The Violence of Others: 'Eastern' and 'Western' Press Discourses

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Abstract: *This article investigates distinctions in press discourse about violence. It compares 'The Economist' and 'Heti Világgazdaság' (HVG), a Hungarian publication very similar to The Economist. The investigation focuses on the discourses of violence in the coverage of the two publications. To avoid discourses where either publication would be talking about its own milieu, the analysis involves only articles about the Middle East and Africa in January 2008. The method of analysis involves Atlas.ti, a discourse analysis software.*

The findings reveal that The Economist has a professional discourse focused on the politics of Africa and the Middle East, while it also emphasizes that these regions are places of violence and inferiorizes them. HVG has a more respectful construal of Africa and the Middle East and neither inferiorizes nor Others those regions in ways that would be problematic. At the same time, HVG reifies 'the West' in ways that raise questions about its concept of the self. The conclusion is that it is not the journal with the clearer sense of self and clearer professionalism (The Economist) that construes Africa and the Middle East in more just ways, but the journal with the more hesitant and uncertain discourse (HVG).

Keywords: *discourse, violence, press, inferiorization, othering*

Introduction: Dangers and Diagnoses of Discourse

I assume that press discourses are Othering and Orientalist. As Jones has pointed out, summarizing the findings of Paul and Elder: "all major media and press in all countries of the world present events in terms that presuppose or imply the correctness of the ideology … dominant in that country" (Jones 2005: 153). Whether in recent years' sensationalist coverage of Andrea Yates (Barnett 2005) or in the long-ago coverage of political violence in Mexico in 1913 (Hidalgo 2007) or in the coverage of Kosovo (Kozol 2004), press discourses have consistently been shown to actively support the dominant order in every society at every point in time. The dominant order may show slight differences across space and time, but it always maintains a strict binary structure (us vs. them, western vs. non-western, white vs. non-white, sane vs. mentally ill, democratic vs. undemocratic). The

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binary structure necessarily entails Othering, with all its attending inferioriza-tions and injustices.

Press discourses are not unique in their support of the dominant order. I under-stand that all institutionalized elite discourses are that way. This comes from the very nature of discourse, because it is always intimately tied to power and domina

Discourse is closes associated with ideology and the reproduction of social hi-erarchies, and its analysis provides a way to examine ideologies as expressed in written, spoken and visual texts. Discourse is not simply a linguistic practice; it refers to and constructs knowledge about a particular topic. (Meyers 2004:100)

Discourse is the connective tissue between each of power, knowledge, language and dominance.

What interests me in this project is whether there are regional and cultural differ-ences in the ways in which press discourses fulfill those functions. This project ties into the larger body of work that investigates whether there is a cultural or regional specificity to what we are still likely to call post-communism. I examine examples of press discourse from a post-communist location along with examples of press discourses from a non-communist location in search of regional and cultural spe-cificities in Othering and Orientalism.

The commitments and value judgments that bring me to this position and as a consequence to this project, are rooted in my ideas of justice. I believe that it is globally unjust to have Othering and Orientalism in elite and/or consequential discourses. I also believe that in order to combat that injustice, its internal dynam-ics need to be understood and studied. Moreover, I believe that all unjust things are not created equal: different degrees (or various levels of harshness/violence) of Othering and Orientalism correspond to various degrees of offense against justice.[2]

The diagnostic project that I undertake here is multi-layered: I am interested in the processes of injustice that various press discourses display or reveal, and I am also interested in how those processes fit into the relationships among regions where those discourses are produced. Simply put, I want to find out whether, given a prevalent dominant dynamic of considering some regions more enlightened and just, the press discourses of those regions indicate any justification for that dyna-mic.[3] The project at hand here may be considered a step or phase in that inquiry. It also responds to the call, form the early 1990s, to be especially mindful of

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[2]   Even if the concept of justice is nebulous, it will certainly not contain, accommodate or license
        Othering, Orientalism, inferiorization or any other discursively violent practice.
[3]   Significant progress in documenting the global ideological geography of value judgments has
        especially been made by Larry Wolff and Attila Melegh.

language and meaning when researching what we persist in calling post-communism (Holc 1993). The phenomenon and situation of post-communism makes this focus especially relevant, even though considerations of discursive injustice have been a worldwide concern. One particular example is the globally Western and globally Northern perspective that has been shown to be detrimental in the Pacific – a clear case of how relatively theoretical concerns with global injustice in Othering translate into diagnosing very practical foreign policy problems (Robie 2008). The link between discourses, their understanding and 'uptake', on the one hand, and, on the other, the world of policy decisions has also been referenced by Kozol in her study of Kosovo referenced earlier (Kozol 2004). There are poignantly practical implications in discourse analysis.

Empirical Materials and Where to Diagnose Discourse

My current project involves comparing the discourses of Africa and the Middle East in two publications: The Economist and Heti Világgazdaság (HVG). The latter is a Hungarian publication that seems very similar to The Economist in terms of frequency of publication, type of content and even physical layout. My inquiry includes all articles about Africa and the Middle East in January 2008 in both publications.

The choice of regions and the choice of the time frame deserve justification. The choices were constrained by the time during which I conducted the initial data gathering for the project and by concerns about manageability. I decided to analyze one month to make sure I did not end up with a random snapshot or an overly unruly stream of data. I chose Africa and the Middle East as the regions of analysis because I wanted to focus on the discursive construction of regions other than the one(s) where the journals were produced, to maximize the opportunity to study Othering. The choice of regions was also motivated by my interest in the discourses of violence: discourse is often most revealing around the margins and violence is a good case of revelations around the margins. The marginalized are central to social science analysis precisely because they define boundaries (Meyers 2004). The regions of the Middle East and Africa, sadly, offer large numbers of incidents at the violent margins of their socio-political structures.

These parameters gave me two very comparable bodies of discourse. Each journal had four issues in January 2008, with similar numbers of articles.

	The Economist	HVG
issues	4	4
articles	15	19

There was a certain degree of overlap in contents: some events (e.g. President Bush's tour of the Middle East) were covered in both journals, while some were only mentioned in one of them (only HVG discussed the French citizens who were accused of child abduction).

Thus the two discourses are safely considered similar enough for comparison and yet not totally identical in their contents. The structural similarities of the journals, combined with the differences in their regions of production, make for a promising inquiry.

Note on the Methodology: How to Diagnose Discourse

To arrive at the most meaningful findings possible, I used a hybrid methodology. Some elements of it are reminiscent of content analysis (I use descriptive counts and percentages) while others rely on a philosophy quite foreign to content analysis (I use emergent categories of analysis). My conclusions, just like the normative commitments outlined at the beginning, place me in the camp of those who consider politics and all other aspects of social coexistence to be discursive in nature. This position has its philosophical origins in Wittgenstein's later work (Wittgenstein 1968, Wittgenstein 1972) and finds cognate approaches in works that understand discourse as a specific way of being in the world (Schwandt 2000).

Given this position, my empirical methodology's goal is to work on the discourse's own terms by immersing myself in the texts I analyze. My purpose is to create a well-documented hermeneutic rather than a definite, final, authoritative account. I agree with the position that such an account is in fact impossible in the case of media texts (Deacon et al. 1999). This is mainly due to the nature of mediate texts in general and the contents of newspapers in particular. Far from providing anything that would approximate objectivity, however defined, journalism records and communicates "facts, ideas and beliefs" (Barnett 2005:13).

The hybridity of the methodology comes from the fact that while I rely on emergent categories of analysis in a way that practitioners of grounded theory find congenial (Charmaz 2000), I also rely on very specific source texts, use a computer software and am ready to say that elements that occur in the highest percentage of cases, are the strongest in the discourse. This mixture of positivistic descriptive statistics and social constructivist language philosophy results from the nature of the endeavor: Investigating meaning is indeed like solving a riddle (Alasuutari 1996). In the course of trying to solve the riddles presented here, I used whatever tools appeared promising and I was more than happy to be a methodological poacher.

The actual analytical process started by loading all of the articles into Atlas.ti, a discourse analysis software. Once the articles were loaded into the software, I repeatedly read the ones from The Economist to identify regularly occurring patterns

of meaning. The phase of repeated readings yielded codes because the patterns of meaning were used as codes. These were emergent categories of analysis that did not exist prior to coding. This process gave me 21 codes. In the next phase, I used this code list to code the articles from HVG.[4] The analysis of the Hungarian articles yielded two additional codes that were not present in The Economist. In the spirit of keeping the hermeneutic well-documented, Appendix 1 contains the full code list, along with the detailed descriptions of the codes as used within Atlas during the coding process.

Whereas the codes themselves did not exist prior to the process of coding, there were two considerations that informed my multiple iterative readings. In a way, these were my two biases that constrained how codes would emerge, or, to put it bluntly, I knew I was looking for two types of things. I knew I was looking for mentions of violence and I knew I was looking for signs of the distinction I have come to refer to as 'self-region vs. other-region'. The former was a consideration of my subject matter; the latter, and attempt to capture the differences in the journals' portrayals of the regions they come from as opposed to the regions of Africa and the Middle East.

Findings: The Difference

Rather than present the findings form one journal and then the next, I prefer to provide an overview of the findings from both side by side. Table 1 summarizes the findings both from The Economist and HVG. The codes are identical except for the fact that only HVG has the 'Hungary' and the 'self-region perpetrator' codes. The first of those occurs because HVG is produced in Hungary and so the country is a frame of reference, the second because HVG reported on the French citizens who were charged with child abduction in Chad, while The Economist did not. The numbers of occurrences for each code are calculated as percentages of the total occurrences in each journal (1094 for The Economist and 696 for HVG).

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[4]   The HVG articles were loaded into Atlas.ti in their original Hungarian version. They were not translated for this study. I simply relied on my native speaker status to code Hungarian articles with English codes.

Table 1: Summary of findings

code name	Economist number of occurrences	Economist percent of total (1094)	HVG number of occurrences	HVG percent of total (696)
across-region co-op	5	0.46	5	0.72
actual violence - other region	84	7.68	41	5.89
difference in self-region	11	1.01	10	1.44
difference in other region	58	5.3	61	8.76
EU	8	0.73	2	0.29
geography	185	16.91	135	19.4
help to other region	13	1.19	12	1.72
Hungary	0	0	3	0.43
irony	50	4.57	20	2.87
nuke	2	0.18	1	0.14
other region - self-region political differences	33	3.02	17	2.44
peace efforts	13	1.19	7	1.006
person: other region	203	18.56	88	12.64
person: self-region	42	3.84	36	5.17
politics - other region	218	19.93	118	16.95
possible violence	31	2.83	9	1.29
religion	53	4.84	50	7.18
self-region perpetrator	0	0	5	0.72
the West	6	0.55	9	1.29
UN	5	0.46	1	0.14
uncertainty	35	3.2	29	4.17
US politics	35	3.2	35	5.03
western failure	4	0.37	2	0.29

It is useful to distill from these numbers the trends that are stronger in one journal or the other. On the basis of higher percentages for codes, HVG and The Economist have discourses with different emphases. These differences get at the core of the

differences in how these two journals construe Africa and the Middle East, the violence in those regions and the relationships between these regions and the ones where the journals are produced. These differences are reviewed next.

Codes with higher percentages in HVG:
- across-region co-op
- difference in self-region
- difference in other region
- geography
- help to other region
- person: self-region
- religion
- the West
- uncertainty
- US politics

These codes reveal discursive strategies focused on differences (both in the self-region of eastern Europe and in the other-region of Africa and the Middle East). Acknowledging and respecting these differences means that the conceptualizations of Africa and the Middle East in HVG are not monolithic and therefore not Othering. Within-region differences make this a discourse of respect.

At the same time, HVG also had a discursive strategy that promotes the most monolithic conceptualization of the entire corpus: mentions of 'the West' as one monolithic and mythical entity, irrespective of actual lived differences, are significantly more prevalent here than in The Economist. The way 'the West' is used in HVG, is related to large-scale patterns of inferiorization and self-inferiorization in relation to eastern Europe (Böröcz – Kovács 2001, Engel di Mauro 2006, Kovács – Leipnik 2008). The discourse of respect for diversity does not cover the very region where HVG is produced.

The tension between these two discursive strategies joins the tension between idealism and hierarchy to complete a picture of hesitation and uncertainty in the HVG discourse. The codes of across-region cooperation and help to other-region contribute the idealism – hierarchy tension. Cooperation across regions is a hopeful, optimistic or idealistic construal, one that navigates as far away from realpolitik as possible. Nonetheless, helping the regions in question taps into the problematic dynamic of assistance: helping in this context means that the strong are reaching out to the weak and vulnerable, which implies the exact same

hierarchy that makes Othering possible. Thus, the overall diagnosis of the HVG discourse is one of uncertainty. This will be contrasted to the strategies in The Economist's discourse.

Codes with higher percentages in The Economist
- actual violence – other region
- EU
- irony
- nuke
- other region – self-region political differences
- peace efforts
- person: other region
- politics – other region
- possible violence
- UN
- western failure

The over-arching discursive strategy in The Economist is one of specificity: this publication is higher on the codes for violence (both actual and potential) in the regions of Africa and the Middle East, for politics in those regions, and for actual persons in those regions. This strategy of specificity is in keeping with what may be a professional ethos and may well be what could be expected in a journal like this.

However, the professional-specific discursive strategy in The Economist is in tension with the treatment of differences. While HVG focused on differences **within** the regions of Africa and the Middle East (and ignored the ones within 'the West', which most likely includes Europe), The Economist places more emphasis on political differences between the self-region and the regions of Africa and the Middle East. A valid point could be made that if there were no obvious political differences among these regions, studies like this one would be impossible. The point, however, is that by focusing on these differences more than HVG does, The Economist is revealed as the journal (more) intent on inferiorizing Africa and the Middle East. That is a noteworthy finding.

To integrate the insights about the respective discursive strategies of the two publications, the following may be said: The Economist highlights differences of interest and strategy between the regions of interest and the journal-producing region whereas HVG highlights cooperation among them. HVG also is more likely

than The Economist to emphasize that neither the journal-producing region nor the regions of interest are monolithic and that there are distinctions and differences among countries in all regions. On the basis of these codes and these trends, HVG seems to have a more empathic, more respectful discourse about Africa and the Middle East. However, it is The Economist that focuses more on the actual political detail of the regions of interest: The Economist has higher percentages of occurrences about the politics and the persons in Africa and the Middle East than HVG. While HVG displays cultural sensitivity, The Economist reports on political processes.

While placing more emphasis on political processes than HVG does, The Economist also focuses on violence in Africa and the Middle East more than HVG. It has higher percentages for codes on actual as well as potential violence. It also has higher incidences of codes on nuclear arms as well as peace efforts. These codes and trends in the discourse support the claim that The Economist is more intent than HVG on construing Africa and the Middle East as inferior.

Related to the issue of inferiorization is the discursive strategy of reification – understood here as the tendency to mask distinctions and differences in order to create a mythically monolithic conceptualization. Given the commitments outlined at the beginning of this article, reification and justice are inversely proportionate. However, these two journals do not present a neat distribution where one is high on reification and the other one low. It is more true that these two publications present different issues of reification. Because of its emphasis on differences both in the self-region and the other-region, the HVG discourse cannot be said to reify these regions. However, HVG relies more heavily on the use of 'the West' than The Economist does, and 'the West' is certainly a staple of reification. Its focus is not on Africa and the Middle East. Its relationship to the region that produces HVG, is unclear. The discourse in HVG focuses on persons from the globally northern and globally western regions – if focuses on US politics and persons from the self-region more than The Economist does. The explanation for that may be that the 'self-ness' of the self-region is not really assumed and that being a Hungarian journal comes with a discourse of uncertainty about where the self is geopolitically. 'The West' is a significant element of the HVG discourse because it is a leitmotif in Hungarian discourse in general (Kovács – Leipnik 2008), with more than a hint of longing for inclusion in it. At the same time, while HVG is riddled with all this uncertainty about its own belonging, The Economist is the publication whose discourse is higher on irony. It would appear that writing/publishing/discoursing from a position of security, from a region whose self-ness is unquestioned, irony and sarcasm become affordable. However, certainty about self-ness, while it allows for stylistic richness that encompasses irony, in no way safeguards against reification

and inferiorization. The Economist is higher than HVG on both of those vis-à-vis the regions of Africa and the Middle East.

Conclusions: The Difference This Makes

This inquiry reveals how the regions of Africa and the Middle East are conceptualized in The Economist and in HVG, a structurally similar publication from Hungary, in early 2008. The goal is to identify the meanings these regions carry and to show those meanings are different based on the regions where the journals are produced. The differences between the discourses in the two journals contribute to a better understanding of globally significant processes of Othering. They also shed some light on whether so-called post-communist discourses are characteristically different from non-communist ones.

This study reveals that it is not globally true that the regions of Africa and the Middle East are first and foremost understood as places of violence: The Economist has slightly more focus on actual violence than HVG, and significantly more focus on potential violence than HVG. Further work will have to uncover how prevalent violence is in the understanding of these regions in other publications and to corroborate or challenge patterns that co-vary with the regions where journals are produced. On the basis of the comparison in this article, the discourse of The Economist, of non-communist pedigree, inferiorizes the regions of Africa and the Middle East, reifies them and construes them as places of violence. HVG, which hails from a background that is still identified as post-communist, has a discourse of respect and diversity vis-à-vis Africa and the Middle East. At the same time, the HVG discourse is uncertain about the geopolitical location of the self and engages in reifying 'the West'. The significance of these findings with regards to violence comes from the nature of political discourse. Because discourse is creative and because it **is** political reality,understanding where and how the conceptualizations in terms of violence are the lowest may be a step in the complicated process of decreasing violence.

The significance of the findings with regards to what may be considered the position of the self, is related to geopolitics. The region a publication comes from geopolitically, impacts how that publication portrays other regions. The Economist is not focused on the globally northern and globally western region that produces it, whereas HVG is caught between the understandings of Africa and the Middle East on the one hand, and, on the other, a strong focus on the global west/global north. The Economist presents a discourse focused on the regions of interest, while HVG presents a discourse that hesitates between focusing on the regions of interest and the global north/ global west. It is no accident that the code for 'the West' is more than twice as many per cent of the HVG discourse as it is of The Economist

discourse. In the context of the previously referenced literature on discourses from the eastern European region where HVG is produced, it is clear that there is a concern and uncertainty or tension about claiming that the global west/global north is the self. This may very well be a left-over of communism and/or post-communism. It may warrant the conclusion that where the self belongs, needs to be clarified before other regions can be reported on, understood and clad in meaning (because The Economist has a much clearer and more professional discourse about Africa and the Middle East than HVG). But is also serves as a reminder that clarity about the self may co-occur with inferiorization and that a hesitant, vacillating discourse may end up being globally more just towards the regions of Africa and the Middle East. To the extent that press discourses maintain a global binary and a global dynamic of Othering and inferiorization, The Economist participates in that dominant order more than HVG does. HVG has a less clear discourse but it also engages less than The Economist does in enforcing the global us-vs.-them binary.

There is nothing **essential** about the violence of the regions of the Middle East and Africa. They carry meanings of violence because they are Others and because we know violence, just as we know politics and war, in the paradigms that the press gives us (Kozol 2004). The violence of Others depends on the journals we read, and the ones with the clearest sense of self may not be of the most service.

Appendix 1

The following list contains the descriptions of all codes used, as defined within the Atlas.ti workspace (the definitions are copied from Atlas.ti without editing for content and only correcting for spelling):

Code: across-region-co-op

„references to cases where the regions of interest are cooperating with the globally dominant ones - in a sense, this is the opposite of the ‚other-region-self-region-political-differences' code – that one is about tension and disagreement, this one is about cooperation and working towards the same goals"

Code: actual violence-other region

„code for the mentions of armed violence in Africa or the Middle East"

Code: difference-in-self-region

„mentions of various countries in the region that produces the journal – pretty much mentions of countries in the self-regions other than the us (those go under us politics whatever the reason the us is mentioned) - this is to measure how much there is an idea that countries other than the US ‚matter' in the journal-producing regions"

Code: difference in other region

„this code is for the mention of differences and conflicts of interests among countries of Africa and the Middle East - covering both mentions of non-violent instances and violent conflict, this code covers the cases where the self-region compares specific countries in the other-region and thereby recognizes that Africa and the Middle East are not monoliths"

Code: EU

„all mentions of the European Union, regardless of what it is doing in the quote - especially useful as a contrast between Economist and HVG"

Code: geography

„code for the references to the geographical locations mentioned in the articles - the references have to be specific to geography - whether they are explanatory or ironic in function does not matter: as long as the reference is to specific locations in the regions of interest, it gets coded here"

Code: help to other-region

„code to cover all the instances of aid, assistance or any kind of help that the Middle Eastern and African regions receive"

Code: Hungary

„this is a code specific to HVG: it collects all mentions of Hungary or Hungarians - just to see if the country of origin for the journal appears specifically"

Code: irony

„this code contains all uses of irony, humor, sarcasm - the code is admittedly subjective: it contains those things I think are cases of humor or irony and as such may be more subjective than most codes - nonetheless, the use of irony and humor is expected to be an important indication and so it is its own code"

Code: nuke

„references to nuclear capacity, nuclear weapons or threat"

Code: other-region-self-region-political-differences

„differences in the policy and political agendas, preferences and interests between the journal producing regions and the regions described – also includes mentions of self-region disapproving of or criticizing other-region – mentions of Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are here also, since their role in these articles is to express the disapproval of the journal-producing regions (when there is

a supportive or congratulatory mention of one of those organizations, I will have to make a separate code for that)"

Code: peace efforts

„code for mentions of peace talks, peace negotiations or any attempts at making and maintaining peace in the regions on interest"

Code: person: other-region

„references to specific persons from the regions of interest (Africa and the Middle-East)"

Code: person: self-region

„this code is for the mentions of specific persons from the region where the journal is produced - in the case of The Economist, this will be taken to include western Europe and North America - in the case of HVG, this will include Hungary - this is also a code that is based on political significance, not necessarily national origin: Kofi Annan is a person from ‚self-region' because the reason he is mentioned in these articles is that he used to be UN Secretary General, ergo a participant in the politics of the self-region"

Code: politics-other region

„references to the politics of the regions of Africa and the Middle East – tensions, negotiations, anything that they do with one another diplomatically, that does not fit into any easy dichotomy of cooperation vs. violence (those two have their own codes) and also anything that is not as narrow or specific as peace talks"

Code: possible violence

„code for threats, possibilities and guesses about, violence (as opposed to actual violence) "

Code: religion

„any mention of religion (even in country names or names of organizations) goes here – the aim is to gauge how significant a presence religion is in the discourse on the Middle East and Africa - mentions of organizations that are religiously affiliated (e.g. Hamas) go here even though they do not contain religious terms in their names)"

Code: self-region-perpetrator

„this is a code that only exists in the HVG portion of the project and it refers to persons from the self-region alleged or charged as perpetrators (like the French aid workers who attempted to kidnap children from Chad) - the purpose is not the

decision of guilt or innocence but the measure of how prevalent this possibility even is"

Code: the West

„all mentions of ‚the West' as a region (geographical, metaphorical or otherwise) - this is in contradistinction to the differences among countries in the journal-producing regions - this will be very interesting in the HVG analysis because that journal may or may not consider itself as part of the West, however defined, whereas The Economist certainly does – other grammatical forms such as ‚Western countries' are also coded under this"

Code: UN

„all mentions of the UN, regardless of whether they are positive or negative, endorsing or critical - dump all of them here"

Code: uncertainty

„references to uncertain political and policy outcomes - regardless of what region initiated a certain action, if its outcome is presented as dubious, unknown or uncertain, it gets coded here -mentions of hope and hopeful guesses are also coded here because even though their emotional charge is different, they are not any more certain"

Code: US politics

„all mentions of politics and foreign policy goals of the US go here - the purpose is to see how ‚present' the US is in all of this discourse and to compare its relative presence and weight between the two journals"

Code: Western failure

„code for references to failures by the so-called ‚West' in the regions described - failure may be military or diplomatic or any other kind of failure - the understanding is that you fail at something you are trying to accomplish, so there is an underlying assumption that globally western and globally northern regions would be helping or trying to help, the Middle East and Africa"

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