourses are discussed.
The second part of the article presents results from a research project consisting of a set of studies of the Kosovo War in the media. The aim was to study how the media and the audience handled and interpreted this global event. The studies were conducted in Sweden (a non-NATO country) and Norway (a NATO country). A British study of news production was also included. The journalistic process was studied via interviews with reporting journalists, the media coverage of the war was studied by textual analysis, and audience reception was studied by focus groups. Some conclusions:
The global discourse of compassion had a strong impact on the media reporting. Media in Sweden and Norway were equally occupied by the fate of the civilian populations and their suffering due both to terror on the ground and to the NATO air attacks. The audience responded to the emotional engagement that the media offered in two ways: either with compassion or with indifference, turning their backs to the suffering.
The media never seriously questioned the enemy Milosevic as the only one responsible for the war, and NATO´s self-proclaimed motives. Neither did the audience. In general, however, the Norwegian audience was more willing to accept the NATO propaganda than the Swedish audience.
From the start the media in Sweden had a much more outspoken and critical voice compared to media in Norway. But under the impact of subsequent events, especially the misdirected attacks on Albanian refugees, the news media in both countries turned into a mainly critical image of the NATO bombings. Some form of ambivalence regarding the bombings was also quite common among the audience in both countries.
In other respects, for example accounts about Russia's role in the conflict, differences between Norwegian and Swedish media remained throughout the conflict. The difference reflected differences in national security and foreign policy traditions.

1.   Introduction

Working together on a tripartite study, which covers the whole span production-text-audience on the media reporting of the Kosovo war, we have come to realise the importance of theoretically bringing together a set of different, albeit related, discourses. These are the discourses of news journalism and propaganda, and, what we like to call, the discourse of global compassion. They are all to be seen as global discourses. They have partly different political, cultural and historical origins but they also meet and are interwoven, which became evident in the media reporting on the Kosovo War. In this paper we will both present the discourses one at a time, to make their historical roots and social contexts clear, and bring them together in a synthesis, which can be characterised as a global discursive order. We will further present results from our studies of the Kosovo War and the media and discuss how the news production as well as the audience may be related to the global discursive order. The article was written before September 11th 2001 and will thus not include a discussion of the most recent global war, the so-called Terror War.

We will start by saying a few words about the research project, and specify our use of the somewhat fuzzy concept "discourse".

1.1 From production to reception

Usually research on war journalism is either focused on the production of news reports or on the effects on public opinion with few attempts being made to integrate the two approaches. Concerning the audience side, there is also, as Hallin (1997) has remarked, a need for more in-depth studies of the audiences´ interpretations of war news and to conduct research in the reception-analysis and ethnographic tradition. We can conclude that there is a strong need to study the communication process from production to reception for situated war and conflict themes and bring together studies of journalistic production, media coverage, and audience reception. This claim is not new if we see to media research in general. Ever since Stuart Hall (1973) presented his encoding-decoding model it has been an ideal. This is, however, hard to live up to for a single researcher, and most researchers have therefore continued to focus on one side of the communication process.

A joint research project is the solution we have tried. A tripartite study of the Kosovo War in the media was designed, consisting of a set of sub-studies covering the "whole" process: sender, message, and receiver. [1]

The studies were conducted in Sweden and Norway but a British study of news production was also included. The journalistic process was studied via interviews with journalists who reported on the war in press, radio and television (Mellum, 2000; Berglez, 2002; Riegert, 2002). The journalistic products, i.e. the media coverage of the war, were studied via quantitative and qualitative textual analysis (Nohrstedt, Höijer & Ottosen, 2002; Ottosen, 2001a). Audience reception was studied by focus groups (Höijer & Olausson, 2002).

1.2 The concepts 'discourse' and 'global discursive order'

Discourse analysis is a method for studying communicative action from a social science and partly linguistic point of view. The concept 'discourse' refers to all kinds of communicative actions (language use in written or spoken form, visual images, gestures, behaviour, etc. (Fairclough, 1995: 54; van Dijk, 1998: 193-194). Its referential meaning concerns the *ways* in which language is used when talking about and understanding the world (Drotner et.al., 2000:28; cf. Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999). Communication is conceived as a kind of social practice with societal implications and effects, "a linguistized societal practice" (Drotner, et al., 2000:107). It can be compared with other actions in that something is *executed* (Nohrstedt, 1986: 48). But the relations between the discourse and its social-political context are not only constituted by its effects on the latter. They are also comprised by the ideological, political and institutional frames and norms that condition the ways in which communication is pursued. Hence, in several reciprocal ways discourse and context are mutually related and different specific discourses are produced and reproduced, for example political, journalistic, humanitarian, etc. discourses.

A 'discursive order' is the actual configuration of a certain complex of discourses. The reason why this concept is needed in discourse analysis is that various discourses are usually mixed and interact with each other. Although any discourse may have a unique institutional base, e.g. media discourses, language use is often transferred from one discourse to another. In the analysis of discursive orders, attention is particularly focused on what combinations of discourses are present in the actual situation and their societal importance. More precisely, Norman Fairclough argues that studying a discursive order implies analysis of both choice relations and change relations (Fairclough, 1995:64). For example, in connection to the Kosovo War the media discourses can be studied with respect to how the media have selected

information and sources in relation to the parties in the conflict and their propaganda activities. Then the analysis is focused on the inter-discursive relations between media discourses and propaganda discourses with respect to the choice aspect. The second aspect, the change relations, is relevant when one focuses on how one particular communicative act, for example a statement on a press conference, is (re)formulated when it "moves" between different discourses - e.g. from the press conference to a news programme, but also further on to audience conversations in front of the television set or work place discussions. According to Fairclough two questions are central in the analysis of discursive orders, namely how unitary or variable, and how stable or changeable the discursive practices are (ibid:65). Although it would not be completely wrong to say that most media research applying discourse analysis is critical, the label "critical discourse analysis" (CDA) is usually reserved for some special directions. According to Ruth Wodak and associates, CDA is comprised of one British, one Dutch, one German and one Austrian variant (Wodak, et al., 1999). When, for instance, newspaper texts are analysed they are conceived of as discursive acts and social practices in a historical, political, social, etc. setting. Thus, critical discourse analysis "assumes a dialectical relationship between particular discursive acts and the situations, institutions and social structures in which they are embedded: the situational, institutional and social contexts shape and affect discourse, and, in turn, discourses influence social and political reality. In other words, discourse constitutes social practice and is at the same time constituted by it." (ibid., p.8).

In the present project it is primarily the discourses of media, propaganda and compassion that are studied. Since they are transnational discourses we are interested in what we will refer to as the 'global discursive order' of these discourses in conjunction with the Kosovo War. From a globalisation theory perspective it is crucial to analyse both to what extent these discourses are nationally specific or transnationally common, as well as to study discursive hegemony and dominance on the global level.

Even though high sensitivity for variations within and between different discursive practices is a characteristic of discourse analysis, it does not exclude us from studying the media as a domain for cultural power and hegemony and for discursive ideology (re)production (cf. Fairclough, 1995:67; Nohrstedt, 1986:49; van Dijk, 1998:316 ff.). In our ambition to contextualise the analysis, we will briefly comment on the globalisation processes that are relevant for our study.

2. Global Discourses

2.1 The New World Order and globalisation

The end of the Cold War had tremendous impact on the international political scene, some of which is probably not yet fully understood. What seems clear, at least when it comes to media wars, is that the cognitive patterns for understanding international politics and conflicts changed from a rather stable situation to an uncertain and movable one, in which past prescriptions for understanding did not fit.

Like others, journalists and media were also forced to re-orient under the new conditions. Instead of a world polarised between East and West they now had to establish meaning in a world with only one remaining superpower, a superpower that had an unprecedented political dominance. At the same time borders had been opened between the previous power spheres in the East and West and contacts had sky-rocketed on all levels – through trade, tourism and media, etc. Globalisation during the last decade is no doubt an effect of the New World Order. We will not enter into the etymology of the notion 'new world order', suffice it to mention that it is connected with the use President George Bush made of it in conjunction with the Persian Gulf War 1990-91, as a foundation for his appeal to the international community to stand up against Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and, at the same time, show that a new era had come entailing the protection of human rights and international law. In the same way as that expression is associated with both utopian and dystopian meanings, globalisation has encouraged both hopes and fears. In the globalisation debate we find promoters as well as opponents. This is no surprise and neither is the fact that the concept 'globalisation' is differently interpreted among the discussants. Re-orientation in the new situation not only appears as a political, but also as an intellectual challenge.

'Globalisation' became something of *leitmotif* in cultural theory and social science during the 1990s. It has even been interpreted as the beginning of a paradigm shift in international communication research (Sreberny-Mohammadi et al., 1997). Others are more reluctant to use the notion because it seems associated with a priori assumptions and values at the same time as it may refer to basically all relations crossing national borders. A not so grandiose language could then instead be to talk about transnational processes (Hannerz, 1996: 5-6)

Why is 'globalisation' such a central theme in current research? The answer clearly has to do with an increased emphasis on a basic feature of today's society: the general awareness of other parts of the world. More and more, the world is recognised as being 'a single place' (Robertson, 1992, p.6). This cognitive aspect is referred to, at least implicitly, in almost every contribution to the discussion.

Although we are witnessing a compression of the world, it seems there are good reasons to question overly simplistic assumptions about a historical development towards increased global homogeneity, unification and harmony. Contrary to the exaggerated promises of globalisation bringing about the 'global village', we suggest that opposite tendencies also should be examined: fragmentation, complexity and differences in the expressions of globalising processes in various regions and countries, together with increased heterogeneity and contradictions. This, however, does not imply that we subscribe a priori to dystopian views, like Huntingston's thesis about "clashes of civilisation". More interesting is a third view, which has been developed by Ulf Hannerz among others. He has pointed to what he describes as 'creolisation' and 'hybridisation'. Basing the discussion on these notions, one can leave behind the sterile contradiction between homogeneity and heterogeneity, and explore the possibilities of other cultural formations and new identities in the wake of globalisation.

Hence, we suggest that the conflicting interpretations with respect to the globalisation tendencies, whether they are homogenising or heterogenising, should be settled through empirical studies of specific global events. This project is one attempt aiming in that direction.

2.2 Globalisation of war journalism and propaganda

In the New World Order it has become even more important strategically than before to develop an effective propaganda worldwide. Although, a transnational scope in the planning of war propaganda is not a new phenomenon - in fact already Lasswell made a key issue of this point in his classical work on propaganda techniques from 1927 (Lasswell, 1927/1971) - the increased globalised media discourses challenge the strategists to consider the variety of national-local contexts in which the transnational flow of information is appropriated (cf. Thompson, 1995). A historically important step to that effect was the establishment of the UN after WWII and the regime for international collective security. Legitimate use of military means is only possible provided that broad international support can be mobilised. The New World Order increased this demand for international back up for conflict resolution policies even more, since what is at stake is a change of peace enforcement norms affecting what is regarded as legitimate implementations of the UN charter and international law. The main issue is whether human rights can be defended also at the sacrifice of the national state sovereignty. A matter of this magnitude can only be settled after a more or less world wide consent, and therefore a propaganda strategy with the purpose of achieving such a change must have a global scope.

One of the lessons learned from the Gulf War is that wars involving the traditional great powers eventually will be a global media event. Another lesson from international conflicts over the last two decades is that sophisticated propaganda techniques will be an integrated part of the warfare. Journalists covering a global event like the Kosovo War are thus playing a somewhat dubious role in the propaganda efforts from all sides in a military conflict. The media are subject to massive propaganda from the parties involved, and are often without their own knowledge representing the necessary link between the propaganda machinery and the audience. If they are not aware of this potential role themselves, the danger of playing the role as a catalyst for propaganda will be even bigger (Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2000).

In the self-critical discourse among journalists after the Gulf War, this "propaganda trap" was commonly acknowledged (MacArthur, 1992/1993). Partly as a result of this we have in recent years witnessed a broader spectrum in the professional positions in dealing with spindoctors and propagandists, than was the case during the Gulf War. One effect of this is that journalists also from the mainstream press have openly criticised their colleagues for playing along with the NATO propaganda. Usually this kind of criticism has come from NGOs and anti-war activists outside the journalist community. Robert Fisk from *The Independent* claimed during the Kosovo bombing that the war was more or less reported by two types of journalist: "frothers " who had "convinced themselves of the justice of the war and wickedness of the other side", and therefore their reporting was biased and predictable. The other group he called "sheep", who blindly followed NATO's word on everything (quoted from Knightley, 2000:9).

The daily press briefings at the press centre in Riyadh in Saudi Arabia, broadcasted by television to a global audience, was summed up after the Gulf War as propaganda success. As a military spokesman put it: "we have an hour and a half every day to talk directly to the American people" (quoted from Ottosen, 1992:78) .The daily press briefings at NATO's headquarter in Brussels was likewise the most important channel for distribution of propaganda from NATO during the Kosovo War.

A number of sophisticated propaganda and public relations methods used by both governments and the military to put their view across in "the best possible light" can be identified. One technique seems to have been an "overflow of facts". As Sky correspondent in the NATO headquarter, Jake Lynch, has put it: "We were given lots of material but no information" (Lynch, 2000). One technique identified by many journalists as a by-product of the overflow of facts was to bury essential information in the midst of unimportant facts. The most obvious example was when NATO detailed its successes in hitting targets one particular evening and just briefly mentioned that the Chinese embassy had been hit by mistake (Riegert, 2002).

Analyses of modern propaganda strategies reveal that this battle for the mind is also a battle of the language. A part of a global media strategy will thus be to develop a designer language in order to put the warfare in as positive a light as possible. In modern military vocabulary you do not kill people, you "take them out". Another example is that NATO changed its justification to attack the Serbs three times (Vaas, 2000). The initial justification was linked to make Milosevic sign the Rambouillet Accord. The second was to halt the ethnic cleansing and thereby a humanitarian disaster. The third was to allow the refugees to return to their homes. NATO obviously thought that the first round of justification would be sufficient since NATO had anticipated a short bombing campaign, and a quick surrender from the Milosevic regime.

Enemy images and historical parallels were used as propaganda tools both in the Gulf War and during the Kosovo bombing. Comparing Milosevic to Hitler was used in the NATO propaganda during the Kosovo War in the same way as Saddam Hussein represented the modern Hitler image during the Gulf War. Content analyses of the coverage of the Gulf War in five different countries indicate that such phenomena are global patterns in contemporary war journalism (Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2000).

2.3 Global compassion

Since the end of the Cold War politicians in the West no more motivate international intervention in the rhetoric of political ideologies or power interests, but in the rhetoric of human rights and global compassion. It is a crime against humanity that must be stopped, it is said (for criticism of this enterprise see Chomsky, 1999).

The discourse of global compassion has expanded and developed in the interplay between politics, the media, audience/citizens, and humanitarian organisations. There is an increased political willingness to pay attention to internal national conflicts and civil wars with victims among the civilian population – at least some conflicts and civil wars – and to see them as threats to global security (Minear, Scott & Weiss, 1996). Through extensive media coverage, images of distant suffering have become part of ordinary citizens' perceptions of conflicts and crises in the world. Further, humanitarian non-governmental organisations have been growing in number and membership and they have attained more prominent positions in the West (Tvedt, 1993).

We shall not try to find the hen and the egg in the development of global compassion because there is a complex interplay of factors behind it rather than a linear causal chain of relationships. Anyway, media coverage seems to be something of a driving force in the development, influencing both the public and the politicians. Especially television with its reach and visual impact plays a key role in the fostering of a collective global compassion. Photographic pictures are often perceived as truthful depictions of reality. As audience we experience that we see the innocent victims of the violence with our own eyes, and the pictures become evidence of the suffering.

The Gulf War, in which the sufferings of the people disappeared in the news reports, was an exception from a general development towards a growing emphasis on civilian victims. On the whole, news media are to a greater extent than before focusing on civilian populations as victims of conflicts and wars. Studies show an increased exposure of pictures of human suffering in television news, and that the visual presentations have become more lurid (Cronström, 2000; Höijer, 1994; 1996). The camera explores faces twisted in pain, or lingers on wounds and bloody bandages, it zooms in on broken and mutilated limbs, or pools of blood, and the injured are not soldiers but ordinary people. The pictures may invite the audience to a moral empathy at a distance, but they can also be rejected and met by ignorance.

Violence is, as recently pointed out by Delanty (2000: 44)), "not only a normative question which can be answered in political-ethical terms, but it is also a cognitive question relating to the definition of violence." This is evident in the victimisation of conflict and war journalism. As a cultural-cognitive construction the discourse of global compassion designates some victims as "better" victims than others.

According to the moral ideals of the humanitarian organisations there should be no social boundaries for being qualified as a victim worthy of help. However, as well in the international politics as in the media many victims never qualify as *worthy victims*. The hundred thousands of victims for the civil wars in Liberia and Sudan in the middle of the 1990s are two "forgotten" examples discussed by Minear, Scott and Weiss (1996). Chomsky (1999) asks why the Western Powers do not pay attention to the Kurdish victims in Turkey, and there are many more examples, such as, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Ethiopia and Eritrea. Further, some victims within an area picked out by the West are worthier; i.e. they deserve our empathy better than others do. Children, women and elderly people are often seen as helpless in a violent situation and therefore they are suitable as ideal victims (Christie, 1996). That the ideal victim is a cultural construction becomes apparent if we consider the victim status of women. It is not until recent times that male soldiers' systematic rapes of civil women from the enemy side are being condemned. A child is, however, the most ideal victim in the perspective of compassion. When a child shows his/her feelings by crying or by a sad look we may feel pity both by way of revival of being open and left out to the treachery of adulthood and by our adult identity of protecting the child.

According to Ignatieff (1998) the shame of the Holocaust is the breeding ground for the development of a moral universalism, which focuses on innocent victims of political violence. The roles of the UN and UNESCO should, of course, not be underestimated, but there are also many thousands of non-governmental humanitarian organisations helping suffering people in the world. Boltanski (1999) goes further back in history in his understanding of what he names "the politics of pity". However, in the same way as Ignatieff, he claims that the last twenty years of development of non-governmental humanitarian organisations "is something new" (Boltanski, 1999: xiii). Johnstone (2000:15) also notes the growth in humanitarian engagement in the West: "As political parties have declined, the creative centre of the old liberal left has shifted to single-issue and humanitarian non-governmental organisations". The apolitical character of such organisations may even be a reason for their attraction. They are in their philanthropic and altruistic messages and practices raised above the power game and hypocrisy of ordinary politics. They are in the service of humanity, they always side with the victims, and they appeal to our most noble feelings – compassion and altruism.

3.   How Journalists Were Situated in the Global Discursive Order

The following section is based on interviews with Norwegian and British journalists. The purpose of the interviews was partly to collect facts about the working conditions for journalists in the war zone, and partly to reveal what professional attitudes the journalists in the field had towards propaganda efforts from the different parties in the conflict.

3.1 The propaganda framework and censorship

Both Norwegian and British journalists were aware that their governments, the US government and NATO tried to influence the way the Kosovo crisis was handled in the media. 'Everybody spins' was an attitude expressed by journalists in both countries. This does not necessarily mean that they had the same attitude towards the two main opponents in the Kosovo conflict, the Serbian government and NATO. A common attitude among the journalists seemed to be that the Serbs are lying when it serves their purpose whilst NATO spokesmen tend to be manipulative, but try to avoid lying. Many defined it as a problem that they were so heavily reliant on NATO officials in Brussels. Despite this, most of the journalists thought that the present regime of media management was 'better' than the restrictions they had previously been subject to, for instance during the Gulf War and other conflicts.

The Norwegian journalists covering the Norwegian pilots involved in the military operation in Kosovo were submitted to limited censorship on the use of names and photos of the Norwegian pilots. They accepted these restrictions and also admitted that they were dependent on press officers on the Vicenza base to get their stories. They reluctantly accepted these restrictions since the alternative would have been no interviews with the Norwegian pilots at all.[2]

The Serbian government was quite open in its attempts to put restrictions on the Western journalists in Belgrade. Most of the journalists from NATO countries were expelled from Kosovo and Serbia, but many of them were able to stay or return to Belgrade at a later stage. Even though the Serb government tried to implement censorship on the news sent out from Belgrade, the apparatus to implement the restrictions seemed half-hearted and inefficient. Both the Norwegian and the British journalists found it quite easy to avoid the control-mechanisms by using satellite telephones rather than the telephones on the "official press centre" etc. The Serb officials were in many cases characterised as sympathetic and half-hearted in their control efforts. The BBC's Foreign Affairs Editor John Simpson compared the censorship in Belgrade with that during the Gulf War: "(the Serb censors were) quite decent people who had a personal distaste for the job". This meant that "when it came to a decision about whether to let something pass or not, they would generally let it pass. This compared to the Gulf War, where the censors in Baghdad were motivated by "that basic terror about what would happen if Saddam got to hear about it" (quoted from Riegert , 2002).

3.2 Access and limitations on working conditions

Both the Norwegian and British journalists had problems with access, sourcing and intimidation in all of the main areas covered by journalists: Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo. According to Riegert "The atmosphere in Montenegro was 'very intimidating' for the BBC journalists working there. Several of the Norwegian journalists mention problems with visa from the Yugoslavian authorities as a major problem (Mellum, 2000). A number of BBC personnel were arrested and their equipment confiscated. One correspondent was arrested for filming in front of what was assumed to be a church hall, which the Montenegrins claimed to be a military barrack. Journalists felt they were constantly being watched and the incident above indicates that they had to be careful of what and where they were filming". One of the Norwegian journalists shared the experience with their British colleagues that the Macedonian authorities also attempted to restrict news coverage. He said that the Macedonian authorities insisted on reading the

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[2] Information based on the interviews which Marit Mellum made available for this project.

material before it was sent out, but as he put it: "nobody does that". Despite this attempt on restrictions, the BBC managed, through devious means, to get footage of Macedonian police beating refugees and also reported that the Macedonian authorities tried to stop aid workers from distributing aid.

Access was not the problem in Albania, where journalists could also film "border exchanges" between the KLA and the Serb military (Riegert, 2002). A huge number of journalists from many countries waited by the border to interview refugees as they crossed the border to Albania and Macedonia. Here the journalists had a source problem since they had to rely on the credibility of the refugees, but both the Norwegian and British journalists emphasised that they tried to double check stories with refugees from other areas.

Several of the journalists said that their stories were coloured by the meetings with refugees. One Norwegian journalist at the border between Kosovo and Albania remember how he saw the refugees coming towards the border: "We knew that the Serbian soldiers had vehicles so they could have helped these people. But they let them walk kilometre after kilometre. And you see the small kids that can barely walk. In the end the parents are not able to hold them anymore. When you see with your own eyes that they don't get any help on the other side of the border, of course it affects the journalism".

3.3 UCK/KLA as sources

The British and Norwegian journalists had different and somewhat contradictory experiences with the UCK/KLA as sources. One Norwegian freelance journalist (not among the interviewed) had close contacts with the guerrilla and had penetrated Kosovo territory together with them, openly expressing his sympathy for their cause. UCK/KLA had also brought British journalists into Kosovo during the campaign. One journalist characterised the KLA as "initially camera-shy, unsophisticated, reticent and made little attempt to influence 'Western' opinion, only later in the war did they become more responsive" (quoted from Riegert, 2002). Another journalist (who arrived later in the conflict) said that the KLA used to hang around in the same bars as the UN, journalists and aid workers in order to influence them.

In a television documentary "The Truth About Rajmonda - A KLA Soldier Lies for the Cause", the Canadian journalist Nancy Durham is using her own experience when she was manipulated by the young female guerrilla soldier, Rajmonda. Rajmonda impressed Nancy Durham with her story about how she took up the gun and joined the KLA to honour the memory of her sister who was killed by Serb security forces. Confronted with the lie (after being broadcasted in several countries) Rajmonda excused herself with the statement: "I'm glad it was effective in one condition, if this was not my story this story belonged to someone else here." Her father also excused her "We didn't try to do any propaganda," he said. "But against the Serbs you had to fight in every way, even with propaganda like this" (quoted from the videotape of the documentary).

The use of statistics seemed to be another problematic topic. Riegert mentions how the overrated figures for how many military targets the NATO bombings destroyed were used uncritically. Estimates were often presented as facts and played the role as justifying the bombings. One journalist self-critically described his colleagues as "almost willing co-conspirators by passing on such 'facts' since statistics seem to increase the circulation of newspapers"[3] (Riegert, 2002).

3.4 Counterspin and answers to propaganda efforts

Both British and Norwegian journalist wrote quite a lot about the media coverage, but they did not consider it a priority task to reveal to the audience the problems they had in the field (Mellum, 2000). Also the journalists had only vague ideas of how they could contract the spin. At least they were not willing to volunteer any new methods and techniques during the interviews with us. They used phrases like "balanced" reporting and view "from the other side". The most radical technique to represent "the other side" was offered by the Norwegian daily *Dagbladet*. In a daily column in *Dagbladet* the Serb professor Ljibusa Rajick wrote his impression from Belgrade as seen through the eyes of a Serb intellectual critical towards Milosevic as well as the NATO bombings.

Several of the journalists interviewed were concerned about the decline of the specialist correspondent, including foreign, diplomatic and defence correspondents. The BBC journalists felt that expertise, knowledge, and experience were effective in counteracting government and military attempts to manipulate the media (Riegert, 2002). Norwegian editors and journalists expressed similar concerns. Some stated that it could be a potential problem that young inexperienced reporters who are more flexible when it comes to working conditions and wages increasingly will be sent to the front lacking the knowledge and experience of more senior reporters.

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[3] For facts about manipulation with statistics see also Newsweek , May 15th, 2000: "The Kosovo Cover up".

Phillip Knightley addresses the same problem and identifies it as a structural problem in the relation between the journalist and military community: "War correspondents have short tours of duty, and there is no tradition or means for passing on their experiences. The military, on the other hand, is an institution that goes on forever (…) The Pentagon and the British Ministry of Defence have manuals that are updated after every war and serve to guide the way in which they will handle their relationship with the media in wartime" (Knightley, 2000:9).

Knightley is worried about the future of war journalism. He is quoting the British war historian Alistair Horne, claiming that "Kosovo (…) turned out to be the most secret campaign in living memory". Knightley is worried because the NATO information strategy was successful in the major issues: "The truth, concealed from all but the most persistent journalist, was that NATO not only bombed civilian targets accidentally, but it also bombed them deliberately". Identifying the third and final phase in the bombing campaign, Knightley is quoting Lt. Gen. Michael Short (in charge of NATO's targeting policy) who admits in a interview with International Herald Tribune that the purpose of this phase was to put psychological pressure on the Serbian population: "I think no power to your refrigerator, no gas to your stove, you can't get to work because the bridge is down, the bridge on which you hold your rock concerts and on which you all stood with targets on your heads. That needs to disappear" (quoted from Knigthley, 2000:10). Despite this statement most journalists accepted and distributed the propaganda version that civilian casualties were mistakes, and that everything possible was being done to minimise them.

The official Kosovo report from the Norwegian Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Norwegian High Command of Defence admits that it was difficult for small NATO nations like Norway to be heard in the internal decision process in NATO. Interestingly enough the report reflects quite a lot on the media image of the Norwegian performance, but deals little with principle issues like the legal aspects of the war, the choice of targets for the NATO bombings and other issues, critically analysed by a report from the Foreign Committee in the British Parliament. It can hardly be regarded as a compliment for the Norwegian media when the Norwegian report characterises approaches from the press as "less than expected" (Kosovo-krisen: Nasjonal rapport, 2000).

There are however signs of more consciousness in the journalist community about the presence of propaganda and media strategies in modern warfare. One of the paradoxes is that the politicians seem to worry little about such issues, and they are not discussed on a principle basis in national assemblies like the Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget). There are examples of journalists and media taking over that responsibility and even criticising the politicians for avoiding the principal legal issues of war and peace[4]. But the journalist seems to have difficulties in developing efficient counter strategies towards propaganda. A concerned question is therefore: Whom shall the audience depend on in these issues at the next crossroad? (Ottosen, 2001b).

4.   How Media Were Situated in the Global Discursive Order

How did the media in democratic countries report on a conflict in which leading democratic states claimed the moral right to violate international conventions and to create peace by bombs? That is the general problem in relation to the Kosovo conflict, which we address in this part of our paper. In this endeavour our approach is based on propaganda theory and discourse analysis. According to a well-known definition propaganda is '... the deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist' (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1992:4). This definition emphasises a process perspective. Therefore in our view analyses of media war coverage should relate the media content to propaganda flows and activities in order to be contextually relevant and realistic. Another important element in the definition of propaganda is its polarised representations, i.e. that it depicts the world in a dualistic way - good/evil, rational/mad, etc. A key technique used for that purpose is demonisation of the enemy as represented by one or a few individuals and then "..load them down with the whole decalogue of sins" (cf. Lasswell, 1927/1971:89).

It shall also be noticed that 'propaganda' is not used here - as in ordinary practice - only as a derogatory label on the enemy's information as being untruthful and not reliable in contrast to one's own side in a conflict. To use 'propaganda' exclusively with reference to one party would actually be to confuse the role of the analyst with the role of the propagandist. In this project we have defined the propaganda discourse in terms of three ideal-typical propaganda-related perspectives. The first two are basically the propaganda views of the opposite parties, NATO/USA and Yugoslavia. In addition, a third perspective, a view critical towards the NATO propaganda perspective, has been

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[4] Aftenposten in an article on April 17th, 1999 during the bombing focused on the process of decision-making before Norway decided to join the warfare. Aftenposten showed that the Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget) joined the bombing campaign without any written information from the government to Parliament, and without a formal vote and almost without political discussion (Ottosen, 1999).

stipulated. Hence the following three perspectives are used for establishing propaganda influences on the media discourses:

1. *The NATO/USA stance*: Milosevic can only be persuaded by tough methods. For a long time, at least ever since the Bosnian civil war, he has shown that he does not heed warnings. Therefore the Serb terror against the Kosovo Albanians can only be stopped by force strong enough to make him give up. Military threat and ultimately air strikes are the only options available if we want to help the persecuted Kosovo people.

2. *The Belgrade view*: The war is the result of the USA's imperialistic aggression. The USA wants to dominate Eastern Europe politically and economically. The EU is also an enemy allied to NATO/USA. The conflict might have been solved, had the UN been allowed to take responsibility in Kosovo. Belgrade also criticises the NATO interpretation of international law and claims that the bombings are a violation of the national sovereignty of the FRY.

3. *The critical perspective*: This perspective is mainly promoted by intellectuals, peace researchers, and activists in so-called alternative media. In this view military threat and the bombings are counterproductive and will jeopardise the declared objectives of NATO. They will only encourage the enmity and aggravate the conflict. The actual motivation for NATO/USA to use violence is a hidden agenda. Besides, the bombings violate international law (the UN charter and the Geneva Accord).

In order to accomplish both a comparative and a diachronic analysis, which is necessary if convergence patterns are to be studied (Nohrstedt & Ottosen, 2000), we will start with comparing the Norwegian and Swedish media (press) during the initial phase of the war, and then continue with the post-war period. Hence we will in this article leave out the in-between-period of some 70 days of war coverage, which has also been studied. Only briefly will we bring some results up in the conclusive part of this paper. From the initial stage of the war we will deal with how the media reported about a) the breakdown of the Rambouillet negotiations; b) President Bill Clinton's speeches before the bombings started; c) the first NATO air attacks on Yugoslavian troops and installations; and d) the Yugoslavian President Slobodan Milosevic.

4.1 From the initial stage: How to sell a European war[5]

a) Rambouillet: Staging propaganda by deeds

One of the main propaganda battles that took place during the preface to the Kosovo War, was about the different peace initiatives. In the preface to the war there were two basic initiatives: The so-called Rambouillet Accord representing the NATO proposal in the conflict. The most problematic part of the draft agreement to accept for the Serb side was the appendix B that defined the terms for the so-called Multi-National Military Implementation Force. In practice it implied that FRY should give up her sovereignty and allow the NATO forces total military control and operational access to the entire republic, not only Kosovo. On March 23 the Serbian National Assembly rejected the demand for a NATO military occupation and put forward a counter-proposal. It proposed a diplomatic solution under the auspices of the OSCE and UN, which included autonomy for Kosovo. The propaganda position on the NATO side was to label Milosevic as unwilling to negotiate and to silence the counter-proposal from the Serb side. On the other hand, the propaganda offensive from the Serb side was to label the Rambouillet accord a provocation towards an independent country (Chomsky, 1999:107-109). Noam Chomsky found, when he checked a few US papers at the time, that they totally ignored the content of the treaty and also the Serbian response, and hence censured the so-called peace propositions from both parties in the conflict, which he regards a mere scandal.

Chomsky's interpretation of Rambouillet and its propaganda aftermath has - not surprisingly - been questioned. Peter Goff at the International Press Institute, Vienna, gives a balanced account. He, however, concludes that '...this key issue of whether negotiation possibilities had been fully explored received little media attention' (Goff, 1999:24).

The media coverage of the Rambouillet negotiations in the Norwegian and Swedish media is not completely in accordance with Chomsky's report from the US papers. It is true that in the media of both countries the sources are, in general, official spokespersons from the Western states that set up the negotiations in the first place. However, some critical comments were actually seen in the Scandinavian media, for example in the Norwegian *Aftenposten* the correspondent in Belgrade wrote that "it was the most remarkable signatory ceremony in the history of modern diplomacy" and that the Serbs "..are right in that it was not a treaty that was signed, for that takes two parties" (Aftenposten 20/3-99). In both the Swedish papers *Aftonbladet* and *Dagens Nyheter* it was mentioned that the Rambouillet treaty was impossible for Milosevic to sign, but this is not the dominant impression since both of the papers give paramount attention to the official western sources.

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[5] The headline alludes to the title of a talk that Jamie Shea, the PR manager of NATO's press briefings during the war, held in various European countries during a tour after the cease-fire.

b) Clinton: Milosevic responsible and a new Hitler

Two speeches by President Bill Clinton on March 23rd and 24th are mirrored in the media, confirming our assumption that they had a framing effect on the media's construction of the image of the conflict. In his two speeches President Clinton obviously wanted to construct an image of the Kosovo conflict around three key elements: a) establishing a link between the nazi-fascist regimes of the WWII period and the current Belgrade regime; b) demonising President Slobodan Milosevic, not only as a criminal dictator like Hitler, but also as a leader who rejected all peace proposals; and c) clarifying that peace and prosperity in Europe were of central interest to the USA (for further details, see Nohrstedt, Kaitatzi-Whitlock, Ottosen & Riegert, 2000).

How the Clinton speech (Statement by the President on Kosovo, March 24, 1999) was introduced in the Norwegian press is apparent in headlines like the following[6]: "USA must lead the attack" (*Dagbladet*) or "NATO attack to bring about peace" (*Aftenposten*). Both in terms of pointing out Milosevic as the villain in the conflict as with respect to the historical parallel to Hitler in the 1930s, the newspapers are relaying the Clinton war rhetoric.

In a similar way also the Swedish press emphasised the historical lessons that Clinton had been addressing, both in editorials and news items. *Dagens Nyheter* for example in an article which otherwise focused on the political support behind the US President. Its headline notes: "Clinton gets support for bombings." The lead further explains: "The US Congress rallied behind military action".

c) The NATO air strikes: Opposite risk scenarios

The NATO bombings were of course top news from the start in all news media. In the Norwegian context the worries were not primarily with those who were in the missiles' target area. On the front page of *Dagbladet* it is pointed out: "Norwegian lives might be lost" and "Norwegian pilots ready for attack". The whole *Dagbladet* coverage was bound together under a graphic headline across the front page: "War tonight". Even the king was introduced, in a news item that could be read as a "nation-stands-together" approach with possible connotations to the role of the king as symbol for national unity during the Second World War: "Last night King Harald followed the dramatic development in Yugoslavia". The article was illustrated with a small picture of the king in army uniform. The same article made no explicit mention of the potential suffering of the civilian Serbian population as a result of the NATO bombings.

The concerns look somewhat different in the Swedish media. The top story on the front page of *Dagens Nyheter*, March 24, reports that "NATO has ordered air strikes", and the lead quotes Richard Holbrooke saying that 'Milosevic has chosen to walk this path and he is perfectly conscious of where it leads'. But the front page is not only referring to US information sources and comments. A headline brings the attention to a warning from Carl Bildt, previously UN´s Bosnia co-ordinator: "Refugee catastrophe aggravates". According to Bildt the bombardment may start a process leading to 'a full-scale war in Kosovo'. Another rather pessimistic view is also mentioned in this article. The Research Director and Balkan expert, Jonathan Eyal, comments: 'Paradoxically, the bombardment can result in the worst humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo, so far...' Similarly the headlines the next day underline the hazardous character of the NATO operations: "The bombings are a tragedy for Europe; Risk that the conflict will spread; NATO attacks not a solution; The war is a great backlash for the UN; Half a million refugees on the run; Bildt fears a prolonged conflict".

Like the broadsheet also the Swedish tabloid *Aftonbladet*, brings much attention to the potential risks with the NATO operations, in particular for civilians in the affected areas. The day the air strikes began, March 24, the paper had a Swedish nurse working in Kosovo on its front page and also on inside pages. The Swedish nurse is sitting in her hotel room, "waiting for Clinton's bombs". AB quotes the nurse's feelings: "But they will not frighten me away from here. I will continue to take care of those who suffer in the enormous refugee flows." /.../ "I feel that I can make a contribution and give practical help to the innocent civil population."

Also from some examples of headlines the first days of the war it is quite obvious that the AB focused a lot on the tragic aspect of the escalation of the Kosovo conflict: "Several killed when NATO attacked tonight; A million may be forced to escape; The struggle can go on for weeks; Can a world war break out now?; 100 000 may die in the war; Bombings worsen the war". There are hardly any constructive, not to say positive, consequences of the bombings to be seen in the news in these two Swedish papers. The new phase of NATO policy is rather met with fear and dystopic misgivings.

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[6] This, and all the following quotations from the newspapers have been translated into English by the authors.

d) The enemy image: Personalised in the shape of Milosevic

This is an element in the NATO propaganda construct, which seems to have been uncritically adopted by most of the studied media, irrespective of national context. Both in editorials and news it is evident that, in some cases, the demonisation of the Yugoslavian leader was taken over and even amplified by the journalists. But there are also some variations between the papers, although not in kind but rather as a matter of degree.

The first day of the war the Norwegian *Dagbladet* had eight full pages of war coverage. A reference title on the front page clarified the target: "NATO to war against Milosevic". This was the first sign of an enemy image presented in a lot of the media: Milosevic became the personification of the enemy and represented the forces of evil. It was he, and not the sovereign state of Yugoslavia, who was the real target. The lead in the main article on the front page in *Dagbladet* underlined the dichotomy between good and evil by stating that "NATO goes to war against Slobodan Milosevic when the peace-negotiator Richard Holbrooke did not succeed". Also the next day, March 25, the enemy image of Milosevic is evident with a huge picture of him covering both the front page and the last page. But here the title also brings in worries about the consequences for the civilian population: "Shock attack against Milosevic - Children might get killed in rain of bombs".

The Swedish tabloid *Aftonbladet*, is as occupied by the Yugoslavian president as the main villain in the conflict as its Norwegian colleague. On March 24 AB publishes an editorial with the headline, which also represents most of the news material: "It became necessary to stop Milosevic in the end". And below, in not so bold print: "UN, EU and NATO have already waited too long". Milosevic is described as a man striving after power at all costs and when up against the wall he is prepared to choose war rather than compromise.

4.2 From the final phase

First a few words about a) the middle-stage of the war period which is not analysed here, then b) main findings concerning the way the media portrayed the end of hostilities and its immediate aftermath, and finally c) the worthy victim-image after the end of the war.

a) The middle stage: A growing propaganda crisis

The main part of the 78 days of the Kosovo media war consisted of daily reports about the number of air strikes and their impact, and reports from the refugee flows at the borders of Albania and Macedonia. Now and then peace proposals were addressed, but in general terms this was a war in which - in contradistinction to the Gulf War 1990-91 - the journalists managed to describe what they sometimes call the "true face of the war", i.e. what effects the hostilities have on innocent civilians. A few particular incidents should be mentioned here, before coming to the media discourses of the final stage of the war; events that have been interpreted as detrimental to the NATO propaganda. One was the misdirected attack on a convoy of Kosovo-Albanian refugees, and another was the bombing of the television building in Belgrade. In the first case NATO first denied being responsible, and then later had to admit that the killing by "friendly fire" was a mistake by one of its pilots. The second incident was controversial from a legal point of view. It is doubtful - to say the least - if the Geneva Convention can not regard television as anything else than civilian and thus exclude it from legitimate military targets. The attack on the television house consequently raised protests from the International Federation of Journalists and Amnesty International. Obviously, these and other similar incidents were difficult for the NATO spokespersons to handle and some analysts even conclude that NATO lost the propaganda battle. We will comment on that towards the end of this article, but here suffice it to notice that the war events made changes to the media discourses. These changes are particularly interesting to study comparatively - both with respect to national contexts of the actual media and various media genres.

b) After the cease-fire: Peace or what?

The day after the "Peace day", June 10, the media stories both in Norway and Sweden are painted in bright colours. Headlines are full of euphoric cheers about Peace and pictures of people celebrating the end of the war. In reports the retreats by the Yugoslavian troops are covered, even they make signs of victory when driving towards Serbia. Interestingly enough, the celebrations the media focus on are located differently. In *Dagbladet* Kosovo-Albanians in a refugee camp outside Skopje are smiling and singing, while in *Aftonbladet* it is the people of Belgrade: "Belgrade is exploding - with joy". Even if both tabloids focus on people's happiness they also notice the remaining problems - that it is important to build peaceful conditions in Kosovo. The two broadsheets, *Aftenposten* and *Dagens Nyheter*, are more distinctively different than the tabloids. In the Norwegian paper the joy is more unreserved than in the Swedish paper.

While the former tops the front-page with "A good day for Europe" the latter has "Long way to a safe peace" on its front-page the same day, June 11. And when the Norwegian paper reports about "How terrorism backfires", the Swedish paper notices that "UCK keeps the weapon". These examples indicate what seems to be - when considering the complete content - a general difference in attitude and expectation on the importance of the peace treaty on the first day after the cease-fire. As in the beginning of the war the two Swedish newspapers are obviously more critical to the NATO strategy than the Norwegian ones. But already on the second day of the "peace", one of the Norwegian papers, *Dagbladet*, turn towards a much more critical view expressed in front page headline "The bombs slaughtered thousands", and inside "An intensive and short hell ends, a deep and enduring one starts". The latter is heading one of the diary reports from a professor in Belgrade that has been sending his notes continuously during the war. The Swedish counterpart also expresses second thoughts about the prospects of peace, but the critical view is not as sharp as in *Dagbladet*. In *Aftonbladet* it is the remaining hate that causes worries: "War is over - hatred remains" and "Hangover after peace".

The critical perspective in *Dagbladet* is followed up these first days after peace in especially three ways besides the diary from Belgrade. First, on the first peace day an open letter from the Norwegian Red Cross questions whether the NATO air war had been a violation of international law because of the number of civilian casualties. Second, two days later the former foreign minister and Balkan peace negotiator Thorvald Stoltenberg is quoted from an interview where he expresses doubts that the Rambouillet negotiations were at all meant to unify the opposite parties around an agreement. The headline draws the conclusion: "The war could have been avoided". Third, the day after the peace a regular commentator in the paper concludes that NATO has changed its global strategy and become a moral military police. The author believes it is time for Norway to disassociate herself from taking part in that mission. It seems clear that the Norwegian tabloid, which during the war period gradually had become more critical towards the NATO air campaign, eventually has found the right moment for expressing quite deep-going doubts - or was it rather the quoted authoritarian sources that have found it the right moment? Anyway, nothing like this critique is seen in the other Norwegian paper or in the two Swedish papers at this stage of the conflict. One possible explanation is that the NATO propaganda discourse had lost its grip over the Kosovo discourse in *Dagbladet* but not in the others, since the other papers in our comparison were much more occupied with Milosevic's role in the aftermath of the war than was this paper. For example, in *Aftenposten* June 11 there are no less than three headlines with his name mentioned. Also in *Aftonbladet* and *Dagens Nyheter* the attention is very much with the Yugoslavian president, still depicted as the main obstacle for peace.

c) Who are the worthy victims?

The Kosovo War was in a way a particularly relevant case for the study of the inter-discursive relations between media, propaganda and compassion. It was different from the Persian Gulf War 1990-91 in at least two respects: first, because the media had access to civilians and their sufferings so the journalists could fulfil their ambition to describe the "real face" of the war; second, because the NATO military's attempt to once again promote the image of the high-tech surgical warfare did not succeed. Considering the first aspect, this is a test case for the interrelations between the discourses of the media on the one hand and the propaganda and the compassion on the other hand. Was the media coverage of civilian suffering and casualties consistent with the worthy victim thesis proposed by Herman & Chomsky (1988), i.e. that pity is expressed in relation only to innocent victims on one side in a conflict? There is no doubt that all of the media we have studied for most of the war period took the Kosovo-Albanians part, regarding them as the worthy victims of the war. This is no surprise for anyone who took interest in the Kosovo media war, and it is supported by all kinds of indicators - space, photo images, language use and manner of quotation. In contradistinction to reports about Serbian casualties and victims, when the Kosovo-Albanians were depicted as victims it was really a campaign-like, massive message which was repeated again and again. Furthermore, the latter were shown in despair, with crying women and children expressing their pain, horror and hopelessness in photos of great emotional appeal. Likewise in the text their exposed position was extensively covered and they were frequently quoted giving witness to the atrocities and terror that the Serbs had inflicted on them. With some exceptions this is not the case in reports about the civilian victims on the Serbian side. During most parts of the war they were referred to in rather abstract words, for example when air strikes was said to hit "areas" and not people, or when official NATO comments, declaring that the bombs were not aimed at the Yugoslavian people but Milosevic, were repeated without critical remarks. However, in the aftermath of the war the picture changed somewhat in this respect. Now the Kosovo-Serbs leaving Kosovo were in some papers treated almost equal to the way that the Albanian refugees had been depicted previously. Compassion and empathy were shown for them as well, and in for example the Swedish tabloid *Aftonbladet* the Serbs too became "worthy victims" alongside the Kosovo-Albanians. Two weeks after the "peace agreement" the paper makes no doubt that the war is not over: "The war continues - but now the butchers have changed faces". This is more or less the same conclusion as Ljubisa Rajic draws in the Norwegian *Dagbladet*: "The difference from before is that while the Albanian refugees drove to the south, the Serbs drive to the north". Thus in both the tabloids in our sample the tendency to assign the "worthy victim" label

only to the Albanians is clearly reduced, not to say cancelled. This is not the case in the broadsheet papers. Both *Aftenposten* and *Dagens Nyheter* seem to be concerned of not letting the Serbs take over the role of worthy victims from the Albanians, and they constantly balance reports about terror or murder against the Serbs with a series of revelations of past massacres on Albanians before and during the war based on reports from new mass graves found inside Kosovo. In these two papers, more than in the tabloids, the usage of passive formulations when describing the escaping Serbs is frequent. Hence, when the stream of Serb refugees are covered the standard formulation is that the Serbs move out because they "fear" revenge from the Albanians, whereas the earlier Albanian refugees were hunted out by the Serbs, i.e. without any reservations about who was responsible.

5.   How Audiences Were Situated in the Global Discursive Order

A total of 23 focus groups, 13 in Norway and 10 in Sweden, were run in order to find out how citizens in a NATO country (Norway) and a non-NATO country (Sweden) negotiated meaning in the media reports on the Kosovo War. The groups reflected a spectrum of citizens: school boys and girls, male and female pensioners, male and female professionals from the health care sector and the technology sector, and male and female Kosovo-Albanian and Serbian immigrants. Since the group interviews were conducted half a year or somewhat more after the end of the Kosovo War, a first interview section with spontaneous memories of the war was followed by a section in which a collection of television news clips from the war period was shown in order to facilitate the retrospective interviewing. It should be said, though, that people in general had very vivid memories and that they had a lot to tell before the clips were shown.

The reactions to and interpretations of the Kosovo conflict were comprehensive and varied and there are many things to report and discuss. Here, however, we shall concentrate on some overall patterns, which connect to the discourses we have presented above. We shall also mainly concentrate on the native Nordic citizens for whom the war was socially and culturally distant. Results from the whole study are presented in Höijer and Olaussen (2002).

5.1 Between global compassion and indifference

It was the discourse of global compassion that dominated the spontaneous memories of the war. The humanitarian catastrophe, i.e. the mass desertions and the human suffering were in the focus and the audience remembered the television pictures of streams of refugees or pictures of crying people in refugee camps, especially pictures of children and elderly people. Crimes against humanity, i.e. encroachment and violence against innocent citizens, are the core in the rhetoric of global compassion and it has a strong appeal on the audience. *"What I spontaneously remember is the enormous driving away of people where one million of Kosovo-Albanians were driven out from their country"; "I have terrible memories of children stepping on board buses and sitting by the windows crying"*, are a couple of short examples of such memories. Pictures, or rather our interpretations of pictures, can make indelible impressions on our minds, and as distant audiences we become bearers of inner pictures of human suffering. Especially when emotional pictures are repeated over time, as the pictures of the refugees were, they have a long-term impact on our collective memories. When the audience say, *"You never get rid of all the crying children and the elderly"* they emphasise the penetrative power of pictures.

In the discourse of global compassion some victims are, as we have already noted, better victims than others. The media reports on the Kosovo War therefore often exposed women, children, and elderly as victims and the audience followed up by talking about those victims. In the Norwegian part of the study this cognitive conceptualisation of a worthy victim was challenged by a news item about a crying middle-aged man in a refugee camp in Macedonia who in front of the television camera begged to be brought along to Norway. The audience reacted negatively and considered him an unworthy victim who should have asked about help for *"pregnant women and sick people in the refugee camp"* instead of for himself. Compassion is dependent on ideal images of an innocent victim against whom we can not bring any charges.

There was a feminine perspective in the compassion with the refugees in as far as the women, who took part in the study, to a higher degree than the men focused on the humanitarian aspects of the war and made empathic interpretations. This is in line with earlier studies of how male and female audiences via television news experience portrayals of victims of violence, for example of war (Höijer, 1996). Obvious social reasons for the gender difference are that women are fostered to show more feelings and mostly have the caring role in family life. Further, war is historically and culturally an extreme male domain in which glory, violence and manliness are called forth. To feel solidarity with victims simply does not accord with male ideals about heroic warfare violence.

According to the NATO propaganda the war was going to last for just a few days. Instead it lasted for 78 days and during this period the audience were repeatedly exposed to images of seemingly endless streams of refugees. A common reaction among the audience was that the pity for the victims gradually decreased in the course of the

humanitarian catastrophe. The powerlessness over the situation, the never ending number of victims, the difficulty to understand the Balkan situation and ethnic conflicts, and the inability of the media to give a background, made the audience less interested, blunt and even "immune" to the human suffering. "*In the end you could not manage it any more*", was one way of expressing how time undermined the feeling of compassion.

5.2 Ambivalent propaganda discourses

Looking at the discourses of propaganda we find a spectrum of perspectives on the war represented among the audience groups in the study. First however, it should be mentioned that the concept of propaganda only in a few cases was in the very foreground in audience reception. Many talked about their views on the war, their views on the actors, the offenders and the victims, what they thought was right and wrong and so on, without spontaneously using the word propaganda or seeing the information and reporting from a propaganda perspective. Also here we found clear gender differences. The male audiences more often than the female talked about propaganda and saw strategic interests behind the information. Men's larger interests for war and the military in general and their schooling in military service make them cognitively more prepared than women to see war reporting in the media as propaganda. The male groups were also somewhat more critical about the media coverage on the Kosovo War than the female groups, they expressed stronger doubts about the correctness of the reporting and more often pointed out how media use certain means to obtain certain effects. In the main, however, the domestic audience, made referential interpretations of the distant war news. The reality status of the reports was not questioned. They were conceived as reliable and people reacted to the perceived reality with empathy, anger, ignorance, or other feelings.

Interpreting the news reports as authentic did not exclude critical remarks on the news coverage. Among the domestic groups such critique were often quite general, for example, some criticised the media for entertainment tendencies when showing aesthetic pictures of the bomb attacks or focusing on the dramatic and selling stories of the destinies of the victims. The media critique was a little more pronounced among the Swedish groups. The most pronounced and severe critique, however, came from the immigrant groups, especially from the Serb immigrants. They were in fact extremely critical to the media coverage of the Kosovo War, which they thought gave a completely biased and false picture. Time and again in the interviews they returned to their critical views on the media coverage, and brought up examples of what they regarded as biased reports.

Turning to the macro-political dimensions of the propaganda discourses we found that ambivalence was more common than thinking models that one-sidedly supported a specific propaganda version. To a certain extent, most participants in the study mixed arguments from different propaganda discourses and felt some ambivalence about what was right and wrong. It could, for instance, be that the audience - as with several of the Norwegian audience groups - mainly supported the NATO bombings and accepted the argument that there was no other way to defeat Milosevic, but at the same time had strong doubts because "*when one thinks about all the dreadful things that follows a war*" or "*bombing is never a solution*". Or it could be, as in other groups in which members reasoned in accordance with the critical version but combined it with doubts because "*I cannot say that I am sure. I don't have enough knowledge*", or "*I think it is really hard to have a firm view on this*". NATO critical versions were more pronounced among the Swedish audience groups.

On the whole a majority of the groups told about how their doubts became more pronounced as the war went on without a solution and when the violence against Serbs in Kosovo was reported in the media. The cognitions about offenders and victims became contested: "*It never ends. Now it goes on in the other direction. Now the Serbs must flee*".

5.3 Denunciation of the enemy Milosevic

In one respect, there was total agreement among the audience and no ambivalent feelings were expressed. It was around the enemy picture of Milosevic that there was a distinct and dominant code of interpretation. As we have seen, the media presented in unison a demonised picture of the Yugoslavian leader and, not very surprisingly, the audience accepted this description. He was conceived of as dispositionally evil and dangerous, powerful and inhuman. All groups used expressions as "*he is a bad guy*"; "*he is a mad dictator*"; "*he is evil, manipulative, and stark mad*"; "*he is a terrible man, a psychopath*", in order to characterise Milosevic. Focusing on one person and attributing him the quality of a devil was a successful NATO propaganda strategy seen from the public opinion point of view.

The cognitions about the enemy also, however, include the perpetrators on the ground that committed the encroachments on the civilians. Here many of the audience groups expressed a somewhat more ambivalent view. When the media after the war reported about encroachments on Serb civilians the audiences´ image of the Serbs as the perpetrators and the Kosovo-Albanians as the victims was contested. As one of the informants said: "*Later on I got a*

more modulated picture because you saw how Serbs were treated by the Kosovo-Albanians, the Serbs were now driven out". One common way of getting a seemingly coherent image of the perpetrators was to include all ethnic groups in the Balkans in a general idea about a violent mind of the people: "*In fact they are all equally mad, it's in their minds*".

5.4 Stereotypes of Balkan people

The agenda of the New World Order was underdeveloped in the audiences' perspectives on the Kosovo War, even though some groups criticised the USA, and NATO, for playing "*big brother*" or "*police of the world*". A more pronounced frame of reference for understanding the situation was cognitions about the Balkans; often quite stereotyped ideas about the ethnic groups, the mentality of the people and the history. Many informants marked a distance between us – civilised citizens in a democracy - and them – primitive uncivilised people - in formulations such as "*it is a totally different culture than ours*, "*it is something with their temperament*", "*in the Balkans they think vendetta*". That the concept of Balkan is a popular metaphor for conflicts and trouble was demonstrated by a woman who told that a residential area nearby where she lived for many years have been called "the Balkans" because "*there have always been neighbour conflicts there*". These thought patterns have, of course, not arisen from nowhere. They also emanate from the media, from which they have been picked up during the course of the disintegration of former Yugoslavia. There may also be a historical component in as far as people might have notions about the Balkans as it was before the communist era.

An interesting difference here appeared between the Norwegian and Swedish citizens. The former more strongly marked the distance to Balkan while the Swedish citizens rather emphasised the geographical closeness of this war - because Balkan is part of Europe - compared to earlier wars, such as the very remote Gulf War. One reason could be a collective psychological defence mechanism from the Norwegians who quite rarely wanted to admit that Norway as a member of NATO took part in the war. Many denied that in the interviews by formulations, such as, "I never thought Norway was at war"; "Norway is not a warlike nation"; "Norway never took part in acts of war".

5.5 Mixed discourses

To sum up we may conclude that the audiences used a mixed set of discourses in their interpretations and reactions to the Kosovo War. In the discursive order between discourses, the discourse of global compassion dominates, however. The audience positioned themselves in relation to the emotional engagement that media offered by focusing on the refugees. Especially for the female audience, pity and empathy were close at hand. For others, especially some of the male groups, dissociation and ignorance were closer. For all groups, indifference became more pronounced as time passed and the war and the stream of refugees continued.

6. Conclusions

The results of our analysis can be summarised as follows:

1. Media discourses in Sweden and Norway were equally occupied by the fate of the civilian population and their suffering due both to terror on the ground and to the NATO air attacks. Some minor deviations with respect to emphasis and tone can be noticed, but by and large it seems that the Kosovo media war was quite different from the Persian Gulf media war 1990-91. In the last European war of the last decade, obviously the global discourse of compassion has had more impact on the media discourses than in the first war of the same decade. When comparing these two conflicts, this can partly be explained as reduced influence on the media from the dominant war propaganda discourses. In the Kosovo War journalists from the Western media had more access to unofficial sources on both sides than in the Persian Gulf War.

The audience answered the emotional engagement offered by the media by focusing on civilian victims in two ways: either by responses of compassion or by indifference turning their backs to the suffering. Compassion responses were more pronounced among the female audience and in the beginning of the war. Over time responses of compassion fatigue increased.

2. However, the NATO propaganda in the Kosovo War was in general quite successful all through the conflict in spinning the media in key strategic terms. The media never seriously questioned the enemy Milosevic as the only one responsible for the war, and NATO's self-proclaimed motives. Not even after the cease-fire, when continuous ethnic cleansing - but now against the Kosovo Serbs - were reported, did the media in general reflect much upon the NATO strategy and its basic objectives, and certainly not its possible hidden agenda. In some letters to the editor and debate items the NATO propaganda was criticised, but this critique did not have any noticeable framing effects on the news, neither could it shake the steady supportive attitude towards NATO in the editorials. But again, on a detailed level some national variations are visible (see below). The way in which the Rambouillet negotiations were staged by the big powers is

probably the main explanation to this stable impact on the media from the propaganda discourse (and we might add: as propaganda of deed this is not solely a discursive event).

The NATO propaganda was partly accepted and partly rejected by the audience. The Norwegian audience was more willing to accept it than the audience in the non-member country Sweden. Concerning the enemy picture of Milosevic, however, total consensus prevailed not only in the media coverage but also among the audience groups. No one questioned this.

3. In other respects the Norwegian and Swedish media discourses differed. In particular, the NATO bombing operations were initially given remarkably opposite coverage, but later the two media discourses converged towards a rather critical image. From the start the media in Norway, the NATO country in this comparison, had a low profile with respect to the effects of the air strikes, but they were generally described as necessary in order to restore peace in Kosovo. The Swedish media on the contrary had a much more outspoken and critical voice, emphasising the potential risks of the conflict spreading out over the entire Balkans and eventually into a third world war. Under the impact of subsequent events, and especially the misdirected attacks on Albanian refugees, the media news discourses in both countries turned into a mainly critical image of the NATO bombings. In this case, the explanation we would suggest is that the combined effect of journalists' access to civilians' experiences on both sides in addition to the impact of the compassion discourse led to increased counter-pressure on the attempts of NATO to dominate the media discourses. The Norwegian media were even more sensitive to this and also more movable because of its initially less critical view than the Swedish.

Some form of ambivalence regarding the NATO bombings was also quite common among the audience, probably due to the fact that over time different voices were heard in the media.

4. Other themes, more closely related to the cold war conflict pattern, like the Russian role in the conflict, show a more rigid discursive pattern. Here the national differences between the media discourses seem to remain also to the end of the conflict, for example when Russian troops suddenly moved into Kosovo from Bosnia. In Norwegian media fear and scepticism dominated, while in Swedish media the image of the Russian troops was part of the enthusiasm and relief, which dominated the coverage. This is a clear indication of the continuous importance of the national security and foreign policy tradition as a national context for the media discourses.

5. In the brief presentation of the media content above, we have given some special attention to the tabloid discourses as a particular case of inter-discursive relations. These newspapers show distinctively more dynamic patterns than the broadsheet or prestige papers. The latter have closer connections to the diplomatic discourse of the conflict, thus reporting more extensively about peace proposals, negotiations, etc., and also expressing views and perspectives more in accordance with their own government's than the tabloids. This could explain their relatively higher discursive stability compared to the tabloids. We have pointed to the remarkable images in the tabloids *Aftonbladet* and in *Dagbladet* at the end of the war. In both cases heavy impact from the compassion discourse can be an important part of the explanation. Concerning the Swedish tabloid, the way it covered the Russian march into Kosovo - as peace itself entering the scene, met by the people's celebrations and cheers - can be explained, we suggest, by its great attention to civilians' sufferings and sacrifices during the war. No matter what troops came in after the cease-fire, they represented the end of the war and the end of pain. Due to the paper's great concern with the "real face of the war" - it had started is own refugees aid campaign - and without any worries about the Russian intentions, *Aftonbladet* let the euphoric feeling of relief and the pure hope of lasting peace frame its coverage. The Norwegian *Dagbladet* came with strong critique against NATO and the way the Rambouillet negotiations were managed - in fact stronger than in any other of the studied media - after the war. It had over time and due to its special columnist in Belgrade reported quite critically about the human and material costs on the Serbian side, but now the paper came out with a critique that indicated that the paper and its sources eventually felt free to speak out about their doubts and worries. Mounting compassion for the people on both sides had at last a free way, when loyalty to the government's need to support the NATO policy had played out its role.

6. In conclusion the global discursive order in relation to the Kosovo War seems to imply that the new world order after 1989 has not led to a total US or NATO dominance. It is reasonable to assume that the US hegemonic position as the only superpower is stronger today than before the Persian Gulf War 1990-91, and that this is part of the explanation why the Swedish media discourse in some respect approaches the Norwegian one, for example with respect to the lack of a serious discussion after the war about NATO's responsibility for the war itself and the continuous problems in the neighbouring countries around Kosovo. But this position is nevertheless contested, although not at all in the same way as under the cold war, by an opponent representing an alternative social system. The global discursive order of today tends to be rather open for non-ideological and anti-propaganda discourses, which calls for multi-level discursive analyses.

The global compassion discourse has probably strengthened its relative importance over the media discourses in comparison to the political-ideologically based propaganda discourse, promoted by the USA and NATO for example in the Kosovo War. It goes both ways. Either the propaganda discourse and the compassion discourse push and pull in the same direction, as during the first weeks of the Kosovo War; or the two discourses may conflict and influence the media

in opposite directions, as in the second half of the war after the human costs of the air strikes had taken the paramount place on the news agenda. Hence, it is today more difficult to predict where the sympathy from the general public will land in a military conflict than during the cold war period. This will probably encourage increased concern from spin doctors and propaganda strategist in their ambitions to control the way pity flows. But the positive thing about this new world order is that it gives civil society more space for anti-ideological and anti-propaganda discourses. And hopefully propaganda based on compassion will be contested and requested to fulfil its claims, or otherwise it will meet with a credibility crisis.

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