What third world?
Changing photographic representation of international news in Slovene elite press (1980-2006)

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Abstract
This article investigates a remarkable shift in international news reporting of developing or Third World countries in a leading Slovene daily newspaper Delo after Slovenia gained independence in 1991 which appears to be consistent with repositioning of Slovene foreign policy after its succession from Yugoslavia. In short, extent of news coverage of developing countries dropped, type of news coverage changed to what is normally categorised as 'negative news' while mode of photographic representation had switched from neutral to symbolic. Drawing on the explanatory powers of national identity and national interest, article focuses on the shift in visual coverage and use of press photographs to construct and maintain the difference between 'Us' and 'Them'. Through this, it exposes the active role of 'indigenous' gatekeepers in providing the final selection of already limited repertoire of news diet, supplied by international press agencies.

Introduction

Over the past decades, international news production has drawn a significant deal of scholarly interest. Using variety of often diverging theoretical perspectives and research methodologies, authors address the subject predominantly for three reasons. Firstly, studies tend to indicate and confirm a strong link between international news reporting and official government foreign policies. Secondly, a number of authors emphasise that the flow and content of international news can impact audience's knowledge, perception and evaluation of other countries, particularly when members of audience have limited alternative channels of information and/or little first hand experience with certain countries. Thirdly, distinct nature of international news production and distribution are seen to produce unbalanced information flows that stream from developed to developing countries, producing not only information dependency of developing countries but also their negative coverage in the media of developed countries.

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This article investigates a remarkable shift in international news reporting of developing or Third World countries in a leading Slovene daily newspaper Delo after Slovenia gained independence in 1991. In short, *extent of news coverage* of developing countries dropped from a third of all international news during 1980s to less than ten percent at the present. At the same time, *type of news coverage* changed to what is normally categorised as 'negative news' while *mode of photographic representation* had switched from neutral to symbolic. My investigation of this shift is based on the notion that news production is 'not simply a function of ownership, nor of journalistic practices and rituals' (McNair, 1994: 48) but a result of struggles for production of meaning between news organisations, other social institutions and wider cultural (national) context within which this communication takes place. Therefore the article is not confined solely to the concerns of dependency/news flow paradigm from which the investigation starts but intertwines its results with the two contesting paradigms to highlight the changes in Delo's (visual) reporting of international news.

Structural determinants of international news

Interest in structural domination of international news flows is by no means a contemporary concern – its critiques have been sporadically voiced at least since the beginning of twentieth century (Renaud, 1984; cf. Tönnies, 1922/1998) and had culminated between mid 1970s and mid 1980s with debates on the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) and the report of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems (MacBride et al., 1980/1984) within the UNESCO. Most of critics explicitly linked structural imbalances of international news reporting with activities of major (Western) international news agencies and emphasised the interrelations between control of communication resources and economic and political power.

Research has shown that the major Western news agencies (Associated Press, Reuters and Agence France Press) effectively dominate the global flow of international news: in 1970s, nearly 80 percent of world news emanated from New York, London and Paris (MacBride et al., 1984: 72, 114) and represented even a larger share of news sources *de facto* used by the media (e.g. Argumedo, 1982; Schramm et al., 1978; Boyd-Barrett, 1980). This share remained relatively unchanged over the following decades (Alleyne and Wagner, 1993; Rampal, 1995; Boyd-Barrett 2000). In spite of (or perhaps precisely because of) the proliferation of local, regional and global media since the end of the Cold war, the overall structure of 'raw news' media market and their domination by Western news agencies (Reuters, AP and AFP) remained relatively intact. (Boyd-Barrett, 1998: 27) While there has been some increase of competition at the second tier of news agency hierarchy by several European national agencies, such as Spain's EFE and Germany's DPA, many third tier national news agencies of former Second and

Third World countries are in crisis, facing financial difficulties and diminished scale of operations or are on the verge of collapse. Similarly, alternative news agencies such as Inter Press Service, Pan African Press Agency or the Non-Aligned Press Agency Pool have all but disappeared. As a result, world faced weaker service of national news agencies in 'democratic nineties' than in 'autocratic eighties'. (Boyd-Barrett, 2000; Boyd-Barrett, 2001)

While the structural domination of international news market was never disputed, arguments about consequent imbalance of news flows, information dependency and negative coverage of less developed regions have been contested.[1] However what did crystallise out of the debates on structural inequalities of news market is that the influence of major Western news agencies is at least twofold: (1) they influence what news gets into the news flow, and (2) they set the standard of content and form/presentation of news. Both of these conclusions however give weight to the argument that structural dominance of big Western agencies produces negative coverage of developing countries. The 'distorted picture' was and still is an outcome of the underlying economic logic: the content of news (what and how is covered and what importance is attributed to it) is primarily determined not in the locations where it is gathered but in the locations where it is consumed and paid for (see e.g. Chu, 1985).

Delo's compensation of international news agency coverage

Through the analysed period, Delo has enjoyed an unrivalled position as the newspaper of record in a country with little less than 2 million inhabitants, reaching a substantial share of country's intelligentsia and decision makers as well as strongly influencing standards of Slovene journalism.

In 1980, Delo was one of the 23 regional newspapers that supplied the daily printed news to 20 million citizens of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Due to its multiethnic and multilingual population as well as Party's strategy to avoid ethnic frictions, Yugoslav media system was decentralised and the bulk of national audience got their information from regional (republic) media, such as Delo. (Robinson 1977, 47) Yugoslav media system strongly differed from those of other communist countries and in many ways mirrored country's ambivalent (exceptional) socio-political position which made it share and voice many of the Third World concerns despite being politically and geographically a country of the Second World. Yugoslav socialist self-management system (at least in theory) needed well informed citizens and Yugoslav media were given an uneasy task of providing comprehensive information to its citizens, including interpretation and critique of so called 'negative phenomena in society', while they simultaneously still had to contribute to the building of a Socialist society and serve as means of social education. Because of this responsibility, media were not directly owned and

controlled by state or Communist party nor were they financially dependent on them but were mostly financed through subscriptions, licence fees and advertising. While domestic news often lacked a clear, all embracing Yugoslav perspective due to decentralised media system and relative administrative autonomy of constituent Republics, international news would reflect a more mutual Yugoslav perspective on events, fine-tuned to the taste and needs of audiences in individual Republics. As one of the most prominent members of the Non-Aligned movement, Yugoslavia was strongly dedicated to buil-up of horizontal communication among Non-aligned and other Third World countries. To some extent, all Yugoslav media were partially involved in consequent launching 'of an extensive array of self-help and cooperation scheme' (Jakubowicz 1985) to create alternative networks and stimulate news flows and information exchange between the countries of the Third World that would be unmediated by the 'Big Four' Western news agencies. Thus for example in 1975 Yugoslavia's national news agency TANJUG became the coordinator and one of the main contributors to the 41-member NAPAP – the Non Aligned Press Agency Pool. Even before that, TANJUG had an extensive network of its own correspondents and stringers in Africa, Asia and South America that balanced the overemphasis of major agencies' news diet on the power centres of West and East in order to reflect a more Non-Aligned position. In 1974, Delo (in association with Radio and Television Ljubljana) made another step toward a more in-depth reporting of developing regions and opened a permanent correspondent station in Nairobi to cover African events.

In 2006 Delo was the largest of the three Slovene quality dailies with an average circulation of 89.000 copies. After Slovenia gained independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, Delo continued with its practice of providing 'national' interpretation of world events by maintaining a network of foreign correspondents and stringers throughout Europe (Berlin, Brussels, Budapest, London, Moscow, Paris, Rome, Vienna, Warsaw), former Yugoslavia (Belgrade, Sarajevo, Zagreb), USA, Middle East and China. The newspaper would also maintain a practice of sending its special correspondent (often accompanied by a staff photographer) to provide news coverage of major international crises and conflicts or to provide in-depth, background reporting on political or social topics from areas where it has no permanent correspondents. While Delo's *modus operandi* of complementing agency news coverage by providing 'indigenous' or 'local' angle on international news remained fairly unchanged throughout the analysed period, it's international news coverage reveals a remarkable shift of focus regarding reporting on developing countries (see Table 1, page 31).

Out of sight, out of mind - Delo's big shift in reporting on the Third World

Delo's international news coverage was approached through critical reading of published photographs and a rudimentary content analysis of sources and themes

of published articles. To detect the patterns in Delo's contemporary international news coverage, a 72-day sample was compiled (one six-day composite week for 12 months from 2004, 2005 and 2006). Front, back and International politics pages were scrutinised for visual and textual coverage, including geographic location of events, source(s) of news and news topics in order to trace the difference between positive and negative coverage. Positive coverage topics included: (1) official politics, meetings, negotiations etc.; (2) economic matters; (3) peacetime military and defence; (4) development, international aid, social service; (5) culture, science and religion. Negative topics included: (6) wars, coups, terrorism etc.; (7) crime, legal issues; and (8) famine, poverty, natural disasters. For the analysis of reporting from Yugoslav era, a 36-day composite week sample from randomly selected months of 1980 was compiled and analysed according to the above described categories.[2]

Textual coverage 1980

In 1980, Delo's offering of international news would on an average day be comprised of two to five front and back page articles, nine longer and informative articles in the "foreign policy" page and an overview of world events in a form of 10 to 13 short articles and "teleprinter" news section on "daily events" page. Out of the 1228 articles in the sample, well over half (57 percent) was reported by Yugoslav new sources: 39 percent by TANJUG wire or TANJUG correspondents and nearly 18 percent by Delo's correspondents and journalists. The "Big Four" agencies (AFP, AP, UPI and Reuters) were the source of 25 percent of the news items while national agencies of East European, Non aligned and Third World countries accounted for little less that 10 percent of the news. Articles that offered some background information or interpretation of the main event were generally attributed to Yugoslav sources, either to Delo's correspondents or TANJUG. Geographically, Delo selected 54 percent of its coverage from Second and Third World.

As for the topics and the question of negative coverage, events from the Third World did receive nearly four times the negative coverage than those from the First World. But it should be stressed that the coverage of the Third World was not limited to the discourse of 'coups and disasters' – all regions of the Third World for example featured prominently in 'positive' topics of international politics and economy (42 and 15 percent respectively). Through this, the Third World political elites were presented as active and equal opponents to their Western counterparts and the internal dynamics of the Third World was exposed through comprehensive coverage of its regions.

Textual coverage 2004-06

Not surprisingly, the paper has changed immensely since 1980, the most significant changes being reduced number of articles per page and increased emphasis on

visual information and presentation. The space made available to international news is now limited to front and back pages (where a small section of short (formerly "teleprinter" news is carried) and one page section of "international politics," where large, up to half-page advertisements frequently notch into the news space. The 72-day sample included 1034 news items, 336 of which included photographs. Out of the 698 purely textual articles, 62 percent were from Delo's correspondents and stringers or were written by Delo's journalists (no sources were quoted). The second most frequently used source, Slovene national press agency (STA), accounted for 22 percent while Western news agencies (AP, Reuters, AFP and DPA) were the source of information in 16 percent of the articles. Although majority of international news from Delo did come from correspondents and journalists, the share of western news agencies amounts to a third of all news (STA's international news service is mainly composed of translations of major Western wire services and therefore can not be regarded as Slovene source). However one of the significant shifts concerning news sources is that not a single news source from developing countries was used in the sample.

Although favourable at first sight, the figures on information dependency are seen in different light when evaluated against geographic distribution of news items. The latter indicates that Delo's international news are confined mostly to its primary geographic location – Europe (31 percent) and the countries of former Yugoslavia (14 percent), followed by Middle East (due to conflicts in Middle East and Iraq), Asia and North America. As presented in Table 1, Africa received less than 3 percent of total news coverage and Central and South America was covered in only 5 out of 698 articles. Geographic distribution of news clearly outlines blind spots on the world map, such as Central and South America or Africa. It should further be added that two thirds of that information on what was formerly called third World was filtered through Western international press agencies.

As for the topics and the question of negative coverage, news articles continue to be dominated by official politics, followed by negative news (wars, coups, crime, terrorism and natural disasters) that make over 80 percent of articles. When evaluated against geographic distribution of news items, the ratio of negative vs. positive topics was 1:5 for Western countries and 1:3 for developing countries (the figure even raises to 2:3 if the data for Middle East as an ongoing crisis region are excluded).

Geographic distribution of news items in 1980 (n=1149)	**Geographic distribution of news items in 2004-06** (n=1034)
Africa 11%	Africa 2,7%
South and Central America 9%	South&Central America 0,5%
Asia 9%	Asia 5,7%
Total share of articles on developing countries 29%	Total share of articles on developing countries 8,9%

Table 1: Delo's shift of international news coverage of developing countries by regions.

Photographic coverage 1980

While photographs of domestic news were relatively prominently displayed, Delo's use of visual material for international news was more reserved and formal. Photographs were more often confined to front and back pages than to International politics page which frequently carried political cartoons from foreign press instead. Contrary to textual news, photographic coverage is, at least at first sight, a clear case of dependency paradigm. Neither Delo nor TANJUG had permanently stationed photojournalists abroad and Delo's photographic coverage in 1980 was dominated by a single Western *source*, UPI, which contributed a third of all photographs. Half of all published photographs were either archive or non-credited, a significant portion of which were head and shoulder portraits of politicians or military leaders of agency origin. Only a small number of photographs were credited to Delo's staff photographers who would occasionally be sent to cover particular stories. The newspapers would also publish photographs taken by their correspondents, although this practice was very infrequent.

Regarding the geographic locations of visualised news, First and Third World received a fairly balanced amount of photographic coverage while the Second World was nearly invisible. There is however a significant difference in the content of published photographs. The photographic discourse on the Third World focused on the depiction of "negative" news topics (wars and coups, crime, terrorism), while First World was presented mainly through its political representatives, mostly in the form of small, passport style identification photographs. Only 4 out of 36 photographs depicted negative news such as social unrest and terrorism compared to 16 out of 34 photographs for developing countries.

Photographic coverage 2004-06

Since 1980, Delo's use of photographs has changed significantly. Not only did the amount of photographs increase but they became an important element of Delo's narration of the international news. One out of three international news items includes a photograph and large photographs (often up to a quarter of a page, printed in colour) are frequently exploited for their own storytelling potential. However, the imperative of visualisation is so strong that photographs with little or no news value or direct connection to textually described events are occasionally used to draw attention to 'significant' topics and events – an issue that will be addressed in more detail in the next section. Currently, the bulk of Delo's visual material comes from the news feed of the major Western agencies. Compared to 1980, the variety of (Western agency) sources has significantly increased: AP, Reuters and AFP account for 63 percent of published material while other European photo agencies, mostly EPA, contribute another 22 percent. During the

period covered in the sample, only 3% of published photographs were credited to Delo's photographers.

Geographical distribution of photographs reveals similar unbalance and blind spots as the textual coverage. The global West accounts for 44 percent of all published photographs while developing world amounts only to one fifth of published visuals. In particular, Africa (5 percent) and South and Central America (2,3 percent) have received less coverage than in 1980, when these figures were 12 percent for Africa and 6 percent for South and Central America. Similarly to textual news coverage, the topics in which the developing countries are depicted are more likely to be negative than positive. Every third photograph of the former Third world depicted a negative event while the ratio for developed countries is one out of five. However this rudimentary statistics offers only a preliminary insight into the nature of Delo's visual coverage and further critical reading of published material is needed to provide a more comprehensive interpretation of photographic representations.

Visualising difference – changes in Delo's visual narration of developing countries

As was already noted above, the underlying concern of the news flow/dependency paradigm is not just imbalance in the quantity of news and dependence on a handful of news sources, but even more importantly, imbalance in the content of news and the manner in which events are covered.

One of the major changes in Delo's international news reporting has undoubtedly been the increased importance of press photography in structuring and narrating the news, however this change appears to be connected with a shift toward more symbolic use of photographs. Delo for the most part abandoned the formalism of its 1980's coverage, when most of the photographs of events and their aftermath were static in composition and taken from mid-distance, emphasising photojournalism's claim of being mere 'objective' recordings. Similarly, photographs of politicians departed from formerly mostly passport-style, formal head and shoulder portraits. In contrast, Delo's present-day coverage is marked by a shift toward symbolic use of visuals, either in a form of less formal portrayal of political actors or through the use of photographs that have little or no direct connections to the reported events.

What I would like to argue in this section is that it is precisely this type of photographic coverage which substitutes storytelling and validation with interpretation that produces the basic structural inequality in visual representation of developed and developing countries. Through this, symbolic use of photographs becomes one of the vehicles for construction of difference between

'us' and 'them' and essentially serves to articulate and demarcate social boundaries of an imagined community of Slovene nation. In order to elaborate on this point, I will first provide an overview of four ways in which Delo uses photographic material: (1) photographs that *identify persons, places or objects*, such as portraits of politicians; (2) photographs that serve to *depict events or their aftermath*, like bomb explosions or floods, often with strong emphasis on validation, offering visual proof that something did happen; (3) photographs that serve as *visual metaphors* that supply symbolic statements, connotations or interpretations of events through the use of gestures, symbols etc.; and (4) photographs that serve merely as *illustrations*, with little or no direct connection to the reported events.

Photographs of political actors

The largest group of photographs published in the analysed period consists of photographs of political actors in a form of portraits, protocol photographs of handshakes, or photographs of meetings and public addresses. Used for their metonymic function, these photographs primarily serve to personalise international politics and attribute legitimacy and visual recognition to political actors. This legitimacy however is not a universal good; in Delo, Western political leaders are more 'legitimate' than their developing world counterparts. The politicians of the developing nations are less frequently featured on photographs and when they do appear, they are less prominently displayed in terms of size as well as placing of a photograph. Often, the political actors of developing countries are not even depicted in person but dehumanised to their representations on placards, signs, murals or statues. In extreme cases, representation of political actors is substituted by depiction of street scenes and groups of anonymous people. In case of major political events such as elections, the news is not visualised through portrayal of candidates (as is normally the case with their Western counterparts) but through more or less unrelated photographs of street scenes. For example an article on elections in India was illustrated by a photograph of soldiers guarding ballot boxes (signifying potential of/for violence) and Iraqi pre-elections with photograph of a man cooking a stew on the street corner, evoking a familiar phrase 'election stew' (thereby suggesting a negative evaluation of the event). Another example is a standard photograph of casting votes in ballot boxes where the difference between belonging to 'our' or 'their' part of civilisational divide would typically be visualised in depiction of who is casting the vote – political actors (developed countries, 'our' side) or anonymous citizens (developing countries, 'other' side). Only the 'well established dictators' such as Kim Il Sung, Fidel Castro and Muammar al-Gaddafi were routinely personalised in a manner similar to Western politicians with their portraits regularly accompanying related textual news. The difference between developed and developing world is further constructed through polarised depiction of political actors as either active or passive. Western political figures are more often portrayed in active mode, normally suggested through gestures, facial expression or posture. When photographed together, it is by a rule the

representatives of developed countries that are depicted in active mode, not vice versa (leading, pointing directions etc.). Furthermore, politicians from developed countries are more often depicted in informal and casual poses (during coffee breaks, exchanging jokes etc.) which makes them appear more approachable.

Photographs of events/aftermath and symbolic photographs

Depictions of events and their aftermath also serve as demarcators of boundaries through construction of difference. It appears that it is more likely that the photograph from developing world will be published if it depicts negative event, such as natural disaster or war. The end result of this practice is a fairly steady flow of images of violence and man or nature made destruction from certain parts of the globe that is not balanced by more neutral or positive depictions of these regions.

Third type are photographs where interpretation of events is inferred through the use of generally accepted codes, conventions and symbols, such as certain gestures, facial expressions or objects of symbolic value (e.g. white dove, religious insignia). This type of photographs appears to be least prone to demarcation of difference as it is used irrespectively of geographical location. However the fact that they are not restricted to certain geo-political region does not absolve them of negative effects – they can become repertoires of standardised stereotypes, such as hooded Muslim militants or starved African children that often obscure the specific aspects of individual news items by evoking associative chain of preconceived notions, interpretations and attitudes.

Non-related photographs

Delo's use of the fourth type of photographs indicates that the norm of accurate and timely reporting does not automatically to apply to all regions of the globe. In Delo, news from developing world can be visualised through archive photographs, photographs from other regions and countries, unrelated photographs and depictions that resonate with image repertoires of stock and travel photography. Thus for example article on appointment of the first African war crime tribunal was accompanied by an archive photograph of armed African peacekeepers storming out of helicopter. In contrast, news from Hague war crime tribunal routinely featured either portraits of prosecutors and accused or photographs of courtroom and sessions in progress. On one occasion, one of the leading articles on the back page on the eruption of bird flu in Nigeria was illustrated with a photograph of everyday market scene from Togo and the leading front page news of railway explosion in North Korea featured a quarter page photograph of a small railway station 'somewhere in North Korea'. Another example are fairly standard photographs of Middle Eastern smoke-filled coffeehouses of idle male clientele that frequently accompany news from the region.

Such photographs with little or no news value or photographs that are not directly related to depicted events (everyday scenes from developing countries) are not merely illustrations, attention grabbers and visual attributers of focus and importance but can also serve as potent purveyors of pre-established ideas, stereotypes and visual differentiation that can serve to legitimise Western (superior) attitude towards less developed countries.

Press photographs as frames

News photographs play a particularly important role in the process of (international) news reporting through their pivotal role in shaping perceptions of 'others'. Not only are they the first message[3] that a reader of a newspaper page (unconsciously) processes (see Newton, 2001: 113) but function as metonymies, as visual symbols of reported events. Press photography's apparent transparency is coupled with its ability to elicit strong emotional response. As several authors have argued, journalism turns to visual storytelling not because of its superior descriptive capabilities but because of its ability to contextualise the discrete details in a broader, symbolic frame (Zelizer, 2004: 130) that is rendered more natural and hence more pervasive through the apparently unmediated realism of the medium. The 'real' storytelling potential of the medium depends on its ability to bestow interpretations to the accurately rendered objects, to synthesise the meaning of their relations into a single image. The tension between naturalism and symbolism is inherent to the very mission of photojournalism which is to capture the essence of an event in a single image (Schwartz, 1992). This, however, is most efficiently achieved not through neutral, naturalistic depiction but through symbolic coverage that resonates with a set pre-established of images, stereotypes and clichés.[4] Such photographs are one of the most pervasive instruments of news framing. They act as 'information-processing schemata' (Entman, 1991: 7) that 'promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretations, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendations for the item described' (Entman, 1993: 52) through conscious or unconscious prioritising of selected concepts, keywords, symbols and metaphors. The repetitive use of visual stereotypes such as armed Palestinian demonstrators or starved African children to name but two of the most standard examples creates a flow of decontextualised and ahistorical interpretations of reported events. Although it may be debated weather such stereotypical (and negative) coverage of developing nations serves a basic psychological function to the population of developed regions to perpetuate, reinforce and justify the superiority of being a Westerner (Lange, 1984), such ahistorical and decontextualised visual reporting does serve an ideological function of obscuring Western involvement and responsibility in 'failures' of less developed countries. Additionally, it delimits the array of possible and legitimate actions and solutions to these 'failures' (e.g. images of starved children suggest humanitarian aid, not political action). In Delo, stereotypical imagery tends to be more prominently displayed than the non-stereotypical[5] and stereotypical or symbolic photographs are often used to illustrate

articles even if their connection to the textually reported event is casual or non existent.

As Griffin argues, news photographs 'may be more important for their role in priming pre-existing interpretative schema, linking viewer's memory to familiar news categories and scenarios than for their specific referential or descriptive function.' (2004: 384) The most memorable press photographs are those that evoke symbolic meanings and operate on the level of myth rather than on the level of description (Griffin, 1999). Frames are important not only for their influence on interpretation of events, on how people understand the world and thus form judgements, but also for their role in information retrieval. They are constitutive to the forming of *schemata*, commonsense models of the world that not only speed up the information retrieval process but also serve as pool of data from which missing information is supplemented. As familiar visuals and stylized picture scenarios in news reporting make it easy for the viewers to comprehend the message and relate it to similar information previously stored in memory, it is not surprising that 'most visuals provide comparatively little new information about political world' (Graber, 1990: 139).

International news coverage and the role of indigenous gatekeepers

While the above discussion established Delo's shift to negative treatment of news from developing world and outlined its principal facets (reduced amount of reporting, emphasis of negative news, different style of presentation), it does not explain the very shift of Delo's international news reporting. Or if I put it in Williams' terms, to what social structure does this rationalisation correspond to? In order to answer this question, the results from the previous sections will be evaluated against theoretical predispositions of the three different approaches to the studies of international news reporting and assessed against the data gathered through semi-structured interviews with two former Delo's correspondents from Africa and a long-term chief editor of the newspaper.

Foreign policy and propaganda perspective

One of the possible avenues of exploration is to question the link between media policy and government foreign policy. At first sight, Delo's shift toward diminished and negative coverage of Third World countries does correspond to the shift of official foreign policy. After Slovenia gained independence from Yugoslavia, country's primary foreign policy objective became joining European Union. Like other countries of Central Europe, Slovenia considered itself to have always been a part of (Western) European cultural space to which it would now naturally return by means of 'redemption through capitalism, democracy, civil society, privatisation and the like.' (Kideckel, 1996: 30). Due to the ongoing conflicts in the region (wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina), Slovenia's

'return to Europe' became seen as dependent on the success of country's distancing from what again became perceived as 'the birth place of tribal consciousness and fanatical hatred, of eastern backwardness and Byzantine corruption, primitive passions and gripping mythical stories.' (Debeljak, 2001: 212). Consequently, Slovenia underwent a process of internal and external 'de-Balkanisation', of suppression and rejection of its connections with former Yugoslavia and the region. Disregard for the legacy of Non-Aligned movement and neglect of political capital former Yugoslav countries still had in the developing world was part and parcel of Slovenia's rejection of its recent Balkan and socialist past. Right after Slovenia gained independence in June 1991, the number of news items on developing countries, especially Africa, significantly reduced although Delo's correspondent was still stationed in the region.

But can Delo's shift in news reporting really be directly tied to changed focus of national foreign policy, to accommodating the interests of corporate and political elites as for example the propaganda model (Herman and Chomsky, 1988) would have us believe? Slovene case seems not to lend enough support to this claim.[6] Firstly, Slovenia is a small country whose political and economic footprint in global international affairs is negligible. Consequently, political actors focus their efforts predominantly on national (and regional) arena which makes pressure from 'filters' concentrated on domestic rather than international news reporting. According to interviews with Delo's former chief editor and foreign correspondents from Africa, reporting of international news has been a sort of safe-heaven from ideological and political pressures, both in socialist Yugoslavia and independent Slovenia. Even during the Yugoslav period, international news reporting was not regime-stimulated. Delo's decision to open permanent correspondent post in Africa was not politically initiated but derived from the editorial concern to provide unmediated, Slovene interpretation of the unfolding events in the region that were seen to have direct bearing on international politics in general. While Yugoslavia's engagement in Non-Aligned movement certainly made the opening of the station and work of correspondents easier, it was not directly correlated to Yugoslavia's politics within the Non-Aligned movement, which is partly evident in the very selection of location of the post in Nairobi (at the time, Kenya was by far the most Western-oriented country in the region). Interviewed former correspondents claimed that they had never encountered direct censorship and interference into their reporting from the region. In the words of one informant: 'We had learned how to properly phrase critical reporting in the way that it would retain the critical note and I never had any interference with my work during socialist period.'

As far as Slovenia's 'nationalising nationalism' (Brubaker, 1996) of 1990s was a project in which dominant state institutions actively participated in, Delo's covering of developing countries could be seen as a case where 'mainstream media, as elite institutions, commonly frame news and allow debate only within the

parameters of elite perspectives' (Herman, 2000). However apart from this general climate of disinterest in developing countries that is not exclusive position of Slovene foreign policy but can be seen primarily as a direct consequence of the end of Cold War and consequent expansion of global neo-liberal capitalism, Delo's relations to Slovenia's official foreign policy and policymakers was fairly critical and at times openly antagonistic (e.g. critique of servility of Slovene foreign policy to United States during preparations for invasion of Iraq, questioning of Slovene membership in NATO, siding with former president Drnovsek's initiative for Darfur to which the government and ministry of foreign affairs opposed to, questioning of Slovene policy toward Croatia etc.). At times antagonisms due to media critique would escalate to the point that one Minister of Foreign Affairs refused to give any statements, comments or interviews to Delo's journalists and launched a smear campaign against the newspaper. Another telling example of occasional antagonistic relations of Slovene official foreign policy and the media in general came at a recent press conference where Minister of Foreign Affairs made an open appeal to journalists to practice unbalanced reporting, urging the journalists to be more openly jingoistic and supportive of Slovenia's policy regarding the border disputes with Croatia.

Dependency/news flow perspective

In introduction I have outlined two other approaches to the analysis of international news reporting, both of which are related to professional standards and practices. One of them is the news flow/dependency paradigm that has already been addressed above. As was to a certain extent already evident from the analysis of Delo's textual and visual coverage of international news, dependency paradigm can not offer an all-embracing explanation of changes in Delo's news reporting. While it accounts for the decreased emphasis on certain regions and the type of reported news (sporadic coverage of negative events), it can not explain Delo's mode of visual representation of developing countries. There is no doubt that the major Western press agencies decisively structure the scope and content of international news diet and it is precisely for this reason that media outlets are willing to invest into their own network of foreign correspondents. My interviewers were well aware of the limitations to the content of news when reporting on certain region depended explicitly on Western press agencies. As one of the former Delo's foreign correspondents put it: 'Our coverage of Africa and Latin America is now indeed confined to sporadic reporting when major events occur, which means predominantly negative news. But what we then try to do is to offer as much background information as we can to contextualise the events for our readers.' Interviewers also saw no viable alternatives to major Western press agencies: national news agencies from developing countries or smaller, independent press agencies that offer alternative news were not considered an option either in logistic or financial terms. Lack of finance and diminishing budgets for news reporting were stated as the primary reasons for dependency on

big press agencies, accompanied by presumed lack of public interest in the news from the developing regions of the globe. However a word of caution is needed when addressing agency news coverage. Several studies (e.g. Kirat and Weaver, 1985) have shown that the news agencies supply a far broader news diet than the one that reaches readers on pages of their newspapers as well as that the same news stories are often 'localised' by national media (Gurevitch, Levy and Roeh, 1991; Clausen, 2004). While this finding is valid for textual as well as visual coverage, I would argue that it has a larger bearing on the use of visuals. Case studies of reporting particular events (e.g. Fahmy, 2004 on war and Afghan women) show that agencies' offerings of wire photographs portray a far more complex version of events than the one that is reflected in the published images.

This is a crucial point to consider when interpreting Delo's symbolic uses of photographs in depicting events from developing countries as it brings to the fore the decisive role indigenous or local gatekeepers play in the final selection of news. A recent Slovene example seems to confirm this argument. A comparative study of photographic coverage of US invasion of Iraq in two Slovene daily newspapers indicated that visual coverage is more dependent on editorial decisions of indigenous gatekeepers than on dependency on news sources. Delo, which featured photographs from four agencies (AP, AFP, EPA, Reuters) and its staff correspondent framed the conflict in the Orientalist discourse of civilised 'West' vs. barbarian 'Other' and focused on symbolic dimension of the conflict (Tomanić Trivundža 2004), while Večer which based its coverage on a single Western source (AP), produced a distinctively non-symbolic, more neutral and sympathetic war coverage that prominently visualised the Iraqi side (Tomanić Trivundža 2005). Due to insufficient standards on how to use an image in news (Zelizer, 2004), editorial selection of photographs is often highly personal (Bissell, 2000) and reflects organisational routines and practices as well as cultural values and prejudices steaming from collective identities (professional, national etc.). While information dependency aspect does provide important insight into the nature of international news reporting, one should not underestimate the agency of local gatekeepers.

Professional values

The question of cultural context brings us to the third approach to analysis of international news reporting. Ever since Galtung and Ruge (1965) proposed that economic, social, political and geographic characteristics of a given nation determines both the amount and type of its news coverage, researchers have struggled to pin down the decisive factor(s) that influence the selection process. The main problem researchers were facing was that importance of individual factors tended to somewhat vary among different countries, attributing greater significance to either elitness of nations, economic relations, proximity or size of a country, ideology, foreign policy and presence of news agency reporters of stringers. Among these, economy appears to be the most universal and decisive

factor (Wu, 2003, 2007; Chang, 1998; Pietiläinen, 2006) that influences the selection of news. When asked about the shift in news reporting on developing countries, Delo's former editor and correspondent claimed it was first of all, 'a result of changed objective circumstances' as 'with the end of the Cold war, Africa as a region lost its political importance and consequently fell out of news spotlight.' The change of Delo's focus was, according to him, simply the result of 'following trends in world politics' and world media: 'Nobody reports much on Africa these days, not even Le Monde, that's the way things are nowadays.' One of the consequences of Delo's trend following was closing of its African bureau in 1991 in order to enable funding of a new post in the Middle East. Second criterion for determining news focus that interviewers referred to was the notion of 'importance' or 'impact' which evokes Gans' criteria of 'impact on the nation and national interest' (1979/2005: 148). By this, interviewers claimed that news focus was guided by abstract, elusive and all encompassing estimation of actual (or potential) political or economic effects, benefits, and interests Slovenia would have in a particular country or region. Thus regions that did not appear central to Slovene political or economic projects, such as Latin America, Africa and developing countries of Asia simply withered into oblivion. In a slight twist of argument, the third criterion of determining news focus was the availability of financial resources. Contradicting the rationalisation of preceding criteria, the interviewees asserted that the newspaper would strive to provide more complete coverage of world regions if it had more financial resources. In another reversal of the argument, interviewees resorted to argument of serving the interests of readers. In their words, the post independence shift of news focus was merely reflecting what was found to be interesting or of importance to readers. However when asked if they have done any surveys with their readers about the content of international news reporting and their interests, answers were negative. As Sonwalkar (2004: 208) eloquently points out, news are essentially about 'us' as a community and 'even though the contours and constituents of 'us' usually remain amorphous, journalists always have a clear conception of what will interest 'us'.'

The limitations and explanatory power of national interest

I would like to briefly expand on this elusive and esoteric concept of the 'impact on the nation and national interest', which, to paraphrase V.O. Key's (1961) comment on public opinion, is like trying to come to grips with Holy Ghost. Research into international news reporting has increasingly been focusing on the prominence of national frames of reference in selection of international news, drawing on the notion that media in general and newspapers in particular are by their very act of communication involved in the process of construction and perpetuation of national identities. Thus for example Yang (2003) claims that in the process of producing international news, journalists select, prioritise and structure the narrative flow of events by filtering it through the national interest while Nossek (2004) goes even further and suggests that national frame exists side

by side with professional frame of journalistic reporting and that the nature, location and context of a given event determine which of the two criteria for news selection will be employed. Like Gans' 'impact on the nation', national interest is not a clear cut idea but an abstract, somewhat fuzzy, dynamic and elusive concept of common good that transcends particularistic interests of political actors and consists of 'a set of shared priorities regarding [nation's] relation with the rest of the world'. (Nye in Yang 2003: 233) As such, national interest appears to be a derivate of national identity, defined mainly through its public articulation by elite social actors and institutions. Regardless of their particular definitions and forms, one of the basic characteristics of nation-based frames for selection of news is that the criteria they impose are not easily recognisable but operate more or less on the level of common sense. Both media and public are part of a same cultural system and thus share certain cultural frames which tend to be internalised and naturalised to the point to common sense knowledge. As Sonwalkar put it: 'Journalists are invariably drawn from the 'national mainstream' and circularly cater to this section of society and its value system. Thus, events and issues that do not fall within the paradigm of interest to this section are unlikely to be considered by journalists as unworthy.' (2004: 208)

Individuals, organizations and professional routines thus can not escape the fact that they are tied to a broader social system which remains primarily embedded in the context of nation state and mechanisms of identification with *imagined community* of a nation. This assertion is particularly relevant in countries which are still immersed in the process of defining and securing the dominant ideas of nation that Brubaker (1996) defined as nationalising nationalisms. Taking into account Carey's (1988) emphasis on ritual function of news reporting in generating and maintaining a community of citizens and Anderson's (1983/1991) explicit linking of such communities to nation (cf. Tarde, 1898/1969), the importance of news media lies not simply in the very content of the information they provide but in their 'daily reaffirming of community ties' (Nerone and Barnhurst, 2003: 112) and demarcating its boundaries. Just as media through their publics evoke nations as imagined communities, international news construct *imagined geographies* (Said, 1978) of these nations. As shifts in Delo's reporting clearly indicate, proximity as one of the key factors of news selection is not so much about 'real' as it is about imagined geography. Swift and nearly complete disappearance of news stories from places like Colombo, Bogotá, Havana, Freetown, Salisbury, Addis Abeba, Bangkok, New Delhi or Bandung from the pages of Delo further testifies on fluidity of such social constructs and on the ease with which these imagined ties can be dismissed in institutionalised contexts.

Most people are still dependent on major mainstream (national) media outlets for information about international affairs and the potential of traditional mainstream media to establish and circulate particular news frames as schemes of

interpretation is especially strong. Undeniably, the image of a country or nation in media of another country depends on the news diet provided through major Western news agencies, however Delo's reporting, particularly in the case of photographic coverage, reveals the important lever of power held by 'indigenous' gatekeepers. It points to a more intricate interplay of news selection factors than the propaganda, news flow/dependency or professionalism paradigms seem to point to. As Roach argues, cultural imperialism is 'never simply external force laid over existing social relations' (1990: 278) but a web of complex relations within which 'indigenous' practices and appropriations are a force of major influence. As the interviews suggest, news selection and framing is based for the large part on common sense judgments of journalists and editors (evaluated against elusive, commonsense concepts such as national interest, reader's interest or international journalistic community). Delo's remarkable co-orientation of international news reporting with general orientation of Slovene foreign policy is not a result of direct institutional influence but results from acting within the frame of commonsense notions and senses of belonging to particular professional, national and cultural imagined communities. This also accounts for the strong presence of culture-based stereotypes and consequent visualisation of the civilisation divide between us and them that define the mode of appropriate and legitimate (visual) discourse for countries within certain *imagined geography*. From the point of the audience and their reliance on the dominant mass media for making sense of international affairs, the fundamental concern that arises from the continuous use of evaluative, (stereo)typical imagery may not be so much the nature of these stereotypes as their consistent and unchallenged flow that conceals their specific socio-historical construction.

Notes

[1] For critical position of structural dominance see e.g. Osolnik (1978), Boyd Barrett (1980) and Mowlana (1986), for apologetic Stevenson (1984), Skurnik (1981) and Okigbo (1985).

[2] The material was coded by the author and one independent coder was used to determine reliability of coding on 20 percent sample (Scott's pi was 0,9 or higher on all coded categories).

[3] Often, they are also the last information a reader processes since photographs persistently attract the eye even after the act of reading textual article has finished.

[4] The genre of war photography is illustrative of this point: while it is generally regarded as the hallmark of press photography, the most memorable war photographs are those that evoke symbolic meanings and operate on the level of myth rather than on the level of description (Griffin, 1999, cf. Tomanić Trivundža, 2004).

[5] Thus for example in one case a photograph of Africans as passive victims of irrational violence (starved Sudan children in refugee camp) was published more than four times larger than the photograph depicting the same Africans as active subjects (Sudanese women demonstrating against the ongoing violence).

[6] I should however emphasise that Delo's case is not intended as a test or rebuttal of propaganda model; it is evoked simply to draw attention to certain contradictions and specificies of the case under investigation.

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