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## A symbiotic relationship: Norwegian diplomacy and Norwegian journalism on war and peace in Guatemala

*Kurzfassung:* Der Artikel beschäftigt sich mit der norwegischen Berichterstattung über den Bürgerkrieg in Guatemala und den Friedensprozess in der Zeit von 1990 bis 1997. Der Autor hat alle Dokumente im Archiv des norwegischen Außenministeriums aus den späten 1980er Jahren bis 1995 herangezogen, die sich auf den Friedensprozess in Guatemala beziehen, und die wichtigsten norwegischen und guatemalteckischen Quellen befragt.

Die Ergebnisse der Studie zeigen, dass die Berichterstattung über Guatemala durchgehend von norwegischen Quellen dominiert wurde. Das Selbstverständnis des norwegischen Engagements korrespondierte mit der Stimmung in der norwegischen Gesellschaft. Die norwegischen Journalisten verließen sich völlig auf ihre Diplomaten und Vermittler/Moderatoren, nicht nur was die Informationen als solche betraf, sondern auch bei der Interpretation der Informationen.

**Abstract:** This article deals with Norwegian journalism on the Guatemalan civil war and the peace process from 1990 to 1997. The author has examined all documents regarding the peace process in Guatemala registered in the archive of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the late 1980s to 1995 and interviewed most of the relevant Norwegian and Guatemalan sources.

The results of the study show that Norwegian sources consistently dominated the reporting on Guatemala. The constructed understandings of Norwegian engagement with war and peace in Guatemala resonated with deep sentiments within Norwegian society. Norwegian journalists came to rely heavily on Norwegian diplomats and facilitators, not only for information, but also for the interpretation of the information.

### Introduction

This article deals with Norwegian journalism on the Guatemalan civil war and the peace process from 1990 to 1997. Norway became engaged in negotiations for a peaceful solution to the civil war towards the end of the 1980s and this led to increased interest in Norwegian media which had previously focused on the consequences of war and on casualties, often submerging Guatemala in an East versus West perspective. But now journalists began to focus on the possibilities for peace.

Norwegian efforts to support a Guatemalan peace process were mostly grounded in arguments linked to human rights. Norwegian NGOs had initially become engaged in Guatemala in the late 1970s after a devastating earthquake hit Guatemala City in 1975, killing at least 23,000 people and leaving 1 million others homeless. In the 1980s, the Norwegian NGOs continued to support projects in Guatemala to help alleviate the effects of extreme poverty and exclusion of the indigenous peoples, but gradually came to the conclusion that the civil war itself doomed any attempt to fight poverty to failure, so finding a peaceful solution to the civil war moved to the top of the priority list for the NGOs. For this reason, in 1989 and 1990, the NGOs used their intimate relationship with the Norwegian political parties to enrol the Norwegian government as a partner in this endeavour. The massive violations of human rights were always used as the key argument for Norwegian engagement in the Guatemalan peace process, and I will therefore ground this paper in the small but rapidly expanding body of literature on "peace journalism".

Shinar maintains that peace journalism criticises media preferences for violence, simple descriptions, fighting parties, conflict, "sports-like situations" and lack of interest in peace-related stories and topics. In contrast, journalists should, according to the peace journalism paradigm (Shinar, 2007):

1. Explore backgrounds and contexts of conflict formation, presenting causes and options on every side so as to portray conflict in realistic terms, transparent to audiences;
2. Give voice to the views of all rival parties;
3. Offer creative ideas for conflict resolution, peacemaking, peacekeeping and development;
4. Expose lies, cover-up attempts and culprits on all sides, and reveal excesses committed by, and suffering inflicted on, peoples of all parties;
5. Pay more attention to peace stories and post-war developments than to regular coverage of conflict;
6. Promote realistic and cautious attitudes with respect to the success that peace journalism may have in overcoming resistance and rejection, as well as criticising excessive enthusiasm on the part of peace journalism supporters.

In this article I will particularly focus on two of the six points mentioned by Shinar.

- a. How did Norwegian journalists select sources? Did they give voice to all relevant parties?
- b. How did the journalists present the background and context, especially the context for understanding the peace process?

Understanding Norway's role in peace processes is relevant to an international audience for several reasons. First, a mediator or "facilitator" can have some influence over a peace process and thus also the outcome of the negotiation. It is therefore useful to understand the motives and perspectives of the mediator or facilitator. Second, since the start of the Guatemalan peace process, Norway has continued its engagement in processes to find a peaceful solution in the Middle East, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Colombia and elsewhere. Understanding Norwegian engagement in Guatemala could possibly help explain Norway's approach to these other peace processes.

### Existing literature

The existing literature on the civil war and the peace process in Guatemala should be divided into at least five or six groups, according to explicit and implicit arguments over the causes for conflict formation and for a possible peaceful solution to the conflict. "Hard" realists tended to see the conflict in a cold war perspective: communism needed to be contained and stopped from advancing in Latin America. The guerrilla movement URNG was seen as a proxy for international communism, specifically Cuban, supported by the Soviet Union. Finding a peaceful solution therefore depended on fighting international communism. Other realists, sometimes labelled "soft realists", shared many of the elements in this version of the conflict, but also included local causes for the conflict, among them the authoritarian regime, human rights abuses, racism and endemic poverty. Finding a peaceful solution, therefore, could not be isolated from finding solutions to these underlying problems. Those influenced by Joseph Nye and his "soft power" perspective, presented a slightly different version (Nye, 1990, 2005, 2008). According to this argument, military and economic power are gradually surpassed in importance by soft power or other forms of power, for instance, power derived from cultural influences such as music, television or movies. "Winning" the struggles in the international arena is increasingly seen as depending more on these forms of alternative power. Finding solutions to the underlying causes of war therefore becomes a prerequisite for winning against international communism, for instance, according to this line of argument. "Constructivists" generally argued that enmities – mutual hatred or ill will – are constructed or learnt in processes of exclusion and marginalisation, and can therefore also be re-constructed. People can learn not to hate each other through processes of dialogue and mutual understanding – and dialogue thus became, from a constructivist perspective, a keyword for finding a peaceful solution. Marxists argued that the causes for war were to be found in the systematic monopolisation of economic resources by a small minority and the slave-like conditions suffered by the majority. Peace could only be found if something was done with the capitalist system itself.

This very brief sketch of the existing literature hides, of course, many important nuances, but illustrates the fact that war formation and the context for peace in Guatemala was understood in a variety of ways, each grounded in various ideologies or philosophies.

From a Gandhian perspective, "peace" in Guatemala would need to mean something more than merely silencing the arms; peace is understood as something more than "no war". A peaceful solution to the war would also mean doing something about structural violence, poverty, lack of education, human rights abuses, racism and so on. Norwegian diplomats participating in peace processes in Guatemala, Colombia, the Middle East, Sri Lanka and Sudan developed what we have to call a counter argument against such a Gandhian approach: according to this Norwegian line of argument, ending the armed conflict was a necessary pre-condition for doing something about the underlying causes for war. A binding agreement to end the war could in itself engage the fighting parties in cooperation on the re-construction of society, in such a way that the parties become mutually dependent on each other, thus preparing the ground for doing something about the structural violence as well.

The civil war and peace process in Guatemala is therefore a subject that calls for rich and complex "explorations of backgrounds and contexts of conflict formation", and for "presenting causes and options on every side so as to portray conflict in realistic terms, transparent to audiences" (Shinar, 2007). The objectivity paradigm would not be of much help here, since these questions call for an explorative approach in which the call for "transparency" would also encompass the journalist and his or her norms and values. The journalist should, in my view, also reflect explicitly on his or her role in the interpretation and presentation of "backgrounds and contexts of conflict formation" (Shinar, 2007). This would be fully compatible with the recommendations of most recent textbooks on journalism, for example Harcup (Harcup, 2009) and Fossum and Meyer (Fossum & Meyer, 2003). It would also be compatible with recommendations for the critical evaluation of sources and information given in textbooks in other disciplines, for example Kjeldstadli's introduction to History (Kjeldstadli, 1999). The value of peace journalism, in my view, lies precisely in the explicit normative position it takes which, in contrast to a more objective or essentialist tradition, invites transparency on the many possible and alternative interpretations of the information.

## Methodology

This paper builds in part on earlier research I undertook in the archives of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I have examined all documents regarding the peace process in Guatemala registered in the archive from the late 1980s to 1995, but I was not given access to the archive for the files for 1996. I have further interviewed most of the Norwegian diplomats and NGO representatives involved in the process. I also interviewed a large number of Guatemalan sources, focusing especially on the Guatemalan guerrilla movement URNG, and had the opportunity to visit a guerrilla camp in the region of Quetzaltenango some 14 months before the end of the war. Since the end of the war, I have returned to Guatemala to conduct more interviews in 1997, 1999, 2003 and 2006, again including talks with a number of former *guerrilleros*.

In addition, for this paper I have selected elements of Norwegian media coverage during the two crucial years 1994 and 1995 for closer investigation. Among the many Norwegian media covering Guatemala, I have chosen the newspapers *Aftenposten*, *VG*, *Bergens Tidende* and *Nordlys*; in addition to *Norsk Telegrambyrå AS (NTB)*, Norway's leading news agency and wire service. This includes both regional and national media, in addition to a news agency serving small local newspapers as well as national media, but it does not include radio or television, which could possibly have influenced the findings although earlier studies on Norwegian journalism on the developing world or "the South" do not indicate significant systematic variations between radio, television and newspapers in relation to the research questions for this investigation. I have therefore chosen instead to deepen the investigation by including a broader spectrum of newspapers.

The main part of this paper is a critical reading of these articles, analysing the framing of the information. A frame suggests what the controversy is about and involves implicit information that gives meaning to an issue and provides a context for the interpretation of the message. Frames are part of a culture and institutionalised in various ways, as Goffman has explained (Goffman, 1974) According to Van Gorp, there exists a cultural stock of frames based on available alternatives, for instance as shown by Propp in his analysis of folk tales (Propp, 1968; Van Gorp, 2007). Several authors have noted that journalists tend to embed their stories within culturally bound narratives, recognisable to the audience, so that news is formulated as new episodes in longer and well known stories (Allern, 2008). Understanding the framing of Norwegian news on the Guatemalan peace process therefore also means trying to understand the history of the specific Norwegian narrative of Norway and its role in the world. There is a growing body of literature on Norwegians and how they imagine themselves as a community in the world, including important contributions from Tvedt, Gullestad, Eide and others. I will draw on this literature when interpreting the results of the investigation.

## Results of the quantitative investigation of articles

73 articles have been investigated and all open sources have been counted and categorised in relation to the following main categories: first, the articles have been categorised according to the genre of the reporting. The categories are "news items", "news reportage", "reportage", "interview" and "commentary". The coverage of Guatemala is dominated by the two first categories, news items and news report. The category "news items" consists of very short articles without any quotations, normally just referring to some new development or "news". The category "news report" is also short, but in addition to news items, the article also contains one or two brief commentaries or quotes. 82% of the articles would fit one of these descriptions. One article is what one might call an extended interview; three are reportages with room for observation, reflection and more than one or two persons quoted, while nine are commentaries written by journalists or editors.

Genre	Number of articles	% of total
news items	22	30 %
news reportage	38	52 %
reportage	3	4 %
interview	1	1 %
commentary	9	12 %

Table 1: Genres

We see from this result that Norwegian journalists very seldom have enough time and resources to cover the war and peace process in Guatemala in depth, including contrasting perspectives and independent analysis – most of the articles on Guatemala are limited in scope and perspectives. Apart from the often insightful nine commentaries, in many cases written from home, I have found only three or four cases of investigative reporting where the journalists have had time and knowledge to reflect critically on the information given by the quoted sources from a different perspective.

## Sources and framing

Norwegians are the most quoted nationality in the selection of articles: 41% of all sources are Norwegian, while 39% are Guatemalan.

		% of total
<b>Number of articles</b>	73	
<b>Number of sources cited</b>	111	
<b>Noregian sources</b>	45	41 %
<b>Guatemalan</b>	43	39 %
<b>Other nationalities</b>	23	21 %

Table 2: Nationality of sources

This is not surprising in relation to existing literature on Norwegian journalism on foreign affairs (E. Eide, 1999; Elisabeth Eide & Simonsen, 2005, 2007, 2008). Several authors have already noted how the “world” in Norwegian media is being constructed in a Norwegian image. International news tends to be interpreted through national framework and domestic filter (Curran, 2002, p. 180; Nossek, Sreberny, & Sonwalkar, 2007). The large number of Norwegian sources indicates another aspect of Norwegian journalism on foreign affairs: Guatemala is seldom newsworthy in itself. Mostly – or only – when events in Guatemala tell Norwegians something about Norway does Guatemala become newsworthy. This is to some extent defensible since many journalists see critical reporting on Norway, Norwegian diplomats and Norwegian NGOs as part of their professional duty. The statistical analysis of sources does not help us much in evaluating whether the reporting is indeed “critical”. I will therefore return to the theme of critical journalism in the qualitative part of this paper.

A closer investigation of the Guatemalan sources reveals even more about the importance of a Norwegian perspective. This is particularly evident in the large majority of articles in the categories news, news report and commentaries, in contrast to the three articles categorised as reportage. As far as I can judge, almost all of the Guatemalan sources in these three categories have close ties to Norway, Norwegian diplomats and NGOs. This is, of course, a difficult judgment to make, since many organizations received financial aid from Norway, some only in a short period of time, for instance one or two years. In addition, much funding was given via a large number of Norwegian NGOs. It is therefore difficult to get a full overview of all sources and all possible connections to Norway. What is clear, though, is the fact that many NGOs continued to receive Norwegian development aid in one form or other many years later – for instance the former guerrilla movement URNG. In many cases, the Norwegian journalist gets access to Guatemalan sources only because they participate in negotiations or events in Oslo financed by the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs. This means that a number of mechanisms for filtering access to sources are in place, often before the journalists begin their work. In the majority of cases, the journalists are not in control of the process of selection of sources, and this raises several questions in relation to the critical evaluation journalists are expected to carry out of the sources – for example in relation to representivity and possible relationships between the sources. It is also problematic that many of the sources depend to some extent on, or have financial bonds to, Norwegian NGOs or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I have found no instance of a journalist explicitly reflecting on the possible implications of such a relationship on the information given. The journalism investigated here is not very transparent. I must therefore assume that the vast majority of readers are unaware of any such relationship.

A closer investigation of the articles in the categories news, news report and commentaries sheds more light on the framing of the articles. Journalists, of course, need to choose news angles, select sources, formulate headlines, and so forth. Framing necessarily means selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text (Entman, 1993). Two aspects of the perceived reality are consistently made salient in these texts: 1. The peace is imminent. 2. The Norwegian contribution has been decisive. The two seem to combine to make a strong and convincing case for a “Norwegian” success in Guatemala. In the reportages, in contrast, a much more complex picture emerges, including context for understanding why the peace process was so often stuck for years without much progress, and also the important contributions from other states or international NGOs.

It is interesting to see how the framing constructed by journalists also influences other disciplines. Historians writing contemporary history often depend on journalists for constructing the knowledge about the world necessary for the interpretation of information. A few Norwegian books on foreign affairs from the late 1990s seem to have adopted the dominating media frame of the Guatemalan peace process (Dale, 2000).

But framing also means relegating other aspects of the perceived reality to a place of insignificance or even of oblivion. The dominating frame is characterised by some important omissions. No Swedes, Mexicans or Costa Ricans are found among the sources of information in the articles, even though many made arguably more important contributions to the

Guatemalan peace process than did Norway. Sweden was involved in the process before Norway; Mexico hosted many of the most important rounds of talks; the president of Costa Rica, Oscar Arias, received the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to end the civil wars in Central America.

One of the negotiation rounds was completed in Oslo in 1994, and *Aftenposten* quoted the ambassador Arne Aasheim: "One might add that the beautiful sunshine, the birds singing and the extraordinary delightful and smiling staff at the Holmenkollen Park Hotel did theirs to ensure that the agreement was signed against all odds, says Arne Aasheim smiling" (*Aftenposten* 1994) Other media followed. Therefore it might not be surprising that soon popular social science writing also elevated the myth of the great Norwegian effort, often exclusively based on the Norwegian participants' narration (Dale, 2000).

The process of making some aspects more salient than others is not random; it is structural. Many perspectives and aspects are systematically excluded from the presented context. As the context becomes less and less complex, more and more simplified, reflection on conflict formation and alternative arguments on causes for war and peace disappear. In many of the shorter articles, it becomes virtually impossible to understand or even to discuss, war and peace. Questions of war and peace become apolitical, as in the example above. To end the war is not much more than a question of having good intentions, something that can be constructed with the help of the civilising effect of Norwegians and Norwegian nature.

I would like to point out that there are alternatives to this dominating discourse. A few reportages stand out, presenting a rich and complex picture, reflecting on alternatives and introducing new voices. Unfortunately, such articles are expensive to produce. The journalists have spent much time researching and are knowledgeable; they have often lived in or travelled extensively in Latin America, and are given enough time and space to write in-depth articles on the peace process. It would be unfair to expect this from all articles on Guatemala. Most articles are expected to be short and simplified versions of some new development, containing little background or context. What I have tried to do here, is not to disparage the fact that simplification and framing take place, but to analyse the structured processes of re-constructing the perceived reality of Guatemala and the peace process. This process probably tells us as much about Norwegian journalism as it does about Guatemala. And to understand it, we need to view it in a historical perspective.

### **Constructing a nation of peace lovers – a historical perspective**

To comprehend Norwegian peace diplomacy, and Norwegian journalism of peace diplomacy, it is necessary to look back in time. At the end of the 19th century, Norwegian politicians considered that conflicts between states should be solved with international arbitration instead of war. In 1892, Prime Minister Johannes Steen claimed that Norway had distinct experiences, experiences that made the country suitable to speak for the case of peace: "the geographical location, the peaceful character of the people, the rich experience of the blessing of the peace that the kingdom has made for the last three-quarters of a century, has done together with the misfortune brought by the wars of earlier times" (quoted in (Lundestad, 1999)). Steen's argument points ahead to the occurrences a hundred years later.

Few have been more significant to the concept of Norway's effort in the world than Fridtjof Nansen. After the Russian revolution of 1917, a prolonged and devastating civil war broke out. It was one important cause of the famine which affected millions of Russians over the next years. In 1921, the Red Cross asked Nansen to help organise an aid rally for the victims of the famine in Russia. This was a very difficult task, and both Nansen and his auxiliaries often found themselves dejected over how little they were able to do in the face of the enormous needs. Nevertheless, in 1922, Fridtjof Nansen was honoured with the Nobel Peace Prize for his contribution in Russia (Vogt, 2007).

The notion of Nansen's great effort would later have great significance for the formation of Norwegian foreign policy. Several (Furre & Grepstad, 1997) leading Norwegian politicians have used Nansen to support their view on Norwegian foreign policy. In addition, Nansen's contribution in Russia has remained as an example to follow for later generations of Norwegian diplomats and activists.

Norway (with the example of Nansen) could thereby present itself internationally as a protagonist for peace, and the League of Nations came to play an important role during the inter-war years. Norwegian politicians often claimed that since Norway was such a small state, a strong international system where laws regulated conflicts rather than the survival of the fittest would be an advantage. Yet, simultaneously, Norwegian politicians were reluctant to give away their sovereignty, and defended Norway's special interests when these came into conflict with those of other states, for example when Norway wanted to halt imports from France, Spain and Portugal.

Norway and other Nordic countries had no difficulty proclaiming that they were at the "forefront of civilisation" in Europe in the inter-war years (Furre & Grepstad, 1997). The first truly "activist" foreign minister, Halvdan Koth, already, by then, held that Norway could influence international politics: "I will never give up the struggle for a better world, it would be to give up myself" (Skard, 1982) quoted in (Lundestad, 1999). However, despite Koth's intentions to fight for peace and justice

in Europe, he had to accept that Norwegian interests came first. While more radical socialists rallied to fight the fascists when civil war ravaged in Spain, Koth's primary concern was to avoid the confrontation that was inevitably getting closer (Furre & Grepstad, 1997). It bothered many members of the Labour Party and the electorate that the government did not support the Spanish Republic in the war against the fascist-supported reactionaries.

The tension between Norwegian idealism and the struggle for Norwegian special interests did not diminish after the Second World War, as the Cold War enmities increased. It became clear that Norway had to concentrate its foreign policy efforts in the areas where Norway had particularly strong interests. The collaboration with the USA and Great Britain was of particular importance, and through the NATO alliance, it came to dominate much of Norway's interests in the world. The northern areas of Europe were also of particular importance to Norwegian interests, especially because Norway was a near neighbour of one of the world's two superpowers. Moreover, Norway had strong interests in the development and collaboration in Europe. Other concerns and other places in the world had to take second stage. The Cold War set clear limits for when and where Norway could get involved.

In this section I have mostly tried to understand the historical reasons why so many Norwegian journalists describe Norway as particularly peaceful or exceptionally predisposed to contribute to peaceful solutions to wars around the world. Naturally, this is not the only tendency in Norwegian journalism. Towards the end of the 1990s, we see that another tendency is becoming increasingly important: some journalist begin to look critically at Norway's involvement in peace processes. More and more journalists raise critical questions with respect to the Norwegian endeavours. Did the secret channels really contribute to peace in the Middle East? And what about Sri Lanka and Guatemala? Could it be possible that well-intentioned involvements only made things worse? The journalists were supported by researchers such as Hilde Henriksen Waage and Terje Tvedt who, early on, criticised the Norwegian understanding of Norway's role abroad (Lewis, Opoku-Mensah, & Tvedt, 2007; Tvedt, 2004, 2007, 2009; Waage, 2004a; Waage & Institutt for fredsforskning, 2000; Waage, Tønnesson, Senter for livslang læring, & Høgskolen i Lillehammer . Avdeling for samfunnsvitenskap, 2004).

But in the period investigated here, the majority of Norwegian journalists subscribed to the general view that Norway was a particularly peaceful nation especially suited to the creation of peace around the world. This underlying understanding of Norwegian peacefulness is an implicit frame for Norwegian journalism on the Guatemalan peace process over these years and the reason the success of Norwegian facilitation becomes the main, and often the only, explanation for the success of the peace process. Unfortunately, this view of Norway's role does not seem to be shared by many others. In a recent book on war and peace processes in Central America, Dirk Kruijt details the Guatemalan peace process without finding much room to mention the Norwegian efforts (Kruijt, 2008). Others have relegated Norway's contribution to footnotes or passing remarks (Aldana, Schwank, & Cojti, 2006; Cabrera, D., & Ediciones Nueva, 1997; Franco & Esponda, 1996; Sieder, 1998). This is not to say that Norwegian diplomats and others did not play an important role in the Guatemalan peace process. In my view, Norway did much more than anyone could reasonably have expected to help the parties in their efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. But it illustrates that the Norwegian version of Norway's role is not in harmony with the dominating international understanding of conflict formations and the causes for war and peace in Guatemala.

### Alternative explanations

While framing makes some elements of a perceived reality more salient, other elements become less visible – or completely invisible. The Norwegian media frame is characterised by the elements made more visible, as described earlier, but also by the many elements and alternative causal explanations made virtually invisible. Some of these elements are highly visible in the international literature on the Guatemalan peace process. I have here space for only a very brief sketch of some of these elements; the possible alternative explanations for the Guatemalan peace accord.

First, Costa Rica was among the regional countries which took an initiative for a regional peace process, beginning with a conference in the Panamanian island Contadora in 1983. A number of internationally renowned personalities were behind the initiative, among them the Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme and Nobel laureates Gabriel García Márquez, Alfonso García Robles and Alva Myrdal. The presidents of Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela and Panama offered to act as mediators in the regional conflicts. Second, the president of Costa Rica, Oscar Arias, played a pivotal role in advancing a regional process, organising a conference in Esquipulas leading to a peace agreement. Even though Sweden was engaged in the Guatemalan peace process long before Norway, this was not mentioned in the Norwegian newspapers. Third, Mexico played a particularly important role, both because all the *comandantes* of URNG, lived in Mexico City, and because much of the actual negotiating took place in Mexico. Fourth, the peace process could not have moved forward without the brave intervention of various Guatemalan NGOs and segments of the Church. Fifth, segments of the Guatemalan business community also came to realise that the civil war had a devastating effect on economic growth and prosperity. Many supported a negotiated settlement, and were willing to make concessions to achieve it. Sixth, the war itself should be an important factor in any attempt to explain why the parties agreed to get involved in a peace process. URNG had been driven on the run in a brutal

army offensive from 1981 to 1983 and had never recovered its strength. But while URNG no longer had any illusion of winning the war, it proved almost impossible for the army to win the war by military means alone. The URNG was, in the early 1990s, still able to field approximately 3000 guerrilla soldiers. After more than 30 years of fighting, even army officers had begun to doubt that the war could end without a negotiated settlement.

Many more explanations could have been mentioned here, but this should make it abundantly clear that the Norwegian frame of the Guatemalan peace process was only one of many possible.

According to McQuail, communication plays an important role in constructing ideology. Ideology is here understood as some "organised belief system" that is "disseminated or reinforced by communication" (McQuail, 2000). At the same time, ideology can be seen as "a set of ideas and values that legitimate a program of action vis-à-vis a given social and political order" (Carvalho, 2007). The information Norwegians got on causes for war and conflict formation was reinforcing a set of ideas and values that legitimated action to facilitate the Guatemalan peace process. But the frame constructed by Norwegian journalists was, with a few exceptions, too simplistic to provide the readers with necessary information to understand the causes for war and peace in Guatemala. Too many important elements of the reality were left invisible.

## Conclusion

Norwegian journalism on the Guatemalan peace process did show a minimum of diversity: a few journalists tried to report explicitly on perspectives not often seen or heard before, or to report from the perspective of the marginalised, in this case the indigenous peoples of Guatemala. This sometimes also meant moving beyond simple antagonism between "good" and "evil" (Hanitzsch, 2007, p. 3), sometimes seeing the fighting parties as two equally destructive forces. Nonetheless, Norwegian sources consistently dominated the reporting on Guatemala. This became even more evident as the fighting parties came to Oslo to negotiate parts of the peace agreement, and some of the Norwegian facilitators became well-known public figures in Norway. In this respect, the Norwegian media coverage of the peace process in Guatemala follows a pattern described by others, and elegantly summed up in the title of a recent publication: *The World is Being Created from Home* (Elisabeth Eide & Simonsen, 2008).

The constructed understandings of Norwegian engagement with war and peace in Guatemala resonated with deep sentiments within Norwegian society. Stories were framed as episodes of a much larger and well-known narrative, in this case the historically grounded narrative of the peaceful Norwegian nation, evident at least since the surge of Norwegian nationalism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Thomas Hanitzsch underlines the important distinction between journalism and public relations: quality journalism upholds the ideal of internally defined goals for communication, while the goals for public relations can come from a client or someone else on the outside (Hanitzsch, 2007). While it is difficult for anyone to be totally independent, most journalists would agree that a goal of good journalism is being able to make evaluations from a perspective different from the sources. In the case of Guatemala, a few Norwegian journalists were able to formulate their own evaluations of the information they received from Norwegian or other sources, but for most, this was virtually impossible, and they came to rely heavily on Norwegian diplomats and facilitators, not only for information, but also for the interpretation of the information.

The relationship between Norwegian journalists and Norwegian facilitators in Guatemala could possibly be compared with the relationship between Norwegian journalists and footballers on the national team, described by Helland as a "symbiotic relationship" (Helland, 2003). By "symbiotic" Helland means that footballers and journalists share the same goal: the Norwegian team winning the game. In Guatemala, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could improve its standing at home while strengthening Norwegian "soft power" internationally. Norwegian journalists, simultaneously, needed Norwegian protagonists to construct powerful narratives for their stories on peace and war in Guatemala.

The framing of news is a collective process, of course, where journalists are influential, but where editors and other staff also take part. Journalists must, for example, compete with others to have their stories published. Editors try to make the information useful and relevant for their audiences, while also keeping an eye on the economic interests of the publication. The collective aspect of journalism means that insights from social psychology could enrich our understanding of it. Social psychologists have, for instance, shown how people systematically structure and register information according to what they already believe or believe they know. We tend to choose information so that the information verifies our beliefs, while we often prefer to ignore information that contradicts what we believe in. This process sometimes resembles what has come to be known as "group think", an extreme form of consensus. In the words of McCauley, "concurrence can be obtained from internalization of the group norm, from compliance with the norm, or from some combination of internalization and compliance". (McCauley, 1989) The results of this investigation seem to indicate that a similar logic was in play when Norwegian media framed news on Norway and Norwegians in Guatemala.

Since Norway became engaged in the peace process in Guatemala, Norwegian mediators have ventured on to facilitate

peace processes in a number of armed conflicts. The so-called Oslo channel for the Middle East is perhaps the best known example, but Norwegians have also played important roles in Sri Lanka, Colombia, Sudan, Cyprus and elsewhere. In the early days, Norwegians felt that a small state had possibilities that a superpower lacked, because it was not seen as serving its own interests, but acting altruistically (Egeland, 1988). Later, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs gradually put more emphasis on exploiting the image of Norway as a peace mediator to raise Norway's international standing, thus accumulating "soft power" which could come in handy when, for instance, fighting for Norwegian interests in trade negotiations or elsewhere. The need to produce information that helps to improve Norwegian diplomacy's standing, both at home and abroad, can influence the way the peace process is conducted. But peace-making is a risky business, as Henriksen Waage noted in a paper on Norwegian mediation in the Middle East (Waage, 2004b). When peace processes fail, the strategy to enhance Norway's standing could backfire, as in Sri Lanka or the Middle East, where Norwegian diplomacy has suffered severe backlashes over the last few years.

I therefore conclude that the relationship between Norwegian diplomats and journalists only seems to be symbiotic. Norwegian diplomacy in reality depends on critical journalism producing independent information and stimulating a lively debate on war and the possibilities of peace. The intimate relationship between diplomats, journalists and sources tended to structure and frame the information on the peace process in a way which did not stimulate critical debate.

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