

# **The war in Afghanistan and peace journalism in practice**

## **Abstract**

This article argues that a critical use of Johan Galtung's theory on peace journalism can be a fruitful supplement in theory building within the field of war- and peace journalism. The article has a critical review of the scholarly debate on peace journalism. The author argues by using examples from Norwegian media coverage of the war in Afghanistan as well as using example of research on the Norwegian media coverage of the war, that the theory on peace journalism also can serve as a useful platform for teaching and journalism training within the field of conflict and war reporting.

By Rune Ottosen

## **Introduction**

Key words: peace journalism, war reporting, journalism training

Johan Galtung's model on peace journalism inspires and provokes. It has inspired journalists to write critical articles from war zones (Lynch 2008, p. 143). The model has been used by, teachers as platform to encourage students to think critically about the way main stream media report on wars (Hackett and Schroeder 2006, p. 26). Media researchers have used the model as a research tool, analyzing news texts on war coverage (Mandelziz and Peleg 2008, p. 62). But the peace journalism model has also been used as a point of departure for studying other media outlets, like computer games on real wars (Ottosen 2008, p. 73).

On the other hand, the peace journalism concept has also provoked journalists to accuse defenders of the theory to violate the ideals of "objectivity" (Loyn 2007). It has also provoked media researcher to accuse Galtung of over-simplifying complex issues (Hanitzsch 2007). In this paper I will summarise some of my personal experiences with using peace journalism as appoint of departure in my own research and teaching.

## **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 (Se appendix for full overview). The model includes four main points which contrasts the two approaches: war journalism is violence-oriented, propaganda-oriented, elite-oriented and victory-oriented. This approach is often linked to a dualistic approach, 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, promoting war (Galtung 2002).

The peace journalism section of the model has a moral and ethical point of departure, acknowledging the fact that 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-oriented, people-oriented and truth-oriented approach, and 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-oriented in the sense that it focuses on the victims (often civilian casualties) and thus gives a voice to the voiceless. It is also truth-oriented, in the sense that it reveals untruth on all sides and focuses on propaganda as a mean of continuing the war (ibid., 261-270).

Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick 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 create opportunities for society at large to consider and to value non-violent, developmental responses to conflict (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005, p.5).

### **Does it work in practice?**

Within the field of peace research Galtung's model has been mostly welcomed and Majid Tehranian has even called it "a system of global media ethics" (Tehranian 2002, p. 58). With this point of departure the question is whether it works in practice or not, 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's referred to all the time (Ross 2008, p. 114).

Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick have contributed to bridging the practice and theory field through their book *Peace Journalism*. This is 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 (Lynch and McGoldrick 2005, p. 6).

Acknowledging the influence of Galtung's model does not necessary mean that one has to accept the whole concept of Peace journalism as defined by Johan Galtung

himself (Galtung 2002). Personally I support Galtung's theory, but not without reservation and criticism. I have in earlier works criticized the model for underestimating the visual aspects of war- and peace reporting (Ottosen 2007). Together with my Swedish colleague Stig A. Nohrstedt I have suggested to use critical discourse analyses as a supplement to the peace journalism model:

At the same time it must be admitted that there are empirical evidences that much of the war reporting in main stream media are constructed along the lines Galtung suggests. By using CDA as a supplement we could offer a more comprehensive analyses that include both the systematic silencing of certain crucial aspects as well as the voices of ordinary people in the public discourse on war and peace issues, with the objective of finding out the complex discursive constructions and structures that contribute to conflict escalations and wars (Nohrstedt and Ottosen, 2008, p. 18).

Other scholars have also suggested combining the peace journalism theory with other frameworks. Robert A. Hackett's attempt to discuss peace journalism theory in light of Chomsky and Herman's "propaganda model" and Bourdieu's field theory, is an interesting contribution. Hackett's ethos is motivated by the question whether peace journalism can work in practice. He concludes that the need for change in main stream foreign reporting is obvious, and sees peace journalism as a potential supplement. But he also argues that peace journalism can't work without strong segments of allied in the public opinion who requests a different kind of journalism:

Unfortunately, it seems probable that in Western corporate media, at least, journalists have neither sufficient incentives, nor autonomy vis-avis 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?) 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 marginalized by current patterns of national or global communication (Hackett 2006).

Hackett's suggests that there is more potential for peace journalism in conflict areas and is partly supported by Jake Lynch, who has experience both from main stream

media like Sky Television and BBC World as well as teaching journalists in conflict zones like The Philippines (Lynch 2008, p. 143-163).

Of course it's easy to support Hackett's sober realism of the weak potential for peace journalists within main stream media. Given the financial crisis in 2008/09 and cut backs in jobs in the news industry, the situation is even worse for the potential of investigative and critical reporting in main stream press. However it should not be underestimated that there always will be a certain potential for critical reporting even in main stream media (Ottosen 2004, p. 47). And of course new platforms like My Space, Facebook, Twitter and the whole blogosphere are also available for alternative coverage, regardless of financial resources.

### **The peace journalism controversy**

The BBC-reporter David Loyn is the most known opponent of the peace journalism approach within the journalism community. 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 prefer to use terms as "truthfulness" and "objectivity" as journalistic guidelines, even though he acknowledge the limitations 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, p. 5).

Loyn is disturbed by the Galtung's original War and Peace model because its categories are too dualistic, its "war journalism" or "peace journalism". He seems almost offended to be placed in such categories by Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick in their book *Peace Journalism*:

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 evildoers. 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 (ibid, p. 6).

It can be questioned whether this is a fair reference to the way Lynch and McGoldrick actually use the Galtung scheme. I will come back to that.

Loyn present his own experiences as a reporter in conflicts like 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 negotiation between the parties impossible. In the case of Kosovo, Loyn in my mind comes very close to the journalism of attachment, promoted by Martin Bell and others during the civil in former Yugoslavia. This position suggested that military intervention by NATO forces was the only realistic solution to stop Milosevic's atrocities towards the civilian population (Søvaag 2005, p. 10). Loyn is however not without criticism of main stream media's ability to give a correct picture of world events through the media:

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 surrounds us, the only reporting which matters is off piste - finding out what really is going on. And there is simply not enough off 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 (Loyn 2007, p. 10.)

In my mind Lyon ends were 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 don't put in factors like propaganda and media strategies by the parties in the conflict, you as a reporter will be unable to see what serious challenges journalism in the battlefield are confronted with. On this point another critic of peace journalism, the media researcher Thomas Hanitzch, criticize peace journalism from a totally different angle than Loyn.

Hanitzch argues that the peace journalism advocates underestimate the material conditions for modern news reporting and overestimate the possibilities for journalist to contextualize their stories like Lynch et al. suggests. He thinks that a complex model like Galtung's model is unfitted for the highly standardized narrative schemes of modern news production. He thinks that promoting peace is no nobler than PR-campaigns and

“journalism of attachment” which suggest military intervention to stop ethnic cleansing on the Balkans. Even though he is sympathetic to many of the point suggested in peace journalism such as expose lies, cover-up attempts a culprits on all sides and to report on atrocities of war and the suffering of civilians, Hanitzch suggest that this might as well be labelled as “good journalism” (Hanitzch 2007, p. 7).

Lynch in his answer to the critiques claims that they underestimate leaders in the Western world willingness and abilities to manipulate the media. Especially in the phase where there is a mobilisation to go to war, rhetoric in favour of “humanitarian intervention” like the building up to the war against Yugoslavia in 1999 and prior to the war in Iraq in 2003. Lynch argues that propaganda must be contextualized by the media and it’s vital that the media is not seduced by propaganda rhetoric themselves by adapting the vocabulary and arguments of spin doctors in favour of war (Nohrstedt and Ottosen 2008, p. 11, Becker 2008).

When it boils down to what Loyn himself looks for in quality journalism, Lynch argues that they share most of those values and suggest that Loyn himself easily could be called a peace journalist. He argues that their values are overlapping rather than contradictory. He thinks Hanitzch’s criticism is unfair since his own interpretation of peace journalism is not support for specific peace imitative, but rather realistic analyses of the complexity of doing journalism in a war field. Quoting Entman he argues that in order to give the audience the full picture journalist should make visible what the propaganda machinery leave out peace alternatives and realistic information on the consequence of war. Entman 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 in Lynch 2007, p. 2).

I basically support Lynch’s position and would perhaps put even more emphasis on the impact of Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) and their impact of media reporting. In retrospect many of the misleading stories arguing for the war in Iraq had their origin in disinformation caused by PSYOPS and propaganda. Michael Isikoff and David Corn in their book *Hubris* argue that the Bush administration mislead the opinion in their campaign for war to a level that has been underestimated by the media. Vice president Dick Cheney misused CIA and picked the information that suited

argumentation for a war and put aside information that contradicted claims that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction (Isikoff 2006, p. 28-29).

The Center for public integrity. Has documented that the Bush administration on 532 occasions produced a total amount 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 mind David Loyn’s position in the debate has a too naive point of departure that presupposes that the media start their war reporting with “blank sheets”. We think that the peace journalism model might serve as a useful checklist for both journalists and media researcher as a guideline in a propaganda-infected landscape. Media researcher Wilhelm Kempf who has successfully used the peace journalism approach in his own research (Kempf 2007), basically supports the framework of peace journalism, even though he criticizes the book *Peace journalism* by Jake Lynch and Annabel McGoldrick in their 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 form of advocacy journalism, which lead directly to PR and propaganda and can squander the trust bonus its recipients grant to peace journalism (Kempf 2007b p. 7).

Here Kempf supports the position of Hanitzsch, though not his conclusion to reject the peace journalism option. Samuel Peleg’s defense of peace journalism dismiss that objectivity is the most important issue to worry about. According to his position the objectivity position, to report what you see is not the most important issue when the main point of a story often is 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, particular 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 (Peleg 2007).

In my mind, here we are at the core of the matter. No quality journalism can work if the journalist before starting to report doesn't acknowledge that the most important part of the story is below the visible surface.

### **Does it *really* work in practice?**

I will go more in depth on the issue whether Galtung's peace journalism works in practice by using my own experience as a professor in journalism, and offer some examples of how Galtung's theory of peace journalism has inspired me and my students in their academic and journalistic work. I will more specifically 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 practitioners.

### **Peace journalism as curriculum**

Since 2003 I have run master 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<sup>1</sup>. I have also used Galtung's model in teaching at the bachelor level, but will in the following concentrate on the master education. Since 2003 the master course has been offered every second spring term. The course has been a joint offer to Norwegian master students and also been offered as a module in the programme Global journalism. Global journalism is a joint Norwegian, Finish, Swedish program recruiting students from all over the world<sup>2</sup>. Close to a hundred master students from around 30

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://home.hio.no/~rune/hovedfagskurs.html>

<sup>2</sup> University of Örebro in Sweden is the host institution. The students go to the other partner institutions to take selected courses. The other partners are University of Tampere, University of Helsinki and Oslo University College.

countries has been through the module since the start in 2003. The evaluation form of the course is a term paper, a written essay where the demand is that the students use the course literature on a specific case. These term papers have in their own right produced a huge number of empirical findings on an unknown number of conflicts and wars on a global scale.

Quite a few students have picked up the theoretical concept of peace journalism and later used it as the main theoretical framework for their master thesis. 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 land and now teach journalism, including peace journalism theory. It should also be noted that master students in other Norwegian Universities have used Galtung's peace journalism module as theoretical basis for their master thesis. Some of the former students have also ended up in the news industry, and later in the article I will give one 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 master thesis relevant for the topic of Norwegian military presence in Afghanistan.

### **Norwegian military presence in Afghanistan- a brief background**

Norway has traditionally been a close ally with the US and has been a loyal NATO member since 1949<sup>3</sup>. 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-defense concept. Norway has played an active role in the NATO-led IFOR and SFOR 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 in the attack 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 US requested Norwegian military support in Afghanistan. Under US command Norway contributed fighter planes,

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<sup>3</sup> This section is taken from Ottosen 2005, p. 95-96.

transport planes, helicopters and ground forces. A central task of the Norwegian forces was to clear undetonated mines on the ground. However, some of the Norwegian forces' tasks were kept secret for security reasons. The fact that Norwegian elite sources took part in operation as part of Enduring Freedom has not been discussed in detail in the public. Some of the facts around their operation is still kept secret, including the exact date when they left Norway after the war started in November 2001. We know that they are hand picked elite soldiers from FSK/HJK and Air Force 720-squadron. We also know that they have been in actual battle with al-Qaida and Taliban militants. One of the soldiers died in combat with al-Qaida soldiers and several of the have been decorated by the US-government (Bakkeli 2007, p. 7-9). As of September 2009 four Norwegian soldiers have died on duty in Afghanistan.

The historical dimension of this military action was underlined when NATO formally took over leadership of the international peacekeeping forces (ISAF) in August 2003. This was the first time in history that NATO assumed such a responsibility outside Europe, although no one doubts that the US will remain the dominant force within ISAF. Later the ISAF forces got a UN mandate for its presence. In October 2006 Operation Enduring Freedom was also placed under NATO command.

The legal issues have to certain extent been present in the public debate. Some of the issues raised were: Did the action have a legal basis in international law? Would the US or Norwegian officer have control over the Norwegian soldiers? In a situation in which Norwegian soldiers had the potential to violate international law, should they then refer to Norwegian or US law? And could combatants arrested by Norwegian soldiers end up at Guantanamo bay. These issues raised in the public debate in Norway were followed by similar issues when Norway sent troops to Iraq in the spring of 2003 (Ottosen 2005, p. 96). When the red-green coalition won the election and founded a government in 2005 the soldiers in Iraq were called back to fulfill the promise from the election campaign.

An interesting aspect of the Norwegian debate was that military personnel participated in the debate to a larger extent than they usually have, since Norwegian officers traditionally have kept a low profile in discussions concerning foreign and security policies. Now, many officers and their professional organizations were active. If they were going to war they wanted clear answers from the politicians. This debate must be seen in the light of discussions during the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999. At that time, Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik was criticized for refusing to call the action a war, calling it instead a humanitarian intervention. Four years later Bondevik criticized 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 in the first place (ibid., 96). This self-criticism was an attempt to meet discontent within military circles with Norwegian politicians who were criticized for not properly standing behind the soldiers

Besides 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**

In the following I will summarize the findings from my own research on Afghanistan in light of Galtung's peace journalism model. Especially I will focus on point 3 in the model (see Appendix). In the War/violence section of the model the relevant point here is "Elite-oriented" journalism with the sub-points with focus on "able-bodied elite males" as opposed to peace section People-oriented focus with emphasis on "focus on suffering all over; on women, aged and children.

My findings from the study of the mainstream newspapers *Aftenposten* and *Verdens Gang* (VG)<sup>4</sup>. The first week of the war in November 2001 has been fully documented elsewhere (Ottosen 2005). *Aftenposten* featured 104 articles the first week of the war and VG 100. The empirical findings from the study of use of sources in articles to a large extent follow the patterns of the war-journalism section in Galtung's model. Both *Aftenposten's* and VG's coverage on 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. Norway's role as a potential military actor in the region is at this stage virtually absent in both newspapers. The latter is quite interesting in light of Muleg's point made earlier in this article. Since Norway's military presence is an important political issue eight year later this was not defined as a potential problem at the time. The issue was still under the visible surface. In my mind a journalist with a peace journalism platform could have highlighted the controversial issue of Norway's responsibility for civilian casualties already from the time Norway decided to send troops in November 2001. The lack of this perspective

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<sup>4</sup> Both newspapers are owned by the Norwegian media company Schibsted. *Aftenposten* is known as the biggest and most influential morning paper and VG is the most selling newspaper in Norway

was evident in the way *Aftenposten* framed Norway's military presence some months later.

### ***Aftenposten's coverage of the bombing of a wedding***<sup>5</sup>

On July 2 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 small article about the Norwegian soldiers in Afghanistan entitled "Norwegian war efforts in Afghanistan praised". The lead speaks for itself: "Minister of Defense 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, Defense Minister Devold marked the celebration by giving 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 specialize in niche capacity and mentioned Norway as an example"<sup>6</sup>. With a language that could have been taken from the business community, there are few connotations of Norwegian soldiers' involvement in war and potential death. Nothing in the text whatsoever hints that Norwegians could be involved in battle or 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 Norwegian pilots at that time were also present in the air space over Afghanistan.

The title of this story is "Mistaken bombing may have killed 120 Afghans". The story with a byline from Reuter/NTB (The Norwegian News Agency, author's remark) quotes a Pentagon source, admitting that a bomb was accidentally dropped on a wedding party. The following day, *Aftenposten* followed up with a larger 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, criticizes 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 if

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<sup>5</sup> This example has earlier been used in Ottosen 2005.

<sup>6</sup> *Aftenposten* 2 July 2002 p. 2.

we remember earlier requests from the Pentagon that the media should mention who is responsible for the war every time civilian casualties are mentioned (Ottosen 2005, p. 99).

To modify the critique 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 July 29 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 about this incident. One theory is that the American were misinformed by Afghan intelligence sources who wanted to provoke the US forces into bombing and thus show them in a bad light. Another theory was that what the Americans thought was gunfire was actually fireworks from the wedding celebration, and mistakenly saw it as an attack on their planes<sup>7</sup>.

Even though *Aftenposten* followed up the wedding incident in a critical manner, this tragedy was never seen in connection with the Norwegian military presence. The Norwegian soldiers are praised because they are clever, but their skills are never linked to their roles as potential “bad-doers”. Since the Norwegian pilots and soldier are by definition “good-doers” they are in no way linked to potential war crimes or violation of international law<sup>8</sup>. In my mind this raises some ethical issues. Should not the Norwegian newspaper readers also be challenged to also see potential problems regarding the Norwegian military presence? The defense minister did not establish any links between the “praise” of the Norwegian soldier and innocent wedding guests being killed by our closest ally and Commander in Chief. If Galtung’s peace model had been use 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, mainstream media would surely not hide the story in a small note on the news page.

### **Master thesis on the war in Afghanistan**

I will now present two examples of master thesis with relevance for Johan Galtung’s theory on Peace Journalism.

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<sup>7</sup> *Aftenposten* 29 July 2002.

<sup>8</sup> The notion of Norway as good-doer was introduced by Terje Tvedt discussing the media image of Norwegian development aid in Tvedt, *Utviklingshjelp*.

### ***Master thesis 1***

Irene Rossland in 2006 wrote a master thesis, with me as supervisor, researching the full coverage of Aftenposten's coverage of the Afghanistan from 9/11 2001 throughout 2002. Her material contained 1118 articles. I will here concentrate on the section of her master thesis dealing with Norway's military presence.

Aftenposten's coverage was dominated by a focus on the Norwegian Special Forces' alleged skill. Rossland emphasis is on the tendency in Norwegian media to cover the positive aspects of the Norwegian soldier's performance rather than the potential critical aspects of the 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, p. 109). This fits well to the pattern of Galtung's war section in the model "us-them, journalism, propaganda voice for "us" journalism".

Aftenposten was more concerned about the Norwegian soldiers' own security than loss of Afghan lives. There was no urge to discuss whether the loss of Afghan lives came as 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 soldier's treatment of prisoners. It was a good deal of criticism of the United States in Aftenposten's coverage, most important was 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 soldier's war participation (Rossland 2006).

### ***Master thesis 2***

In another master thesis, Christian Haug, with me as supervisor, used Galtung's model to compare the coverage of civilian victims in U.S. and Norwegian newspapers (the Washington Post and New York Post in U.S.) and the Norwegian newspaper (*Aftenposten* and *VG*). In an analysis of newspaper coverage of the attack on town Shaker Qala on October 23. 2001, Haug looks closer at the coverage of many civilian casualties. Haug identifies two phases in the U.S. and Norwegian newspapers coverage of this attack. The first phase according to Haug is framed as "denial" of the problem with civilian casualties. When the consequences of the attack were confirmed, the "explanatory phase" started. This phase fits well into of

Galtung's "war journalism section" in the model, with a small degree of empathy with victims on "the enemy side". The coverage was "victory oriented" with 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 U.S. newspaper went further in denial of civilian casualties than the Norwegian even though they basically followed the same pattern. But the U.S. policy and the Operation Enduring Freedom was not openly challenged by the Norwegian newspapers (Haug 2007, p. 102-103).

### **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 master thesis. After trying to cover the Afghanistan "from a distance" in Norway, he found it frustrating to be dependent on Norwegian military to get access to conflict area where the Norwegian soldiers operated<sup>9</sup>. The Norwegian military has to a large extent determined the premises of the media coverage of the Norwegian military presence through embedded press tours. Partly inspired by the insight from the teaching of peace journalism he decided to move to Kabul and settle there to come closer to the area where the potential for more "people oriented" journalism (to use Galtung's expression) was bigger<sup>10</sup>. After living there for almost two years he has filed several critical articles in various Norwegian media. Together with Norwegian Broadcasting company's investigative magazine *Brennpunkt*, Hammer made a critical documentary that was sent on March 3 2009<sup>11</sup>. The programme placed a number of interesting and appropriate questions on the agenda regarding the Norwegian warfare in Afghanistan. Through his network of sources he got access to a village where some of the Norwegians soldiers had been fighting Taliban forces together with American and Afghan soldiers. Some civilians were killed during the battle and Hammer interviewed the relatives who partly blamed the foreign troops for their loss. When Hammer tried to get comments from the responsible Norwegian officers he was denied access to the Norwegian camp. This led to a public debate where I myself took part and in an article in the Norwegian daily newspaper *Dagbladet* I challenged

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<sup>9</sup> Statement made by Hammer at a public discussion meeting in Oslo Journalist federation on December 18 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Anders Sømme Hammer has stated to this author that he was inspired by the peace journalism to think critically on reporting from a war zone, and has allowed me to use this as an example in the article.

<sup>11</sup> Available at <http://www1.nrk.no/nett-tv/klipp/469913>

the Norwegian Defense minister Anne-Grete Strøm-Erichsen on several issues (Ottosen 2009). The Norwegian government has a media strategy to emphasize the humanitarian aspects of the Norwegian military presence. In her comment to Hammer's documentary she had earlier avoided the problematic issues of Norway's responsibility for the civilian casualties and claimed that Norway "shall be a visible peace nation"<sup>12</sup>. This line of argument is fully according to point 3 in Galtung's war section in his War and Peace model where it's stated "focus on elite peace-makers". Hammer's documentary was in mind according to the principle of peace journalism especially point 3 in the "people oriented" section of Galtung's model: "Focusing on suffering all over; on women, aged, children, giving voice to the voiceless" (see Appendix). In my response to the Defense minister 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 which is the formal political platform for the coalition, it's stated that the Norwegian forces should not participate in Enduring Freedom. Hammer shows that in reality it is difficult to draw a clear line between ISAF-operations and Enduring Freedom-operations. Norwegian forces agree in practice to support operations Enduring Freedom when they are asked to assist US forces, and is thus in a legal gray area between the ISAF operation with Enduring Freedom. All parties in Parliament support our participation in the ISAF forces while the majority of the electorate through opinion polls has expressed skepticism and opposition to Norwegian military presence in Afghanistan. This is a sensitive issue and Norwegian politicians address this problem by denying that we are at war.

Why do politicians need to make the military reality "kinder" than it is through their own rhetoric? I believe that Norwegian politicians have swept an unpleasant debate under the carpet. Norwegian media have committed the sin that they have not made an independent journalistic assessment of the legal issues involved. The media has not gone behind the politicians' rhetoric and looked at what law experts are saying about these issues<sup>13</sup>. Hammer's investigative reporting is an example of peace journalism since it gives "voices to voiceless" and "name all evil-doers".

## **Conclusion**

It is difficult to give scientific evidence that a model like Johan Galtung's peace journalism is valid in the sense that it can be tested statistically. Like in many others of Galtung's works i.e.

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted from *Dagbladet* 18. April 2009.

<sup>13</sup> For more details see Ottosen 2009.

the theory of “structural violence” (Galtung 1971) and theory on “cultural violence” (Galtung 1990), Galtung identify power structures and sociological connections in a thought-provoking and complex manner. In this article I have tried to give examples of practical consequences of Galtung’s theory on Peace journalism since it obviously has influenced teaching, research as well as practical journalism. The war-and peace journalism model is example of a theoretical contribution that defines an agenda and inspires scholars, teachers and journalist 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.

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## Appendix

PEACE/CONFLICT JOURNALISM	WAR/VIOLENCE JOURNALISM
<p><b>1) Peace/Conflict-orientated</b>            explore conflict formation, x parties, y goals, z issues, general "win, win" orientation            open space, open time; causes and outcomes anywhere, also in history/culture            making conflicts transparent            giving voice to all parties; empathy and understanding            see conflict/war as a problem, focus on conflict            creativity            humanization of all sides; more so the worse the weapon            proactive; prevention before violence/wars occurs            focus on invisible effects of violence (trauma and glory, damage to structure/culture)</p>	<p><b>1) War/violence-orientated</b>            focus on conflict arena, 2 parties, 1 goal (win), war            general zero-sum orientation            closed space, closed time, causes and exits in arena, who threw the first stone            making wars opaque/secret            "us-them" journalism, propaganda, voice, for "us see "them" as the problem, focus on who prevails in war            dehumanization of "them", more so the worse the weapon            reactive: waiting for violence before reporting            focus only on visible effects of violence (killed, wounded and material damages)</p>
<p><b>2) Truth-orientated</b>            expose untruths on all sides / uncover all cover-ups</p>	<p><b>2) Propaganda-orientated</b>            expose "their" untruths/help "our" cover-ups/lies</p>
<p><b>3) People-orientated</b>            focus on suffering all over; on women, aged, children, giving voice to voiceless            give name to all evil-doers            focus on people peace-makers</p>	<p><b>3) Elite-orientated</b>            focus on our suffering; on able-bodies elite males, being their mouth piece            give name of their evil-doers            focus on elite peace-makers</p>
<p><b>4) Solution-orientated</b>            peace = non-violence - creativity            highlight peace initiatives, also to prevent more war            focus on structure, culture, the peaceful society            aftermath: resolution, reconstruction,</p>	<p><b>4) Victory-orientated</b>            peace = victory - ceasefire            conceal peace initiatives, before victory is at hand            focus on treaty, institution, the controlled society            leaving for another war, return if the old war flares up again.</p>

## About the author

Rune Ottosen (1950) graduated in journalism in 1973 (Norwegian College of Journalism) and in Political Science in 1984 (University of Oslo). He has worked for many years as a journalist in various Norwegian media. From 1994-1996 he worked as a research fellow at the Norwegian Journalist Federation writing the professional history of Norwegian journalists. Since 1996 he has worked as associate professor at the Journalist education, Oslo College and became professor in the same institution in July 1999. He has together with professor Stig Arne Nohrstedt at Örebro University written many articles and books within the field of war-an peace journalism. They have edited and contributed to "Journalism and the New World Order. Gulf War, National News Discourse and Globalization" (2001). In 2004 they published U.S. and the others. Global Media Images on "The War on Terror" and in 2005 they published "Global War – Local Views. Media Images of the Iraq War".