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## **THE MILITARY, SECURITY SECTOR REFORM AND THE MEDIA: PUBLIC CONTROL AND/OR CONFIDENCE BUILDING**

*During times of universal deceit,  
telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act.*

George Orwell

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### **Military and the Media**

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## 1. Introductory remarks

The military-media relationship has been in the sphere of practical experiences rather than in the theoretical and public critical discourse in Macedonia. Some recent developments, however, shed better light on this issue as a focal one in several contexts, such as peacebuilding, security sector reform, democratisation, and integration with the Euro-Atlantic institutions. Prior to 2001 crisis the order of the mentioned contexts could have been different as well as the problems related to this issue. Nevertheless, the current debate in Macedonia should take into account the impact of two major events i.e. 2001 crisis and the post-Prague Summit agenda of the Macedonian government.

Understandably, neither the problems occurred in the last couple of years nor they can be resolved quickly. However, the very identification of the problem has its own value. Despite the belief that the Army of the Republic of Macedonia (ARM) and the other security structures are newly born institutions, only a decade old, in many ways they still bear the scars from the former (parent) society of SFR Yugoslavia. The situation in the context of media is also burdened with the so-called 'original sin' of politicised media system of Second Yugoslavia. Thus one can even argue that both the military and the media, to some extent still embrace metaphorically speaking the 'old guard' members. That is certainly just one dimension of a much wider problem.

In the communist times the Yugoslav People's Army (YPA) enjoyed privileged political and social status and, thus, was 'untouchable' for any public critics. The 'Slovenian spring' for the first time promoted idea of independent and vigilant civil society as a counter-balance to the dominant political state. Interestingly, the critics of the ideology and the authoritarian system began with public critiques of the YPA. The leading role in what the Army leadership saw as attacks against Yugoslavism and national security threat had the "Mladina" magazine. The calls for greater transparency in military matters, disclosing corruption scandals and arms trade with authoritarian regimes; conscious objection, etc. were basically with a democratic tune. Having coincided with the deep legitimacy crisis of the state and its armed forces, the public debate could have hardly 'democratise' the Yugoslav system. Actually it added to the demystification of many taboos in the society but also indirectly helped the ethno-nationalist agenda of the newly born republican pluralist forces. Unlike "Mladina" who targeted mostly with well-grounded criticism the other republican media quickly joined the chorus of the ethno-nationalist elites.

Along the crisis' escalation, the gradual particularisation of the territories in the Yugoslav federation produced also numerous media spaces. Alike the appearance of the (republican) multi-party system this phenomenon did not mean more intensive communication but fragmentation and building up walls of misunderstanding, fears and hatreds. In the words of some intellectuals, several decade-long 'hate silence' was replaced by 'hate speech'.<sup>1</sup> Equally, the five-decade long Yugoslav 'cease-fire' soon turned into an overt violent conflict. Bizarrely enough, democratisation gave momentum to ethno-nationalism

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<sup>1</sup> Zarko Puhovski, "The Silence of the Hatred" in Nena Skopljanac-Brunner et al, *The Media and War*, (Belgrade: Mediji, 1999).

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through a plain misuse of the democratic principles and creeds, including freedom of speech, information and media. Instead of making the citizens' voice heard through the free media, a kind of a 'popular revolution' or better populism occurred in the media field.<sup>2</sup> The media did not start the war, but seemed as if they fully supported it (with few honourable exceptions). They contributed the public life's emocionalisation thus marginalising the meaning of objective reporting. Even worse, from the very beginning it eliminated the need for the political power to be controlled. On the contrary, the media (as well as many intellectuals) supported the republican elites. The media-media 'war' preceded the YPA-republican (para)military conflict. A pretty good part of the media's assaults targeted at YPA mostly because of its being perceived as a symbol of Yugoslavism (apart from communism). At the same time YPA reacted harshly on the public criticism coming from certain republican media. It's 'defence' was that any attack on the Army is an attack on the values it was supposed to protect. Thus calls for transparency and public accountability were non-patriotic acts in some environments, while in others the opposite was true.

Second Yugoslavia's dissolution did not bring any shift of the discourse but rather a change of the national framework in which the problem was to be defined. In meantime given the impact and the horrendous consequences of the armed conflicts, however, the basic question of military-media relationship has exacerbated a lot. Not only that the state context changed but also the armed forces, the media and civil society had become contested concepts in the conflict-driven and/or post-conflict environments. Thus it appears insufficient to discuss the military-media relationship through the democratisation prism, because this very relationship has become an unavoidable component of the whole peacebuilding process.

Looking West is not always helpful as the Western military-media paradigm has also been going through profound reconsideration. In the so-called Western 'security community' it looks as if the armed forces are going through a process of (often simultaneous and controversial) internationalisation and privatisation of security. The mainstream media are influenced by powerful corporations and state/military elites, and more importantly the focus has shifted from the national debate over transparency and accountability of the armed forces regarding its own public towards more 'globalised' problems.

The Western militaries are not mainly occupied with their classical military missions but merely with 'military operations other than war', so-called 'peace enforcement/support operations', etc. In other words, they are doing their jobs on thousands miles away from home regions. This new situation from the media's perspective could be defined as 'reporting war when there is no war'.<sup>3</sup> It may still be seen as a problem concerning the respect for the democratic principles and values in the countries of origin of the both armed forces and the media, and there are not minor or easy problems.

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<sup>2</sup> See Djordje Pavicevic, "The Political Discourse: The Media and Communication" in Nena Skopljanac-Brunner et al, *The Media and War*, pp. 87-108.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Moskos and Thomas E. Ricks, *Reporting War When There is no War: The Media and the Military in Peace and Humanitarian Operations* (Chicago, IL: McCormick Tribune Foundation, 2000).

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However, of far more concern for the conflict-driven societies is the expanded military-media relationship. Understandably, in many cases on the side of the military one should also take into account the presence of the international military missions (with various mandates, certainly). The media side of the story, however, includes the international media and often their extraordinary influence on the national situation and the international image of the country's and the internal developments. Apart from that, the so-called CNN-effect has already be proved as an efficient catalyst for the Western 'we have to do something' interventionist policy in the Balkans.

## **2. The Military-Media Relationship in Democracy: Between the Myths and Reality**

The military-media relationship is a part of another, much wider and older, story i.e. of the paradigm of civil-military, or better society-military relationship. The story proved to be never-ending, or better - each epoch has defined it in a slightly different way. Since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the communism, however, the paradigm is extended to the degree to embrace all security (i.e. armed and uniformed) structures. Thus it is much more appropriate, but also fashionable, to speak about 'security sector reform' than about democratically shaped civil-military relationship. It did not take long since the so-called 'democracy-promotion' or donor community promoted the concept of the 'security sector reform' for the concept to become a buzzword. The definitions are numerous and with different scope (depending on the agenda of the donor community)<sup>4</sup>. However, what is undeniable is in the fact that democratic control (oversight) of the military is insufficient tool for securing democratic values and human rights. Despite being the oldest and most explored segment, the relationship between the politics, the military and the civil society still raises concerns and calls for deliberations and re-definitions.

Partly, each component of this equation is blended with myths and/or unrealistic expectations. For example, in modern times the military is still unavoidable institution, "necessitous evil" within every political system. It is still considered as an attribute of state sovereignty and a prerequisite for national survival. At first glance it seems that the relationship between the military and peace is very simple, especially in its "black&white" version. The "black" variant sees the military force as a threat to peace, of course, when it belongs to the enemy. The "white" interpretation is linked with splendid and patriotic approach: "the military protects peace, it is its guarantor", or more explicitly "the military is a defender of the homeland." However, in-depth analysis proves that this relationship has never been straightforward and simple. For instance, the military security is not a guarantee for better security and due to the 'security dilemma' effect it may mean less rather than more security.

The creation of the modern (or mass) army coincided with the process of nation-state building. Since then the military has been the "crown of the state sovereignty". There is still high degree of

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<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, the West sees the (former) East and some other parts of the world as the potential recipients of the 'security sector reform' assistance programmes, while losing out of sight the applicability of the same paradigm in their own societies. If it is true that political-military and society-military relationships are never-ending part of the theory of democracy, it seems a bit disdainful to make one's own an exception from the general process.

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identification of the military with the state. The national army symbolizes unity of the nation, and consequently represents the ultimate symbol of patriotism. More than two centuries one of the most important factors of a state's survival within the international arena has been consisted of its capability to mobilise and to put into function mass armed force, based on a compulsory military service and preparations of the populace for defence.

Since its creation, the military as an institution has been followed by several myths.<sup>5</sup> One of the most common is that it always serves interests of its own nation and citizens. In addition, there is also a false conception that armed forces have, by the definition, defensive character. It means that its military mission is legitimate from the perspective of international legal system. However, there is no need to go far away through the history to find a series of examples of military interventions in internal political affairs, either on behalf of the ruling political forces or on its own behalf. Even democratic governments feel uneasy in regard of their military establishment because the awareness that despite important military role in protecting the society, at the same time it might represent an inherent threat to the very democratic values it is supposed to protect.

Furthermore, peace does not mean just absence of repression and violence which executors are "external enemies" and their armed forces. Lack of the fundamental democratic postulates, and especially military's involvement in politics - are definitively incompatible with the very essence of the notion (positive) peace and a peaceful society. Accordingly, a consistent civilian supremacy over the military performed by legitimate and responsible power-holders represents *conditio sine qua non*. Despite unquestionable fact that peace and security are ultimate goal of every state, nevertheless, there is a widespread myth that everything which strengthens national security is moral and justified. For instance, sacrificing of economic welfare or individual freedom before national security sometimes can be immoral and unjust. Material resources of society, even in case when it is very prosperous, are limited. The military, led by its own functional imperative, trying to find appropriate response to any real or imagined threat, is very significant aspirant in regard to social resources. The core of the problem lies in this very fact. Maximising military security presupposes, more or less, sacrificing of other social values. The price that is to be paid sometimes affects values that cannot be evaluated through economic (material) parameters, such as individual freedom, democratic or peaceful character of state's policy, etc. Therefore, appropriate solutions for national security concerns have to be searched through the prism of the crucial questions: security for *whom* or *what*; against what *kind of threat*; and security by *what means* and at *what cost* (or who will pay the price)?

The military usually poses certain requests toward civil society, which peace it protects. These requests are directed toward economic and natural resources, in terms of material means and equipment, human potential, adequate organisation of the civilian infrastructure, as well as a range of other prerequisites that originate from the specific nature of societal preparations for eventual war.

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<sup>5</sup> Asbjorn Eide, "Militarisation with a Global Reach: A Challenge to Sovereignty, Security and the International Legal Order". In Eide, Asbjorn and Thee, Marek (eds.): *Problems of Contemporary Militarism*. (London: Croom Helm, 1980)

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Because of its ambiguous nature and the possibilities for be misused/abused the democratic oversight of the military has become an 'alpha and omega' of any democratic governance. The myths about the military, however, are closely related to the myths about democracy itself. Democracy is, has been and will be a contested concept. The 'democracy-promoters' often forget to remind the recipients about the imperfect nature of the Western democracy, and about the most crucial fact that both political and military power has to be under public scrutiny and accountability.

In the Clausewitzian 'trinity' (i.e. the State-Army-People triangle) has changed but has not lost its relevance with somewhat altered shapes of its angles.<sup>6</sup> The State is supposedly a "weberian" rational state, enjoying a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence within its border (Weber 1947; 1958: 78). It should thus not only possess the requisite administrative capacity to exercise actual control but also enjoy legitimacy (Fowler & Bunck, 1995). People/State relations should conform to the social contract which obliged the State to protect its citizens against each other and external foes (Hobbes 1968), to which were subsequently added demands for representative democracy (Locke 1978; Rousseau 1966). But Ole Weaver's concept of securitization shows the 'other side of the coin'. Namely 'security' can be viewed as a *speech act*. It means that "by saying 'security' a state-representative moves the particular case into a specific area; claiming a special right to use the means necessary to block this development".<sup>7</sup> Thus governmental agencies are 'securitizing agents' who has ability to move one problem from the political or social area into the security one and to claim special rights to deal with the 'security threat' because it concerns national security. Among other methods, the ruling elites usually use the services of the media, while the military appears often as the 'executor' of these special rights and methods.

Ideally, the role of the media in the story of democracy and democratic oversight of the armed forces is to be an intermediary between the civil society and the political state, particularly its security apparatus. In a democratic society, the media is expected to play an important role by serving as the critical information link among the elements of the 'trinity'.<sup>8</sup> Actually, a media dimension is involved in all three elements. The state/governments uses PR services, and sometimes owes or influences certain information agencies and news media; the military also 'speaks' through its PR offices/officers but also via specialised military magazines; and finally, the 'real independent media' are supposed to 'speak' on behalf of the civil society.

In a democracy the media is expected to provide objective information, enhance transparency between the political/military circles and the citizens, and secure public accountability of power-holders. The myth on the media goes even further allotting a sort of 'enlightenment and educational role' in regard to the wider public. The media is to embraces journalists, managers and the media owners, but also intellectuals, columnists, publicists and give voice to the citizens. Furthermore, it represents meeting and debating forum for everybody. In sum, in a democratic society the military may still raise liberal scepticism

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<sup>6</sup> See Bjorn Moller, "The Revolution in Military Affairs: Myth or Reality?", *COPRI Working Paper*, 15/2002.

<sup>7</sup> Ole Weaver, "Securitization and Desecuritization", *COPRI Working paper*, 3/1993, p.7.

<sup>8</sup> See Barry E. Venable, "The Army and the Military", *Military Review, Command & GS College*, January-February 2002, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

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but the media is surrounded with an aura of benevolence and probity. However, a reality-check would easily prove that behind the myths there is another picture. First of all, not all media deserve the same attributes as well as the military cannot be equally judged in all situations and in regard to all its missions.

The crucial problem for the media is how to keep independence and impartiality when informing and reporting about each 'corner' of the triangle, i.e. regardless who is in the focus – the state authorities, the military or the civil society. Getting closer to the political power endangers the media's ability to report objectively and critically. In other words, it would mean political patronage and financial tutelage, which would encumber freedom of speech and thought, but also diminish any possibility of realising public accountability. Even worse, getting too close to the military brass would turn media work into a pure (military) propaganda.

These relationships are of utmost importance in time of peace because of their direct impact on the democracy. But the increase of security threats, or quite explicitly – in wartime, make the relationships far more delicate. The politics-military-media partnership puts them all in a position of being 'securitizing agents' able to produce peace or incite war/conflict. In the name of patriotism, national unity, and protection of endangered national security interests, the media may be 'spokesperson' for the military and military-industrial complex, which would call for 'increased security' (for 'our nation') or 'humanitarian intervention' in the name of protection of human rights elsewhere.

Objectivity and keeping distance from the centres of power does not, however, mean a hostile and obstructive attitude. Or in other words, being 'too loyal' to the civil society does not mean impartiality or righteousness, as the civil society has its own dark side (mafia and criminal groups, insurgents and guerrilla, etc.). Especially, in a situation where there is porosity between the political sphere and the civil society, and people go back and forth, depending on the current circumstances – the media may be equally biased and politicised if advocating certain political interests. As already said, the media should open all possibilities for the citizens' voices to be heard and expressed but it also includes the danger the belligerent groups misuse the freedom of speech in a form of hate speech.

The military-media relationship is determined by the relationship between the political state and the civil society, although the 'military' (or militarism) can be sometimes found on both sides. The military is not necessarily a state institution: in conflict-driven societies there are various armed groups, which may even imitate state military organisation in terms of special uniforms and command system (in terms of equipment, training and weapons they may be even superior in some cases). The trend of 'outsourcing military expertise' (i.e. expansion of the so-called market for force and private military companies) is particularly evident in some Western countries. The private military companies, as any actor in the market, behaves and uses the commercial means of propaganda and competition. Interestingly, the para-militaries and guerrillas also have developed various mechanisms of using own media and thus influencing certain audiences. In other words, in addition to states and para-states, there are also militaries and para-militaries as well as official and alternative media.

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### 3. The Military-Media Relationship in Peace and/or War Times

The state-military-media relationships get different shapes and contents depending on various factors, but one of the most important ones is war/peace context. Interestingly, the invalidity of the thesis of the inherently peaceful character of the democracies ('democracies do not fight each other') raise the problem of war/conflict reporting and changed military-media relationship under such circumstances. The increasing number of 'military operations other than war', vaguely defined 'humanitarian interventions' (by military means), replacement of 'old' with 'new wars'<sup>9</sup>, reluctance of the conflict-driven societies to name the conflict – a conflict, all this makes the picture more complex than ever.

The peacetime agenda of the military-media relationship is relatively different from the wartime one, but in neither case the two situations are completely isolated and without impact on each other. In that sense, one may speak about the expectation this relationship to work in harmony with conflict (or better, violence) prevention – at home and internationally. The military even in a mature and peaceful democracy<sup>10</sup> has its own limits – it cannot achieve anything but negative peace. But being under democracy it may and should allow positive peace to be nurtured. The media is expected to have a more pro-active role in the sustainable peace-building, but can also contribute to the 'negative peace' at least in the civil society by eliminating the possibilities for 'hate speech' expansion within the civil society.

In peacetime, the military's highest priority is securing its public prestige and institutional legitimacy. Despite the fact that it is to a high degree determined by the legitimacy of the political power, there is still enough space in the democratic political life for the military to 'earn' high professional esteem and public support. The objective military reporting and understanding for the specific military's problems may very helpful, as the military leadership sees it. However, the media is usually not what the 'ideal picture of democracy' shows, and here the potential conflict raises. The noble and enlightening role of the media may be downplayed by various factors, such: closeness to various political and financial centres, media's ignorance of security/military related issues, media's urge to sell the newspapers and 'hunger' for scandals that sell the newspapers the best, etc.

The military's self-image is often very close to the image of the values it is supposed to protect. Thus no military on earth is happy by public criticism, which may be seen as unfair, incompetent and non-patriotic. The military believes in its uniqueness as an institution that holds high criteria and demands from its members, including the ultimate sacrifice of one's own safety. Least they can expect from the own society is respect and support. However, the sensitivity to public criticism goes so far that often understands even unwillingness to speak publicly about its own weaknesses, such as scandals, corruption affairs, professional blunders, abuse of human rights, discrimination, sexual harassment, etc.

The military is pretty closed institution, and Huntingtonian professionalism makes it usually very introvert i.e. very much concerned with its own affairs, while unconditionally respecting the political

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<sup>9</sup> Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Global Era*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> Johan Galtung, *The True Worlds: A Transnational Perspective*. (New York: The Free Press, 1991)

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decisions. However, the national systems in mature democracies differ in regard to the regulations of the right of the military professionals to speak in the public and to oppose political decisions. For example what is legal in the German armed forces, may be seen as a gross violation of the norms in another country.

The media in democracy have to obey their own 'functional and societal imperatives', which may differ from the functional and societal imperatives of the military, or may be perceived differently. For example, there is a false impression that the media are internally organised in a very democratic manner. However, the reality is that there is a hierarchical order and subordination, not to talk about external influences, pressures, blackmails – and self-censorship. The media's policy is not always free in terms of the issues coverage but dictated by the 'demands' of the public and the 'laws' of the merciless market. In other words, in order to be professional and successful on the market the media may downplay the democratic incentives.

The military and media may find very much in common, as well as a lot of things that put them on the opposite poles of the public life. The real test for the military-media relationship is the times when the military goes out of barracks into action. The public support is needed more than ever, while possibilities for making mistakes and blunders also increase. The military operations have never been so much exposed to the public through the media as in modern times. Particularly, it is believed that war reporting provides eyes and ears for the public that cannot be present on the battlefields.<sup>11</sup> This new customs make the military and the media more dependent on each other, especially on the terrain. The presence of media groups may be of great interest in terms of increasing public image of the military. But it adds new worries for the military commanders who now need to provide security for the reporters, to get more cautious about increased opportunities for disclosure of military secrets and moves, and also tense about the witnesses of eventual non-professionalism and blunders.

Alike the military, the journalists also belong to one of the most endangered professions. In the military/conflict zones in order to get better information, the journalist may decide to act as free lancers without any military protection. While doing so, there is always possibility to see the 'other side of the war' that has already got a public support. Actually the mainstream media (CNN, BBC, etc.) have more often been criticised for allying with the political/military leaderships than it was opposite. However, there are also examples when the military and media would take opposite standpoints in regard to judging the *ius in bello* and *ius ad bellum*. The probably best known example is Vietnam War, which is still embedded in the memory of the US Armed Forces in a form of a belief that 'the media lost the war by its negative reporting'. The legacy of the so-called "post-Vietnam blame the media" effectively built a stone wall between the two institutions in USA. This case shows that the US government and the civil society (including independent media) took opposite sides. The US Armed Forces may suffer because of the

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<sup>11</sup> Zlatko Isakovic, "Satellites, Media and Confidence Building Measures", paper presented at the EuPRA-APPRA Joint Conference *Confidence Building for Regional and Global Security - an Intellectual Challenge in the Era of Change*, Coventry, Great Britain, 13-18 September 1997.

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military defeat and even humiliation, but obviously the media played an honourable role of the conscience of the anti-militaristic part of the American society.

The military leadership usually complains because of its responsibility to strike a balance between operations' security and the public's right to know. However, at least in one case, the military identified the media as a legitimate military target and hit it in cold blood. Namely, one of the most disputed actions during the 78-days long NATO bombing campaign over FR Yugoslavia was the destruction of the building of the main radio and TV channel (RTVS) during broadcasting the regular program. NATO spokesman announced a 'legitimate military target' as RTVS as 'spreading military propaganda' i.e. was identified with the military force of the 'enemy'. The international journalist community condemned the attack as a war crime but except for the moral verdict there has been no legal outcome yet.

Probably every conflict is fought on at least two grounds: the battlefield and the minds of the people via propaganda.<sup>12</sup> The 'good guys' and the 'bad guys' can often both be guilty of misleading their people with distortions, exaggerations, subjectivity, inaccuracy and even fabrications, in order to receive support and a sense of legitimacy. The Yugoslav conflicts have provided a lot of examples of misuse of the presence of the international media for achieving military goals – by all conflict parties, including the so-called 'third party' in the conflict. The NATO military response in the Bosnian war (which served as a pretext for the Dayton negotiations and the consequent 'Peace Accord') was directly 'inspired' or better prepared by the media. The shocking pictures of Holocaust-like 'concentration camp' were quickly used to raise the international public opinion, which cried for immediate action against the blood-thirsty Serbs. The trick was, however, disclosed as a clear manipulation,<sup>13</sup> but it was too late to correct the misinformation and the international attitude. Such an attitude of the international media rushing to 'self-evident conclusions' about the real perpetrators gave an idea to the local conflict parties, who then started 'fabricating massacres' in order to provoke an international support and intervention on their behalf. In that sense, the Markale (Bosnia) and Racak (Kosovo) massacres played their roles despite the indications of actions undertaken against own civilian population, sacrificed for 'greater national interests' of the warring parties.

The international actors easily 'swallowed' these 'news' and even prejudiced the conclusions (as it was the case of the infamous leader of the OSCE-led Kosovo Verification Mission, William Walker, who invited all international media on the spot of the Racak massacre and denounced the obvious guilt party). After the rather crowded with media and internationals theatre in Kosovo, the consequent NATO intervention took place practically without any public or reliable media information from the ground.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> TFF Pressinfo, [www.transnational.org/pressinf/pf62.html](http://www.transnational.org/pressinf/pf62.html)

<sup>13</sup> Namely, the picture showed half-naked starving people allegedly standing behind a wire fence. A more careful observers, however, discovered the trick: the people were actually standing outside the place surrounded with the wire fence, which could have been seen clearly as the wire was fixed on the side where the 'prisoners' were standing.

<sup>14</sup> Understandably, Milosevic regime introduced state of war regulations and the domestic media were strictly censored or misused for state propaganda. On the other side, the UCK fighters played a role of 'war correspondents' for the international media by mobile phones. Another source of information about the war crimes and military developments could be taken from the refugees but their objectivity was often questionable because of obvious reasons.

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In sum, the consideration of the military-media relationship in war/conflict raises a wide scope of questions such as: media war, the use of media in war<sup>15</sup>, information warfare, propaganda, special war, misinformation, censorship in state of war or emergency, etc.

The military-media relationship in the context of war operations is pretty complex, including shared interests, opposite attitudes, manipulative techniques towards each other or towards the general public, etc. From the military's point of view information is the currency of victory. That is why the military leadership plans its media strategy with as much attention as its military strategy.<sup>16</sup> Also as the media has become an unavoidable companion of the military throughout the conflict zones, the military leadership has tried hard to control media in subtle ways, either through organising media sessions and daily press briefings, or through providing guided access to war zones, etc. It gives the military opportunity to manipulate the mainstream media, by restricting what information is presented and hence what the public are told.

Somewhat 'politically correct', incompetent or lazy media may get satisfied with the 'leftovers' provided by the military PR offices. The use of quite narrow sources of 'experts' to provide insights into the situation makes the reports quite simple and 'politically correct'. For example, unconditional trust and reliance on official government sources as facts rather than just one perspective that need to be inquired, or interviews with retired military officers, do not give a real picture of the complex conflict situations. Sticking to the political leaders' statements is another perfidious method of keeping allegedly impartial and neutral position, while discretely promoting the government's line.

The interesting dilemma appears as the military does everything to provide public support for the operation, while the media are supposed to be critical and impartial:

"Shortly after the end of the American Civil War, journalist F. Colburn Adams wrote, 'The future historian of the late war will have [a] very difficult task to perform ... sifting the truth from falsehood as it appears in official records.'

Similar to the oft-repeated axiom that truth is the first casualty of war, Adams' observation succinctly summarizes the nub of the conflict between the military and the news media. The military's mission is to fight, and to win, whatever conflict may present itself-preferably on the battlefield but certainly in public opinion and the history books. The journalist, on the other hand, is a sceptic if not a cynic and aims to seek, find and report the truth -- a mission both parties often view as incompatible with successful warfare, which depends on secrecy and deception as much as superior strategy, tactics, weaponry and manpower."<sup>17</sup>

Unfortunately, as the number of conflicts and military interventions all over the world grows, the dilemma is here to stay.

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<sup>15</sup> One of the most perceptive and critical pictures of the role of the international media in the Bosnian war was given through a media i.e. the masterpiece film "No Man's Land".

<sup>16</sup> Phillip Knightley, "Fighting dirty", *The Guardian*, March 20, 2000, [www.guardianunlimited.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,3975978,00.html](http://www.guardianunlimited.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,3975978,00.html).

<sup>17</sup> Jane Kirtley, Enough is Enough, *Media Studies Journal*, October 15, 2001, [www.alternet.org/story.html?StoryID=11716](http://www.alternet.org/story.html?StoryID=11716).

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#### **4. The Military vs. the Media or the Military and the Media**

The democracy development and maturation have shed full light over the Hegel's belief that free media/press should provide talk between the government and the people. In the nowadays' 'global village' the challenges are even bigger as in stake is not a national democracy but the mankind's prospects. There is no global governance but the impact of the media is unbelievable. The media coverage of conflicts all over the globe can raise the question about the legitimacy of war/military intervention – or lead the military campaign. It can act as a mankind's subconscious – but under the overflow of violent pictures and stories that are not associated with peace journalism approach, the people in the 'global village' tend to become indifferent, or even worse – feel self-righteous because their governments tell them they will take care of human rights' abuses or dictatorial regimes. People have never been able to get such a quick information and picture from the battlefields, but it does not necessarily mean that everything the public gets is accurate. Technological achievements can create 'virtual realities' and thus promote war in the name of peace.

Increased transparency of warfare through the eyes of the media does not mean automatically increased transparency and accountability of the governments and the armed forces before the civil society. Security is not always an objective category, something measurable and palpable. As the security perceptions matter a lot, the role the media can play can be twofold: to either induce more fears or to lessen them. Equally, the big number of media does not mean that there is a public as an institution, which enables objective informing, freedom of speech and control of the power-holders.

From a point of view of the civil society and the individual citizen the desired goal is non-politicised military and non-militarised society. The media, however, if fitting the democratic ideal have to be both non-politicised and non-militarised, i.e. should resist calls from both political elites and sometimes belligerent 'uncivil' society.

In the context of the democratic control of the security structures, the crucial question is still Juvenal's *Quis custodiet ipsos custodiet (Who guards the guardians?)*. Since the media is a most powerful opinion maker, which influence can be used and misused in various ways, it seems the discourse reach one more similarity between the military and the media. The question is merely the same: who controls media?

The post-Cold War period opened many challenges for the military establishments in the Western security community. With the rapidly decreasing military budgets and under the incentives for downsizing and reductions, the militaries have to invent ways of getting out of the sphere of own irrelevance. The 'enemy threats' were quickly replaced by 'threats to the values' and the need to 'do something' in the conflict zones, such as former Yugoslavia. The new military missions, conflict and crisis management proved to be the best solution, which also met with great public support – and increased military budgets. The new military missions also reflected on a much better military-media relationship, which was proved in the Kosovo case with very few dissonant tunes coming from the media reports.

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The discourse in the post-communist countries has been slightly different. Apparently, there have been very few legitimacy problems for the militaries of the newly-born (ethno-nationalist) states. The military is as a rule one of the most trusted institutions, leading far before the parliaments of political figures. (In divided and war-torn societies, however, the trust and legitimacy would alternatively go to the para-military or guerrillas.)

The media ability to criticise such trusted institutions has been questionable – either because of lack of will, lack of courage or lack of expertise in military matters. The positive exceptions are often accused of being non-patriotic (for example, for disclosing the Plitvice massacre in spring 1991 in Croatia or Tanusevci affair in February 2001 in Macedonia, both followed with overt conflicts) or publicly condemned (the Holmec affair<sup>18</sup> in Slovenia), not to talk about physical execution of some journalists (Curuvija) in Serbia.

Democratisation brings more positive atmosphere for media development, and for a more relaxed military-media relationship. The publicly declared wish to join Euro-Atlantic structures is supposed to strengthen these tendencies. However, the situation is not so straightforward. With the newly granted normative-diplomatic function (i.e. to bring the country closer to NATO/EU) for the military, it gets better standing with the media. The military-media happy fellowship tends to emphasise all achievements in the military reforms, supports cries for larger share in the state budget, turning a blind eye to some weaknesses in order to hide them before the international watchful visitors, etc.

The equations the military vs. the media or the military and the media do not impose any contradiction, as both attitudes are possible and helpful for both institutions. First, no institution whatsoever should be taken for granted and trusted unconditionally. After all, civil-military relations are very much about the tensions and conflicts between the two poles. Hence, the best way to support reforms is to publicly criticise the weaknesses and blunders. The antagonistic attitude towards state structures only because of ‘ideological stereotype of repressive institutions’ and without any argument can be onerous for the balance between the national security interests and the public’s right to know. The policy of integration in NATO also gives enough opportunities for the media to re-consider such security policy and to explain the public what is NATO membership all about, how much it would cost, what are the gains and possible pains, etc.

Obviously, in the post-communism and particularly in post-conflict situations, the military and the media can help each other rehabilitate and heal the traumas, although each of the institutions hurt itself. External assistance to both institutions is more than necessary as rehabilitation and reconciliation are painful and long processes. As the military (and the whole security sector) needs higher professionalism, the same applies to the media. The institutions will understand each other and co-operate in a more productive manner if there is civilian expertise in security/military matters, and vice versa – knowledge for

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<sup>18</sup> The affair concerned a war crime in Holmec when the Slovenian armed forces reportedly shot two soldiers of the Yugoslav Army immediately after they had surrendered on 28 July 1991. See Igor Mekina, “Forgotten Crimes”, *AIMPress* ([www.aimpress.org](http://www.aimpress.org)), 11 February 1999.

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the specifics about the media business and the sensitivity for the needs of the civil society. Openness and mutual communication is again a complex system of networks between the armed forces (PR offices) and the media; media vs. media; military media vs. civilian media; the media – civil society; the armed forces – the civil society. Through daily contacts and bigger transparency one may expect elevating the alienation of the military from the civil society, bigger support for the new military roles, higher military legitimacy and positive public image.

The confidence building between the military and the other security structures and the civil society, through the media, can be achieved in the best way by exercising public control. That said, one should keep in mind that the military-media relationship is a never-ending story full of tensions and changeable balance, something that even mature democracies are unable to reach, especially under serious security threats, as the post-September 11<sup>th</sup> developments illustrate the best.

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