The war in Afghanistan and peace journalism in practice

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Abstract
This article argues that Johan Galtung's theory on peace journalism can serve as a fruitful supplement to theory-building in the field of war and peace journalism, and critically reviews the scholarly debate on peace journalism. By using examples from Norwegian media coverage of the war in Afghanistan and examples of research on the Norwegian media coverage of the war, the author argues that Galtung's theory on peace journalism can also serve as a useful platform for teaching and journalism training in the field of conflict and war reporting.

Introduction

Johan Galtung's model of peace journalism inspires and provokes: it has inspired journalists to write critical articles from war zones (Lynch, 2008: 143); it has been used by teachers as a platform to encourage students to think critically about the way the mainstream media report on wars (Hackett and Schroeder, 2008: 26); and media researchers have used the model as a research tool when analysing news texts on war coverage (Mandelzis and Peleg, 2008: 62). But the peace journalism model has also been used as a point of departure for studying other media outlets, such as computer games on real wars (Ottosen, 2008: 73).

On the other hand, the peace journalism concept has provoked journalists into accusing defenders of the theory of violating the ideals of 'objectivity' (Loyn, 2007). It has also provoked media researchers to accuse Galtung of over-simplifying complex issues (Hanitzsch, 2007). In this article, I will summarize some of my personal experiences of using peace journalism as a starting point in my own research and teaching.

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Short introduction to Galtung's model

Galtung's model of peace journalism builds on the dichotomy between what he calls 'war journalism' and a 'peace journalism' approach (see the Appendix for a full overview). The model includes four main points of contrast between the two approaches: war journalism is violence-orientated, propaganda-orientated, elite-orientated and victory-orientated. This is often linked to a dualistic method, a zero-sum game where the winner takes all (as in sports journalism). A potential consequence is that war journalism contributes to escalating conflicts by reproducing propaganda and promoting war (Galtung, 2002).

The peace journalism section of the model takes a moral and ethical point of departure, acknowledging the fact that the media themselves play a role in the propaganda war. It presents a conscious choice: to identify other options for the readers/viewers by offering a solution-orientated, people-orientated and truth-orientated approach. This, in turn, implies a focus on possible suggestions for peace that the parties to the conflict might have an interest in hiding. Peace journalism is people-orientated in the sense that it focuses on the victims (often civilian casualties) and thus gives a voice to the voiceless. It is also truth-orientated in the sense that it reveals untruths on all sides and focuses on propaganda as a means of continuing the war (pp. 261–70).

Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick (2005) suggest this short definition of peace journalism:

> Peace journalism is when editors and reporters make choices, about what to report and how to report it, which creates opportunities for society at large to consider and to value non-violent, developmental responses to conflict. (p. 5)

Does it work in practice?

Within the field of peace research, Galtung's model has generally been welcomed, and Majid Tehranian (2002) has even called it 'a system of global media ethics' (p. 58). From this viewpoint, the question is whether or not it works in practice, a question that could be answered rhetorically by referring to all the university courses, seminars, books and articles on the subject: of course it works in practice, it is referred to all the time (Ross, 2008: 114).

Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick have contributed to bridging the practice and theory field through their book *Peace Journalism* (2005), an attempt by academics with a journalistic background to combine the insights from journalistic practice with the theory from academic peace studies, where Galtung himself, obviously, is the most important source of inspiration (p. 6).

Acknowledging the influence of Galtung's model does not necessarily mean that one has to accept the entire concept of peace journalism as defined by Johan Galtung himself (Galtung, 2002). Personally, I support Galtung's theory, but not without reservation. In earlier works, I have criticized the model for underestimating the visual aspects of war and peace reporting (Ottosen, 2007). With my Swedish colleague Stig A. Nohrstedt, I have suggested the use of critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a supplement to the peace journalism model (Nohrstedt and Ottosen, 2008). A combination of Galtung's

peace journalism model and CDA has the advantage of being able to include a historical framework for case studies (Nohrstedt, 2009). Ruth Wodak's (1996) historical approach to critical discourse analysis is a particularly useful supplement to Galtung's model since it compensates for the somewhat strict framework of the model and opens up to include long historical perspectives in the analysis. Another advantage of discourse analysis is that it 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, such as language use in written or spoken form, visual images, gestures and behaviour (Fairclough, 1995: 54 and Van Dijk, 1988: 193–4). Since Galtung's model builds upon quite a simple dichotomy (war- or peace-orientated journalism), CDA can introduce other aspects, including what Bourdieu refers to as 'doxa', topics not brought into the newsframe through either self censorship by journalists or censorship and/or repressive action by people in power (Von der Lippe, 1991).

However, there is empirical evidence that much of the war reporting in mainstream media is constructed along the lines that Galtung suggests. Empirical findings from scholars such as Lynch, Shinar, Hackett and Schroeder are living proof that Galtung's model is indeed a useful research tool but, by using CDA as a supplement, we could offer a more comprehensive analysis of case studies, including the systematic suppression of certain crucial aspects as well as the voices of ordinary people in the public discourse on war and peace issues. By discussing, through CDA, what is not present in a newstext, we can highlight complex discursive constructions and structures that contribute to conflict escalations and wars (Nohrstedt and Ottosen, 2008: 18).

Other scholars have also suggested combining the peace journalism theory with other frameworks. Robert A. Hackett (2006) sees peace journalism theory in the light of Chomsky's and Herman's 'propaganda model' and Bourdieu's field theory; to my mind this is an interesting contribution. Hackett's ethos is motivated by the question of whether peace journalism can work in practice. He concludes that the need for change in mainstream foreign reporting is obvious, and sees peace journalism (PJ) as a potential supplement. But he also argues that peace journalism cannot work without strong support from public opinion in the appeal for a different kind of journalism:

> Unfortunately, it seems probable that in Western corporate media, at least, journalists have neither sufficient incentives, nor autonomy vis-a-vis their employers, to transform the way news is done, without support from powerful external allies. It may be that PJ is most likely to take root in societies (Rwanda? Indonesia? The former Yugoslavia?) where they have experienced the ravages of violent conflict, and where the media have played a blatant role in fuelling the destructive fires of enmity. Moreover, I speculate, much of the impetus (or constitutes) for PJ is likely to derive from the victims of war, from activists committed to peace building process, and/or from social movements marginalised by current patterns of national or global communication.

Hackett's suggestion that there is more potential for peace journalism in conflict areas is partly supported by Jake Lynch, who has experience in mainstream media such as Sky Television and BBC World as well as in teaching journalists in conflict zones such as the Philippines (Lynch, 2008: 143–63).

It is easy, of course, to support Hackett's soberly realistic assessment of the weak potential for peace journalists within mainstream media. Given the financial crisis in 2008/9 and attendant cutbacks in jobs in the news industry, the situation is even worse for the likelihood of investigative and critical reporting in the mainstream press. However, there always will be a certain potential for critical reporting – even in mainstream media (Ottosen, 2004: 47). And, of course, new platforms such as My Space, Facebook, Twitter and the whole blogosphere are also available for alternative coverage, regardless of financial resources. The way in which Twitter was used to mobilize mass demonstrations against the repressive regime in Iran in the spring of 2009 can serve as an exemplar for the use of social media in future conflicts. For an understanding of this, we can obtain insights from Brian McNair's book *Cultural Chaos* (2006), which explains how an educated population today has access to alternative information and can depend on sources other than the national media for information about global issues. Dayan Thussu's (2000) notion of counter-flow can also shed some light on the fact that, despite a one-sided political public discourse in favour of a Norwegian military presence in Afghanistan, a large part of the public gains access through the internet to alternative points of view, and opposes political parties.

The peace journalism controversy

The BBC reporter David Loyn is the best-known opponent, within the journalism community, of the peace journalism approach. In a special issue of *Conflict & Communication* online, the opponents and defenders of peace journalism debate Galtung's peace journalism model. In his article, Loyn prefers to use terms such as 'truthfulness' and 'objectivity' as journalistic guidelines, even though he acknowledges the limitations inherent in those terms: 'On this analysis, if we accept that objectivity is at least a worthy aspiration, even though not a tool to achieve the "whole truth", then peace journalism fails a key test by imposing other expectations onto journalists' (Loyn, 2007: 5).

Loyn is disturbed by Galtung's original war and peace model because its categories, 'war journalism' and 'peace journalism', are too dualistic. He seems almost offended at being placed in such categories by Lynch and McGoldrick (2005):

> They tend to lump everyone else together – those (like myself) who insist on objectivity, including a commitment to neutrality, along with the journalists of attachment who want to be able to name evil-doers. For them we are all 'war journalism'. This single minded contempt is allied with name-calling: 'Otto the objective Ostrich', digging his head in the sand in the face of all glittering evidence collected by peace journalism to change his mind. (p. 6)

It may be argued that this is not a fair reference to the way Lynch and McGoldrick actually use the Galtung scheme. But I will come back to that.

Loyn presents his own experiences as a reporter covering the conflicts in Northern Ireland, Kosovo and Rwanda to suggest that, if the peace journalism approach had been preferred, the outcome would have been worse. In Northern Ireland, he suggests that the peace journalism principle of transparency would have made the secret negotiations between the parties impossible. In the case of Kosovo, Loyn, to my mind, comes very

close to the journalism of attachment promoted by Martin Bell and others during the civil war in the former Yugoslavia. This position suggested that military intervention by NATO forces was the only realistic solution to Milosevic's atrocities against the civilian population (Sjøvaag, 2005: 10). Loyn (2007) is, however, not uncritical of the mainstream media's ability to present a correct picture of world events:

> Even if one might agree with the peace journalists about any parts of their diagnosis, their solutions are often the wrong ones. In the world of press conferences and the media opportunities which surround us, the only reporting which matters is off piste – finding out what really is going on. And there is simply not enough of it around. The business of reporting foreign news is under threat from many sources. The deep cut is in commercial revenues and the drive for audience makes it harder to report a wide agenda on mainstream outlets. The collapse of serious documentary-making cuts away another prop for those who want to understand world issues. The tyranny of the satellite dish tends to encourage quantity, sometimes at the expense of quality, on live 24 channels. (p. 10)

In my opinion, Loyn ends where the discussion on the limitations of the idea of objectivity should begin. The most important weakness in Loyn's arguments is the lack of context. I agree with Lynch that if you fail to put in factors such as propaganda and media strategies by the parties in the conflict, you as a reporter will be unable to see what serious challenges confront journalism on the battlefield. On this point, another critic of peace journalism, the media researcher Thomas Hanitzsch (2007), attacks peace journalism from a totally different angle to that of Loyn.

Hanitzsch argues that the peace journalism advocates underestimate the material conditions for modern news reporting, and overestimate the possibilities for journalists to contextualize their stories, as Lynch and others suggest. He thinks that a complex model like Galtung's is not suitable for the highly standardized narrative schemes of modern news production and that promoting peace is no nobler than the PR campaigns and the 'journalism of attachment' that propose military intervention to stop ethnic cleansing in the Balkans. Even though he is sympathetic to many aspects of peace journalism, such as the exposure of lies and cover-ups, and the reporting of the atrocities of war and the suffering of civilians, Hanitzsch suggests that they might as well be labelled 'good journalism' (p. 7).

In answer to his critics, Lynch claims that they underestimate the willingness and abilities of leaders in the Western world to manipulate the media; this is especially so in the phase of mobilization to go to war, and rhetoric in favour of 'humanitarian intervention' such as the build-up to the war against Yugoslavia in 1999, and Iraq in 2003. Lynch argues that propaganda should be contextualized by the media, and that it is vital for the media to avoid being seduced by propagandistic rhetoric themselves through adapting the vocabulary and arguments of spin doctors in favour of war (Nohrstedt and Ottosen, 2008: 11; Becker and Beham, 2008).

When it boils down to what Loyn himself looks for in quality journalism, Lynch argues that they share most of those values and suggests that Loyn himself could easily be called a peace journalist. He argues that their values are overlapping rather than contradictory and he thinks Hanitzsch's criticism is unfair since his own interpretation of

peace journalism does not amount to support for a specific peace initiative but, rather, a realistic analysis of the complexity of practising journalism in a field of war. Quoting Entman (1993), he argues that, in order to give the audience the full picture, journalists should make visible what the propaganda machinery leaves out: peace alternatives and realistic information about the consequences of war. Entman (1993) puts it like this:

> To frame is to elect some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation. (Entman, 1993: 51–2).

I support Lynch's position in principle and would, perhaps, put even more emphasis on the impact of Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) and their influence on media reporting. In retrospect, many of the misleading stories arguing for the war in Iraq had their origins in disinformation caused by PSYOPS and propaganda (Ottosen, 2009). In their book *Hubris* (2006), Michael Isikoff and David Corn argue that the Bush administration misled public opinion in its campaign for war – to a level that has been underestimated by the media. Vice President Dick Cheney misused the CIA and picked the information that suited arguments for war, putting aside information that contradicted claims that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction (pp. 28–9).

The Center for Public Integrity has documented that, on 532 occasions, the Bush administration produced a total of 935 false statements:

> In short, the Bush administration led the nation to war on the basis of erroneous information that it methodically propagated and that culminated in military action against Iraq on March 19, 2003. Not surprisingly, the officials with the most opportunities to make speeches, grant media interviews, and otherwise frame the public debate also made the most false statements, according to this first-ever analysis of the entire body of pre-war rhetoric. (Lewis and Reading-Smith, 2008)

In my opinion, Loyn's position in the debate adopts too simplistic a point of departure, presupposing that the media start their war reporting with 'blank sheets'. The peace journalism model might serve as a useful checklist for both journalists and media researchers and as a guideline in a propaganda-infected landscape. Media researcher Wilhelm Kempf (2007a), who has successfully used the peace journalism approach in his own research, basically supports the framework of peace journalism, even though he censures the book *Peace Journalism* (2005) by Lynch and McGoldrick for its criticism of Loyn's position on 'objectivity':

> To radically turn away from the call for objectivity, as suggested by Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) or Hackett (2006), not only endangers the acceptance of peace journalism project in the journalistic community, however, but also twists peace journalism into forms of advocacy journalism, which lead directly to PR and propaganda and can squander the trust bonus its recipients grant to peace journalism. (Kempf, 2007b: 7)

Here, Kempf supports the position of Hanitzsch, though not his rejection of the peace journalism option. Samuel Peleg's (2007) defence of peace journalism disagrees that

objectivity is the most important issue. According to him, the objectivity position (to report what you see) is not essential when the main point of a story is often *what you don't see:*

> Peace journalism is not merely *good* journalism; it is *different* journalism and a departure from the traditional way of covering news stories, particularly conflict and violence, not only in nuances and emphases but in substance. Peace journalism is not to report what *is seen* but to report what *can be seen*, not simply to reflect reality but to explore reality and unearth what is not ostensibly reflective; to wisely utilize structural and organizational imperatives and to be subdued by them; to regard and cultivate readers' interest but not be manipulated by them. This is the profound shift in the nature of journalism that the new philosophy offers. (emphases in original)

This is the core of the matter. No quality journalism can be successful if, before starting to report, the journalist fails to acknowledge that the most important part of the story is below the surface.

Does it really work in practice?

I will go into greater depth on the issue of whether Galtung's peace journalism works in practice by using my own experience as a professor of journalism, and offer some examples of how his theory has inspired me as well as my students in their academic and journalistic work. More specifically, I will use the topic of Norway's military presence in Afghanistan as a case study in my attempt to explore the issue of the relevance of peace journalism for journalism teachers, researchers and journalists.

Peace journalism as curriculum

Since 2003, I have run Masters courses in war and peace journalism at Oslo University College. Johan Galtung's model has been a main inspiration for creating the curriculum for the course.[1] I have also used Galtung's model in teaching at the Bachelor degree level but, in what follows, will concentrate on postgraduate education. The Masters course has been offered every second spring term since 2003. It has been, jointly, an offering to Norwegian Masters students and a module in the programme Global Journalism, a shared Norwegian, Finnish and Swedish programme recruiting students from all over the world.[2] Close to 100 Masters students from around 30 countries have been through the module since its start. Evaluation takes the form of a term paper, a written essay which demands that the students use the course literature on a specific case. These term papers have produced, in their own right, a huge number of empirical findings on an unknown number of global conflicts and wars.

Is it possible to argue that the theoretical framework for a Masters course based on Johan Galtung's model has a specific effect on the students' way of thinking in their future scholarly and journalistic work? Of course, this is difficult to test empirically, but in the evaluation forms filled in after the end of the course there are quite a few examples of statements from students indicating there is a connection here.[3] Quite a few students have adopted the theoretical concept of peace journalism and later used it as the main theoretical framework for their Masters theses. Others have been inspired by the course to use the

peace journalism theory in later scientific work (Senthan, 2008). Quite a few of the international students have returned to their home countries and now teach journalism, including peace journalism theory. It should also be noted that Masters students in other Norwegian universities have used Galtung's peace journalism module as the theoretical basis for their Masters theses. Some former students have also ended up in the news industry and, later in this article, I will provide an example of a former student who is covering the war in Afghanistan. To limit the scope of this article, I will offer a few examples of term papers and Masters theses relevant to the topic of the Norwegian military presence in Afghanistan. In my mind, these examples are more than anecdotal cases to indicate that Galtung's model does have an effect on the approach chosen by students in their research work leading up to their Masters thesis. The large number of term papers from the War and Peace Journalism course, and later final Masters theses from these students, are important contributions to research within the field of war and peace journalism. Here we find case studies from a large number of countries and regions. In the following, I just concentrate on those students who have chosen Afghanistan as case studies.

Norwegian military presence in Afghanistan: a brief background

Norway has traditionally been a close ally of the US and a loyal NATO member since 1949 (Ottosen, 2005: 95–6). After the Cold War and the breakdown of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, NATO developed a new activist policy, representing a break with the traditional collective self-defence concept. Norway has played an active role in the NATO-led IFOR (Implementation Force) and SFOR (Stabilisation Force) forces in Bosnia and the KFOR forces in Kosovo. Norwegian forces were involved in a military intervention, outside a UN framework, for the first time since the Second World War when the former Yugoslavia was attacked in April 1999. At that time, Norway provided a military support function and placed fighter planes and Norwegian pilots at the disposal of the attacking NATO force. The war in Afghanistan represented an additional dimension, with Norwegian ground forces taking part in the hunt for al-Qaida forces in the mountains of Afghanistan. With the exception of a few dissident voices, the Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget) agreed to answer in the affirmative when the US requested Norwegian military support in Afghanistan. Under US command, Norway contributed fighter planes, transport planes, helicopters and ground forces. A central task of the Norwegian forces was to clear undetonated mines on the ground, but some of the Norwegian forces' tasks were kept secret for security reasons. The fact that Norwegian elite sources took part in operations as part of Operation Enduring Freedom has not been discussed in detail in public; some of the facts of their operation are still secret, including the exact date they left Norway after the war started in November 2001. We know that they are hand-picked elite soldiers from FSK/HJK (Norwegian special forces) and Air Force 720-squadron and we also know that they have engaged in battle with al-Qaida and Taliban. One of the soldiers died in combat against al-Qaida and several of them have been decorated by the US government (Bakkeli, 2007: 7–9). In July 2010, nine Norwegian soldiers died on duty in Afghanistan.

The historical dimension of this military action was underlined when NATO formally took over leadership of the international peace-keeping forces (ISAF) in August 2003.

This was the first time in history that NATO had assumed such a responsibility outside Europe, although no-one doubts that the US will remain the dominant force within ISAF. Later, the ISAF forces acquired a UN mandate for its presence. In October 2006, Operation Enduring Freedom was also placed under NATO command.

The legal issues have played some part in the public debate. Some of the issues raised were: Did the action have a legal basis in international law? Would American or Norwegian officers have control over the Norwegian soldiers? In a situation in which Norwegian soldiers had the potential to violate international law, should they refer to Norwegian or to US law? And could combatants arrested by Norwegian soldiers end up at Guantánamo Bay? These issues raised in the public debate in Norway were followed by similar concerns when Norway sent troops to Iraq in the spring of 2003 (Ottosen, 2005: 96). When the red–green coalition won the election and formed a government in 2005, the soldiers in Iraq were called back to fulfil the promises of the election campaign.

An interesting aspect of the Norwegian debate was that military personnel participated in it to a greater extent than usual since Norwegian officers traditionally maintain a low profile in discussions concerning foreign and security policies. Many officers and their professional organizations became active; if they were going to war they wanted clear answers from the politicians. This should be seen in the light of discussions during the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999. At that time, Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik was condemned for refusing to call the action a war, insisting instead that it was a humanitarian intervention. Four years later, Bondevik revoked his own position at that time in front of a large audience of NATO officers, now admitting that it *should* have been called a war (p. 96). This self-criticism was an attempt to counter discontent within military circles with Norwegian politicians, who were rebuked for not properly supporting the soldiers.

In addition to the running news coverage of the military actions in Afghanistan, the media also served as a forum for public debate through editorials and comments from editors and journalists. There were also many letters from readers expressing concern over these issues.

My own research project on Afghanistan

I will now summarize the findings from my own research on Afghanistan in the light of Galtung's peace journalism model, focusing on point III (see Appendix). In the war/violence section of the model, the relevant point is 'elite-orientated' journalism; sub-points focus on 'able-bodied elite males' as opposed to the peace section, where the people-orientated focus stipulates 'focus on suffering all over; on women, the aged and children'.

My findings are from a study of the mainstream newspapers *Aftenposten* and *Verdens Gang* (*VG*).[4] The first week of the war in November 2001 has been fully documented elsewhere (Ottosen, 2005). *Aftenposten* featured 104 articles in the first week of the war, and *VG* featured 100. The empirical findings from the study of sources in articles generally follow the patterns of the war journalism section in Galtung's model. Both *Aftenposten's* and *VG's* coverage in the first week of the war in Afghanistan are dominated by US-friendly framing and the use of Western sources. The US-friendly framing is more obvious in *Aftenposten* than in *VG*. The editorial in *VG* is more unconditional

than is the editorial in *Aftenposten; VG* is also much clearer in its framing of Norway as a potential victim of future acts of terror. At this stage, Norway's role as a prospective military actor in the region is absent in both newspapers, which is quite interesting in the light of Peleg's (2007) point, made earlier in this article. Norway's military presence is an important political issue eight years later but this was not defined as a potential problem at the time. The issue was still under the surface. To my mind, a journalist with a peace journalism platform could have highlighted the controversial issue of Norway's responsibility for civilian casualties from the time that Norway decided to send troops – in November 2001. The lack of this perspective was evident from the way *Aftenposten* framed Norway's military presence some months later.[5]

Aftenposten's coverage of the bombing of a wedding[6]

On 2 July 2002, *Aftenposten* ran two separate news stories about Afghanistan. Both were small articles, one on the news page and the other on the foreign page. On the news page there was a piece about the Norwegian soldiers in Afghanistan, entitled 'Norwegian war efforts in Afghanistan praised'. The lead speaks for itself: 'Minister of Defence Kristin Krohn Devold is impressed by the effort of the Norwegian forces in Afghanistan.' The praise continues in the text: 'Just good words'. Devold had visited the Norwegian forces and explained that she had received 'crystal-clear feedback' from 'top military officers in other countries' on Norway's war efforts. The story was a report from a press conference celebrating six months of Norwegian military presence in Afghanistan; together with Chief of Armed Forces Sigurd Frisvold, Defence Minister Devold marked the celebration with positive news about 'our boys' doing their job under US command:

> [the minister] underlined that Norway has developed good competence in some specific niche areas. She mentioned that at the NATO meeting in June the Americans recommended that small countries should specialise in niche capacity and mentioned Norway as an example. (*Aftenposten*, 2 July 2002: 2)

With language that could have been borrowed from the business community, there are few connotations of Norwegian soldiers' involvement in war and possible death. Nothing whatsoever in the text hints that Norwegians could be involved in battle or in killing.

If we proceed to the second article, on the foreign page, we are reminded of the brutal reality in Afghanistan. But this story is in no way linked to the fact that, at that time, Norwegian pilots were also present in the air space over Afghanistan.

The title of this story is 'Mistaken bombing may have killed 120 Afghans'. With a byline from Reuter/NTB (the Norwegian News Agency), the story quotes a Pentagon source, admitting that a bomb was accidentally dropped on a wedding party. On the following day, *Aftenposten* followed up with a longer story about the incident in which the number of casualties was reduced to 'at least 40'. In this story, the Afghan Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullah Abdullah, censures the Americans at a press conference, and at the same time reveals that Afghan intelligence has proven that Osama bin Laden is still

alive. It is perhaps no coincidence that these two pieces of information are presented at the same time, especially if we remember earlier requests from the Pentagon that the media should reveal who is responsible for the war every time civilian casualties are mentioned (Ottosen, 2005: 99).

To modify this appraisal of *Aftenposten*, it should be mentioned that, several times after this story was printed, the newspaper followed up with critical articles on the wedding incident, including a major story in the evening edition, *Aftenposten Aften* on 29 July 2002. Here, it was revealed that in a UN report on the wedding it was stated that US forces came to Kararak, the site of the incident, shortly after the attack and removed evidence that could link the Americans to the bombing, thereby obstructing the investigation. Since the Pentagon had refused to release air photos that could shed light on what happened, we still do not know all the facts of this incident. One theory is that the Americans were misinformed by Afghan intelligence sources who wanted to provoke the US forces into bombing and thereby show them up in a bad light. Another theory was that what the Americans thought was gunfire was actually fireworks from the wedding celebration, and that they mistakenly saw this as an attack on their aircraft (*Aftenposten*, 29 July 2002: 2).

Even though *Aftenposten* followed up the wedding incident in a disapproving manner, this tragedy was never seen in connection with the Norwegian military presence. The Norwegian soldiers are praised because they are skilful, but their skills are never linked to their roles as potential 'evil-doers'. Since the Norwegian pilots and soldier are by definition 'do-gooders', they are in no way linked to potential war crimes or violations of international law.[7] In my opinion, this raises some ethical issues. Shouldn't the Norwegian newspaper readers also be challenged to see potential problems in the Norwegian military presence? The Minister of Defence did not establish any links between the 'praise' of the Norwegian soldiers and the innocent wedding guests killed by our closest ally and Commander in Chief. If Galtung's peace model had been used as a guideline, the point in the peace section 'to name all evil-doers' could have been relevant here.

If we turn this around and see the framing of a potential al-Qaida attack on a similar wedding, the mainstream media would surely not hide the story in a small note on the news page.

Masters theses on the war in Afghanistan

I will now present three examples of Masters theses written by students who have followed the War and Peace Journalism course. These theses constitute scientific research in their own right and one should be careful about declaring a correlation between these three works and their common ground as written by students on my course in War and Peace Journalism. However, since they all have in common a critical attitude towards the mainstream media's coverage of the war in Afghanistan, it seems justifiable to put forward the hypothesis that the course, and Galtung's theory on peace journalism, has, directly or indirectly, inspired the research and writing of these theses.

Masters thesis 1

In 2006, Irene Rossland wrote a thesis analysing *Aftenposten's* coverage of Afghanistan from 11 September 2001 to the end of 2002. Her material contained 1,118 articles but I will concentrate here on the section dealing with Norway's military presence. According to Rossland, *Aftenposten's* coverage was dominated by a focus on the Norwegian Special Forces' alleged skilfulness. Rossland's emphasis, in her analysis, is on the tendency in Norwegian media to mainly cover the positive aspects of the Norwegian soldiers' performance, rather than critically evaluate their military presence: 'It is my clear impression that both journalists and sources compensate for the lack of information by telling us what the special forces were trained for and what they had the capacity to do' (Rossland, 2006: 109). This fits well with Galtung's war section in the model on 'us–them' journalism.

    Aftenposten was more concerned about the Norwegian soldiers' security than with the loss of Afghan lives. There was no urge to discuss whether the loss of Afghan lives was a consequence of Norwegian warfare. *Aftenposten* failed to address the controversial aspects of the Norwegian soldiers' participation in Operation Enduring Freedom. As an example, Rossland mentions the legal aspects of the Norwegian soldiers' treatment of prisoners. *Aftenposten's* coverage included a good deal of unfavourable comment about the United States, most importantly the treatment of prisoners at Guantánamo base in Cuba. But these problematic aspects of the warfare in Afghanistan were not drawn into the coverage of the Norwegian soldiers' participation in the war.

Masters thesis 2

In another thesis, Christian Haug (2007) used Galtung's model to compare the coverage of civilian victims in American and Norwegian newspapers (the *Washington Post* and *New York Post* in the US and *Aftenposten* and *VG* in Norway). In an analysis of newspaper coverage of the attack on the town of Shaker Qala on 23 October 2001, Haug looks more closely at the coverage of many civilian casualties and identifies two phases in the US and Norwegian newspapers' coverage of this attack. The first phase, according to Haug, is framed as 'denial' of the problem of civilian casualties. When the consequences of the attack were confirmed, the 'explanatory phase' started. This fits well into Galtung's 'war/violence journalism' section in the model, with some small degree of empathy with victims on 'the enemy side'. The coverage was 'victory orientated' with a focus on the alleged military progress. There is no attempt to give voice to the voiceless and let the families of the victims be heard. The US newspaper went further in its denial of civilian casualties than the Norwegian paper, even though they basically followed the same pattern. But US policy and Operation Enduring Freedom were not openly challenged by the Norwegian newspapers (pp. 102–3).

Masters thesis 3

In her thesis, Gro Mette Moen (2009) used discourse analysis to show how the news coverage from Afghanistan in 2006–7 was domesticated through a typical 'Norwegian

framing'. Even though there are some articles in her sample offering a critical coverage of the Norwegian military presence in Afghanistan, most support it, directly or indirectly. This way of framing a war fits into Galtung's warning of the tendency in 'war journalism' to reduce the war coverage to 'us–them' journalism, and only see 'them' as the problem. Moen also makes a point of showing how the stories from Afghanistan written by journalists travelling together with the Norwegian politicians tend to see the reality on the ground through the eyes of the political elite, supporting the war rather than the civilian population in Afghanistan. This fits into the pattern Galtung warns against in the 'war/violence journalism' section of his table: to be elite-orientated rather than to see reality through the eyes of the 'unworthy' civilian population. Analysing the news articles in her sample, Moen suggests that the Norwegian military personnel are primarily presented as helpful 'do-gooders', and only to a lesser degree as warriors. Most of the coverage, even the criticism of Norway in some articles, remains within the frame that Norwegian soldiers are contributing something good in Afghanistan.

Journalism according to Galtung's model

Anders Sømme Hammer, one of my former students on the War and Peace module, decided to continue his journalism career after completing his Masters thesis. After trying to cover Afghanistan 'from a distance' in Norway, he found it frustrating to be dependent on the Norwegian military to get access to areas of conflict where the Norwegian soldiers operated.[8] The Norwegian military has determined, to a large extent, the media coverage of the Norwegian military presence through embedded press tours.

Partly inspired by insights from the teaching of peace journalism, Hammer decided to move to Kabul and settle there to come closer to the area where the potential for more 'people-orientated' journalism (to use Galtung's expression) was stronger.[9] After living there for three years, he has filed several critical articles in various Norwegian media and, with the Norwegian Broadcasting company's investigative magazine *Brennpunkt*, he made a critical documentary that was broadcast on 3 March 2009.[10] The programme posed a number of interesting and appropriate questions on the agenda that lay behind Norwegian warfare in Afghanistan. Through his network of sources he gained access to a village where some of the Norwegians soldiers had been fighting Taliban forces together with American and Afghan soldiers. Some civilians had been killed during the battle, and Hammer interviewed the relatives – who partly blamed the foreign troops for their losses. When Hammer tried to get comments from the Norwegian officers responsible, he was denied access to the Norwegian camp. This led to a public debate, in which I took part, and to an article in the Norwegian daily newspaper *Dagbladet*, in which I challenged the Norwegian Defence Minister, Anne-Grete Strøm-Erichsen, on several issues (Ottosen, 2009). The Norwegian government has a media strategy that emphasizes the humanitarian aspects of the Norwegian military presence, and in her comment on Hammer and *Brennpunkt*'s documentary she had earlier avoided the problematic issues of Norway's responsibility for the civilian

casualties, claiming that Norway 'shall be a visible peace nation' (*Dagbladet*, 18 April 2009). This line of argument is fully according to point III in Galtung's war/violence section in his war and peace model, with its 'focus on elite peace-makers'. Hammer's documentary espoused the principle of peace journalism, especially point III in the 'people-orientated' section of Galtung's model: 'Focusing on suffering all over; on women, the aged, children, giving voice to the voiceless' (see Appendix). In my response to the Minister of Defence, I also problematized the relationship between ISAF forces' operations and Operation Enduring Freedom. This goes directly to the problems in the Norwegian red–green government coalition. The Soria Moria Declaration, the formal political platform for the present government coalition, states that Norwegian forces should not participate in Operation Enduring Freedom. Hammer shows that in reality it is difficult to draw a clear line between ISAF operations and Operation Enduring Freedom operations. Norwegian forces agree in practice to support Operation Enduring Freedom when they are asked to assist US forces, and are thus in a legal grey area between the ISAF operation and Operation Enduring Freedom. All parties in parliament support Norwegian participation in the ISAF forces, while opinion polls show that around half the population is sceptical about, or in opposition to, the Norwegian military presence in Afghanistan. A poll published in autumn 2009 shows that 45.7 per cent of the population wants to pull the Norwegian troops out of Afghanistan while 38.7 per cent believe the soldiers should remain, according to the survey undertaken by TNS Gallup on behalf of TV2.[11] This is a sensitive issue and Norwegian politicians address the problem by denying that we are at war.

Why, then, do Norwegian politicians need to make the military situation 'kinder' than it is in reality through their own rhetoric? I believe that Norwegian politicians have swept an unpleasant debate under the carpet. The Norwegian media have committed the sin of not making an independent journalistic assessment of the legal issues involved. The media have not looked behind the politicians' rhetoric at what experts in law are saying about these issues.[12] Hammer's investigative reporting is an example of peace journalism since it gives 'voices to the voiceless' and 'names all evil-doers'.

Conclusion

It is difficult to provide scientific evidence that a model like Johan Galtung's peace journalism is valid in the sense that it can be tested statistically. By the theory of 'structural violence' (Galtung, 1971) and the theory of 'cultural violence' (Galtung 1990), Galtung identifies power structures and sociological connections in a thought-provoking and complex manner. In this article, I have tried to give examples of the practical consequences of Galtung's theory on peace journalism since it obviously has influenced teaching and research as well as practical journalism. The war and peace journalism model is an example of a theoretical contribution that defines an agenda and inspires scholars, teachers and journalists to look for new paths they can follow in their work. Thus, it should be supplemented with other theories and methods in journalistic and scientific work.

Appendix. Johan Galtung's model of peace journalism published in Galtung (2002).

PEACE/CONFLICT JOURNALISM	WAR/VIOLENCE JOURNALISM
I Peace/conflict-orientated	**I War/violence-orientated**
• explore conflict *formation*, *x* parties, *y* goals, *z* issues, general 'win, win' orientation	• focus on conflict arena, 2 parties, 1 goal (win), war general zero-sum orientation
• open space, open time; causes and outcomes anywhere, also in history/culture	• closed space, closed time, causes and exits in arena, who threw the first stone
• making conflicts transparent	• making wars opaque/secret
• giving voice to all parties; empathy and understanding	• 'us-them' journalism, propaganda, voice, for 'us'
• see conflict/war as a problem, focus on conflict creativity	• see 'them' as the problem, focus on who prevails in war
• humanization of all sides; more so the worse the weapon	• dehumanization of 'them', more so the worse the weapon
• *proactive*; prevention before any violence/war occurs	• *reactive*: waiting for violence before reporting
• focus on invisible effects of violence (trauma and glory, damage to structure/culture)	• focus only on visible effects of violence (killed, wounded and material damage)
II Truth-orientated	**II Propaganda-orientated**
• expose untruths on all sides	• expose 'their' untruths
• uncover all cover-ups	• help 'our' cover-ups/lies
III People-orientated	**III Elite-orientated**
• focus on suffering all over; on women, the aged, children, giving voice to the voiceless	• focus on our suffering; on able-bodied elite males, being their mouthpiece
• give name to all evil-doers	• give name to their evil-doers
• focus on people peacemakers	• focus on elite peacemakers
IV Solution-orientated	**IV Victory-orientated**
• peace = non-violence + creativity	• peace = victory + ceasefire
• highlight peace initiatives, also to prevent more war	• conceal peace initiatives, before victory is at hand
• focus on structure, culture, the peaceful society	• focus on treaty, institution, the controlled society
• aftermath: resolution, reconstruction, reconciliation	• leaving for another war, return if the old war flares up again

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. See http://home.hio.no/~rune/hovedfagskurs.html
2. The University of Örebro in Sweden is the host institution and the students go to the other partner institutions to take selected courses. The other partners of the course that

started in 2003 have been the University of Tampere, the University of Helsinki and Oslo University College.

3. These evaluation forms are kept in my archive at Oslo University College and copies are available upon request to the author. One quote from the evaluation form after the course in 2007: 'I generally think this course was particularly useful especially for aspiring journalists and journalists who plan to further their experience in the profession.'

4. Both newspapers are owned by the Norwegian media company Schibsted. *Aftenposten* is known as the biggest and most influential morning paper, and *VG* was the best-selling newspaper in Norway up to spring 2010.

5. The analyses of *Aftenposten* do not claim to be representative for the period after the analysed dates.

6. This example has been used earlier in Ottosen (2005).

7. The notion of Norway as 'do-gooder' was introduced by Terje Tvedt (2003), discussing the media image of Norwegian development aid.

8. Statement made by Hammer at a public discussion meeting of the Oslo Journalist Federation on 18 December 2008.

9. Anders Sømme Hammer has told the author that he was inspired by peace journalism to think critically about reporting from a war zone, and has allowed me to use this as an example in the article.

10. Available at http://www1.nrk.no/nett-tv/klipp/469913

11. URL (consulted June 2009): http://mobil.bt.no/234/295/745759.html?e=237

12. For more details, see Ottosen 2009.

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