
National Elites and Transnational Discourses in the Balkan War

A Comparison between the French, German and British Establishment Press

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ABSTRACT

■ This article is based upon a survey of the establishment press in France, Germany and the UK during the Balkan war of 1999. The sources are *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Le Monde* and the *Financial Times*. The objective is to see what their reportage reveals about the political agenda of the various elite readerships and their perceptions of the international order. Our findings indicate that there has been a degree of synchronization in the focus of public attention mediated through the press but that there are also marked differences among these French, German and British papers in their contents and perspectives. Despite the existence of a certain degree of transnational discourse, the European public sphere stills remains fragmented. ■

Key Words Europe, Kosovo, press, public sphere, war

Introduction

Political issues are mainly defined through the mass media, which are also a major influence upon public opinion. Within national states, the media

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are a crucial link between the citizens and the politicians in power. However, there are no European-wide mass media which inform the European demos as a whole, simultaneously, about the same issues, ensuring that all citizens are part of the same political debate.

The conflict over Kosovo dramatized this issue because it was an unprecedented case of the members of the European Union being drawn, directly or indirectly, into a major war on the same side over an issue that united their interests. The issue was human rights as expressed in NATO's desire to prevent a 'humanitarian catastrophe'.¹

How has this issue influenced perceptions of Europe as a polity? Has the war led to a synchronization of public discourses, directing the attention of the press in different countries to the same issues at the same time? Furthermore, has the war led to a homogenization of public discourses within Europe, in the form of a convergence of perspectives and evaluations between the different national media?

Our initial conjecture was that there would be huge overlaps in the focus of media reporting (synchronization) but also marked national differences in content (heterogeneity). The expectation was that there would be differences in focus of coverage and wording of key issues depending on the specific 'frame' operating in each country. Such frames define what counts as 'national interest' and this is assumed to be different in each country. A further expectation was that there would be little if any homogenization of different national frames, although there would be some transnational traffic of ideas depending on the orientations of 'gate-keepers' within each national discourse. A final expectation was that papers would emphasize the role of 'their' political leaders.

Theoretical background

As has been emphasized by many authors, European governance is widely perceived as remote, opaque and inaccessible.² Overcoming this depends on the vitalization of the European public sphere. This would involve one or both of two possibilities: on the one hand, the Europeanization of national public spheres, and on the other hand the emergence of a transnational European public (Grundmann, 1999). The first amounts to a synchronization, the second to a homogenization of the national public spheres.

This distinction provides a tool that can be made operational for investigating empirical examples of transnational communication processes. If homogenization occurs it will probably follow a period during which national public spheres become synchronized with regard to key

political issues. It may be anticipated that pan-European issues such as the war in Kosovo will lead to a synchronization of public attention across member states. This is a precondition for a homogeneous European public sphere and hence for a European polity.

Methodological approach

A quantitative and qualitative document analysis was conducted based upon the reports contained in establishment newspapers in three large European countries: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)*, *Le Monde (LM)* and the *Financial Times (FT)*. For the quantitative analysis part a search was carried out using the FT Profile database. The search focused upon key words related to the events in and around Kosovo during the period from 23 March 1999 until 10 June 1999.

A co-citation analysis was carried out examining the co-occurrence of 'Kosovo' and connected terms, like 'Russia', 'Germany', 'War in Kosovo', etc. (see Table 1 for a list and absolute numbers, Table 2 for ratios). This was intended to reveal differences in the coverage of the three papers which could be interpreted as reflecting underlying differences in the perspectives, attitudes and beliefs of the political elites in France, Germany and the UK.

Second, an analysis was carried out of the number of references made to prime ministers, foreign secretaries and defence secretaries in these three countries in order to assess to what extent national media focus attention upon their own politicians in foreign affairs and to what extent they report on the actions of key political figures from other states. The frequency with which these names occurred in all articles containing the word 'Kosovo' was measured. In both instances, the objective was to assess the extent to which the synchronization of the three national public spheres had led to public discourses that crossed national boundaries.

The quantitative analysis

Synchronization

The hypothesis that the Kosovo war had a synchronizing effect can be confirmed. As Figure 1 shows, there was a continuing build-up of attention on the Kosovo issue before the outbreak of the war with a steep change occurring in April and May, then declining to prewar levels. The pattern is the same in all three papers, although less pronounced with the *FT*. Figure 1 is based on the number of articles which include the word

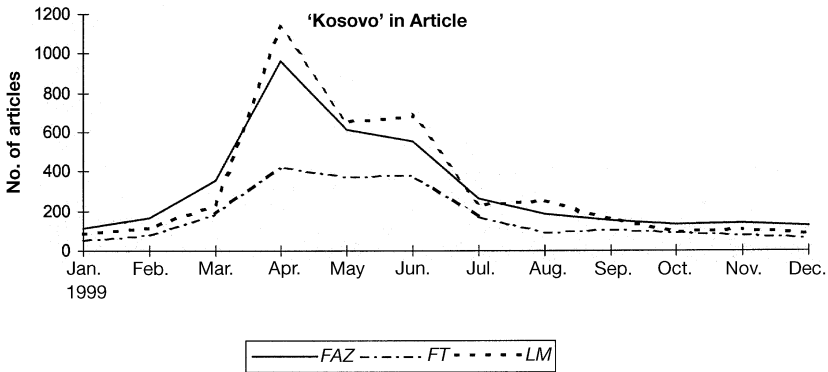


Figure 1 Attention cycle on Kosovo crisis in 1999

Source: FT Profile.

'Kosovo' (as opposed to the frequency with which that term occurs in headlines).

Table 1 shows the numbers of articles containing 'Kosovo' in each of the papers in the sample. *Le Monde* mentioned the word Kosovo most frequently during this period (it also has the highest peak in April, as Figure 1 shows). *LM* mentioned terms like 'Albanie' and 'UCK' (i.e. the Kosovo Liberation Army, or KLA) far more frequently than *FAZ* and *FT*. It should be noted that if attention is paid to the relative frequency of headlines containing 'Kosovo', the *FT* scores far more highly than *LM* or *FAZ*, although it had only about half as many articles mentioning 'Kosovo'.³

Semantics

It is interesting to note that the *FT* avoids the phrase 'war in Kosovo' (63 hits) and tends to use 'Kosovo crisis' instead (384). *LM* and *FAZ* seem to use both phrases equally.⁴ The *FT* is keener than the others to use the term 'ethnic cleansing', but less bothered about issues of 'sovereignty'. Looking at another outstanding case, it is worth pointing out that although the issue of 'ground troops' occupied much attention in *FAZ* and – albeit less – in the *FT*, it was less of an issue in France, where it was often presented as the preoccupation of the British.

This picture changes slightly when looking at the proportionate use of these key words within each paper's total coverage (Table 2). The *FT* has more mentions of 'Kosovo crisis', 'ethnic cleansing' and 'Russia' than either *FAZ* or *LM*. And while *LM* seems preoccupied with 'sovereignty', and *FAZ* still sees it as an issue, the *FT* is less concerned.

Table 1 Co-citation analysis, absolute counts

	FAZ	FT	LM
Kosovo	2031	1074	2183
'Kosovo' in headline	328	458	340
UCK/KLA/UCK	153	70	265
greuel*/atrocit*/+serb*	27	19	26
ethnische Saeuberung/ethn*cleansing/ purif*ethn*/	73	102	88
Souveraen*/sovereignt*/souveren*	63	19	99
Griechenland/Greece/Grece	76	81	84
Russland/Russia/Russie	410	271	397
Albanien/Albania/Albanie	314	263	1090
Deutschland/Germany/Allemagne	863	247	329
Deutschland/Germany/Allemagne+presid*	17	28	27
Krieg/war/guerre im/in/du K.	145	63	121
K.Krise/K.crisis/crise du K.	194	384	110
Bodentruppen/ground troupes/troupes terrestres ^a	257	119	19

Source: FT Profile.

^a *Le Monde* also uses the term *force terrestre*; when this factored in the French count is higher. However for the French this issue remained a less important focus.

Table 2 Ratio of co-citations containing these search expressions and the word 'Kosovo' (rounded percentages)

	FAZ	FT	LM
'Kosovo' in headline	16	43	16
UCK/KLA/UCK	8	7	12
greuel*/atrocit*/+serb*	1	2	1
ethnische Saeuberung/ethn*cleansing/ purif*ethn*/	4	9	4
Souveraen*/sovereignt*/souveren*	3	2	5
Griechenland/Greece/Grece	4	8	4
Russland/Russia/Russie	20	25	18
Albanien/Albania/Albanie	15	24	50
Deutschland/Germany/Allemagne	42	23	15
Deutschland/Germany/Allemagne+presid*	1	3	1
Krieg/war/guerre im/in/du K.	7	6	6
K.Krise/K.crisis/crise du K.	10	36	5
Bodentruppen/ground troupes/troupes terrestres	13	11	1

Source: FT Profile.

Regarding relative frequencies, the findings from earlier are confirmed by and large. The most visible exceptions are the much higher degree of relative attention that the *FT* gives to Russia (a quarter of all articles mention it) and its much more frequent use of the term 'ethnic cleansing': it occurs in about 10 percent of all articles, compared to less than 5 percent in *FAZ* and *LM*.

Attention to politicians

Turning to the frequency with which top politicians in the three countries are mentioned, this brings a slightly surprising result. It may be expected that when reporting foreign affairs the domestic press would emphasize the role of its own country or the implications for its own domestic affairs. It would be expected to overreport on national politicians and figureheads (Gerhards, 1993). This pattern is partly confirmed. As Table 3 shows, *LM* dedicates more attention to the French prime minister and president, compared to the attention paid by *FAZ* and the *FT*. Also, Table 4 shows that all papers mention their own nation much more often than the other two (by a factor of three and more).

However, and this is a striking finding, British and French elite papers have far more interest in the Germans as players than vice versa. *LM* mentions Schröder, Fischer and Scharping more often (43 percent) than Jospin, Chirac and Vedrine (32 percent). An even more pronounced interest in the German leaders is apparent in the *FT*. In this paper there is very little interest in the top three French politicians (12 percent) but much more interest in the German leaders (57 percent) as compared to their British counterparts (31 percent).

Table 3 Co-citation analysis of 'Kosovo' and top politicians in three European papers

	<i>FAZ</i>	<i>FT</i>	<i>LM</i>
Chirac	5.9	8.1	16.2
Jospin	2.1	3.4	12.0
Vedrine	1.2	1.0	3.6
Fischer	29.5	23.2	16.9
Schröder	31.5	20.9	17.6
Scharping	17.0	12.3	8.7
Blair	8.3	19.3	15.9
Cook	3.2	8.4	6.4
Robertson	1.3	3.5	2.7

Source: *FT* Profile.

Table 4 Co-citation analysis of ‘Kosovo’ and Germany, France and the UK in three European papers

	<i>FAZ</i>	<i>FT</i>	<i>LM</i>
Frankreich/ France	169	157	750
Grossbrit*/Britain,UK/GranBretagne	264	1045	166
Deutschland/Germany/Allemagne	863	247	329

Source: *FT* Profile.

Finally, *FAZ* distributes 9 percent of its attention among both the British and French leaders while it reserves 79 percent for its own. These findings do not conform with the straightforward expectation that, in foreign coverage, the national media in every country would focus attention on their own representatives. The fact that in France and the UK, both Fischer and Schröder are much more salient than any of the other domestic leaders (Blair, Cook, Jospin or Chirac) suggests that there is some degree of transnationalization of discourses about the Kosovo crisis. Figure 2 maps the pattern of attention paid to the nine politicians mentioned in all three papers, expressed in absolute numbers.

How can we account for the salience of German politicians? There are three possible explanations: institutional, (geo)political and historical. It is possible that German salience was institutional, i.e. due to Germany’s occupancy of the EU presidency during the Kosovo war. It is

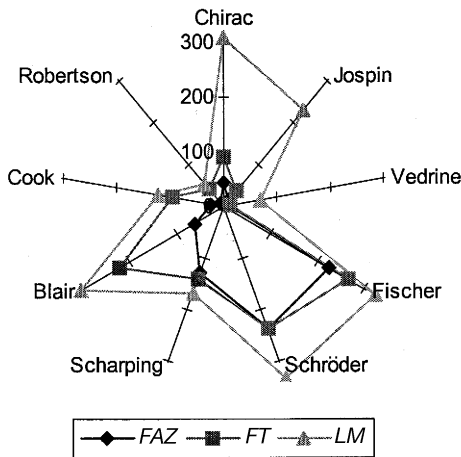


Figure 2 Absolute frequency counts of top EU politicians during the Kosovo conflict in three European papers

Source: *FT* Profile.

also possible that the reason is geopolitical, i.e. that Germany was seen as a key frontline state within Mitteleuropa. Finally, the reason may be cultural/historical, i.e. that Germany was seen as a potentially unreliable ally because of the legacy of the Second World War and its subsequent disposition towards pacifism and non-involvement in military ventures.

The first possibility derives only limited support from the co-citation analysis. The mentioning of 'Germany' together with 'presidency' was only a minor fraction of all citations for 'Germany'. However, along with the other two possibilities, it is pursued in our qualitative document analysis.

To summarize: the results of the quantitative analysis suggest that while there is a synchronization of the public spheres in France, Germany and the UK, there is a marked difference in attention and the framing of issues. Germany gets special attention from its European neighbours, the French pay special attention to issues relating to Albania, the KLA and sovereignty, the British to 'ethnic cleansing'. While *LM* prefers the term 'Kosovo war' over 'Kosovo crisis', the *FT* and *FAZ* have it the other way round, clearly reflecting their government's (and NATO's) political semantics.⁵ This points to different cultural-political alignments of these countries within NATO.

The qualitative analysis

The three papers

Le Monde is a sober paper; there are few 'soundbites', no trace of populism. Texts are long, dense and demand high levels of literacy from the reader.⁶ In its coverage of the Kosovo war, *LM* expressed French preoccupations, loyalties and prejudices.⁷ The same is true of the *FT*, whose tone was generally dispassionate and pragmatic with only the occasional lapse into emotive language, mainly when referring to the plight of the Kosovo Albanians (e.g. 'Murder Drives out a Suffering People', *FT*, 5 April 1999).⁸

The reportage of *FAZ*, like the *FT* and *LM*, can best be characterized as detached and pragmatic, trying to convey many viewpoints and central problems, giving a platform to political opinions but also to intellectuals from all over the world. There is extensive coverage of the events in the former Yugoslavia, in other European countries, of peace initiatives of several kinds and implications for the future of Europe and for the balance of power in the international system.

The statistics reveal that *LM* journalists and editors devoted a greater proportion of their attention to coverage of the Kosovo situation than was the case in the *FT* and *FAZ*. This would not surprise the habitual reader of the paper. During the months of the war and in the immediate aftermath, the war dominated the front page, was covered in minute detail inside the paper and provoked a sustained debate in the editorial, comment and letters sections. After the war had ended, *Le Monde diplomatique* and *Le Monde des débats* devoted whole issues to a review of the causes, management and outcomes of the war.⁹

The European character of the war

In *LM*, from the outset the Kosovan crisis was billed as a European problem which Europe should solve. On 2 April the paper's 'Point de vue' article, which appears on the front page and is a high profile opinion piece, was written by Max Gallo, a well-known historian, and Charles Pasqua, an ex-minister and senator in the Rassemblement Pour la République (RPR). Their key point is that it must be Europe which resolves the problem. Solutions imposed from outside and using US military force rather than European diplomatic channels are anathema. During the war there was considerable discussion in France on the desirability of a European intervention force. The French political classes became almost unanimous in their desire for an EU force; even the Communists gave it limited support.¹⁰

There is a certain invention of Europe as a player in a number of articles in *LM*. The case of an article on the provision of aid to the Kosovan refugees flooding into Albania and Macedonia in the first days of the war is typical. The *LM* subeditor titles the piece 'L'Europe et l'ONU mettent en place des aides d'urgence'. However, in the actual text it becomes clear that it is in fact the individual states of Europe which are furnishing the aid. *LM* groups them under the umbrella term of 'Europe' as distinct from the UN and USA. The cursory reader takes Europe to be a unitary actor.

For its part, the *FT*'s coverage tells the story of the EU playing a gradually more prominent role in the issues surrounding the Balkan war, especially in its closing stages. When the war began there was something of a vacuum at the European Commission. Romano Prodi had not yet been formally named as the next president.¹¹ Early on in the crisis, the *FT* reported that the EU gave its 'cautious' approval to NATO's bombing campaign although the four neutral members (e.g. Austria) had serious reservations (*FT*, 25 March 1999).

For his part, Prodi as president-designate hit the ground running. In an interview with the *FT* on 1 April he called for the EU to play a leading role in the postwar regional settlement after the war was over. He proposed that the EU should offer a 'partnership' with states in the region and export there its model of 'democracy, ethnic diversity and shared common goals'.¹² *LM* reported Prodi's call for a conference on the Balkans which would seek to anchor its various constituent parts into European structures.¹³

By 5 May Prodi's picture was carried by the *FT* on page 2 and the paper reported his call for 'a common army for the European Union'. According to the *FT*, this comment showed,

... how the development of a 'European security and defence identity' has climbed up the EU policy agenda in recent months, pushing fears of lost sovereignty to one side. The Kosovo war has accelerated policy planning following the stimulus from last year's defence discussions between Mr Blair and Jacques Chirac.

On 23 April, the paper reported Tony Blair's declaration in favour of a 'doctrine of international community' challenging the principle of non-intervention. Blair added that the EU would increase in military strength but 'admitted that "its time is some way off"'. In the same issue, *FT* columnist Philip Stephens argued that Europe had so far failed to demonstrate the political will to carry out the task of 'building its own distinctive defence identity' (*FT*, 23 April 1999).

Stephens did not give the impression that the chances were high that Blair would take an effective lead on this matter and 'claim a place in history as a European statesman'. As has been seen, Blair confronted serious opposition in terms of press coverage from Chancellor Schröder who was able to claim, for example, that in confronting the Balkan crisis of 1999 the EU had mastered its greatest challenge in a long time, 'under German leadership in the European Council' (*FAZ*, 27 March 1999).

Analysing the Balkan situation

As the *FAZ* reports show, at the beginning of the air attacks, Schröder adopts a rhetoric in which the failure to resolve the conflict by political means was not due to American obduracy but to the 'intolerable' attitude of the Yugoslav leader, Milosevic: 'He is responsible for everything that is to come.' According to Schröder, the decision was not easy but NATO could not passively watch the killing in Kosovo, which was a 'humanitarian catastrophe' (*FAZ*, 24 March 1999). In this he was in concert with the other western leaders. Schröder also repeats the official

NATO line that the attacks are against the Milosevic regime and not against the Serb people. NATO had been forced into military action in order to stop further violence in Kosovo. If Milosevic were to sign the Rambouillet treaty, the human rights of the Kosovars could be maintained as well as the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia (*FAZ*, 27 March 1999). Defence secretary Scharping echoes the formula of the UK's defence secretary Robertson and speaks of a Serb 'policy of genocide' (*FAZ*, 29 March 1999).

By contrast, one of the features of the *LM* coverage of the war was a willingness to consider the Serbian case or at least a refusal to demonize the Serbs as a group. This is a mirror of reactions in the political elite where the Serb case is given consideration. *LM* accords space to Régis Debray who reports (13 May 1999) after a visit to Serbia and Kosovo on what he perceives as lies and exaggerations in the western account of the war. This sparks a long debate in the letter pages of *LM* on whether there is any justification in the Serb case and what it might be, and provokes Bernard-Henri Lévy and Alain Joxe to provide a counterblast. *LM* journalists continually stress the long tradition of Franco–Serb friendship; there is a constant call for a negotiated settlement and much space given to the various German, Russian and Finnish diplomatic initiatives.¹⁴

The *LM* commentators are aware of a process of demonization in other national press coverage. Among the German political class and press they note a tendency to use the vocabulary of the Third Reich (e.g. concentration camp, genocide/*Völkermord*) and directly compare the events in the Balkans to the Nazis' ethnic cleansing. This is understood as the 'diabolisation nécessaire' to pull the Germans into the war. The UK politicians and press are also shown to be engaged in the elaboration of a discourse which demonizes Milosevic. As a corollary, the war is being portrayed to the British public as a fight against evil and for morality and human rights.¹⁵ There is an underlying criticism that the full debate is not being heard in the UK. This becomes apparent in French reactions to the British hijacking of NATO briefings (as is discussed in a later section).

On 20 April 1999 the *FT* carried the story that a colleague of Alastair Campbell, Julian Braithwaite from the British prime minister's press office, was being assigned to NATO headquarters 'to help the alliance improve its presentation of the war in Kosovo'. However, this did not spark off a debate about bias. The *FT*'s line on this matter was implicitly conveyed by its reaction when its own correspondent in Belgrade (Guy Dinmore) was expelled during the weekend of 24–25 April (one of many western journalists to be treated in this way). The

paper concluded that this signalled that Mr Milosevic knew he was 'starting to lose the propaganda war' but also admitted that the flow of 'well-informed, objective and accurate' reporting would suffer with such expulsions (*FT*, 27 April 1999).

The *FT*'s reporting of the situation in southeast Europe contained occasional speculations about Belgrade's strategic thinking and domestic political manoeuvres.¹⁶ However, it mainly concentrated upon the situation in Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania. All three received an influx of fleeing Albanian Kosovars. The refugee crisis was mainly examined in terms of its consequences for the internal politics of the countries concerned. Occasional reports also covered public opinion and political disturbances in Greece and Russia.¹⁷

A third approach is evident in the German press as represented by *FAZ*. While the *FT* tends to take the straight NATO (and British government) line of treating the Milosevic regime as an enemy that needs to be defeated, and while *LM* displays much more sympathy and some support for the Serbian position, *FAZ* is more sensitive to the complexities of Serbian culture and politics. For example *FAZ* emphasizes a deep-seated cultural issue in the former Yugoslavia which seems to make compromise in Kosovo difficult. This is the symbolic importance of the 'Kosovo *polje*' ('blackbird's field'), the part of this region of Kosovo where a thriving but short-lived feudal Serb state once existed.¹⁸ Kosovo plays a key role in the national myth and, as one German editorial concluded before the war started, the Serbs actually believe in that myth which also asserts that there is a world conspiracy against the Serb people, with the exception of Russia, Belarus, Greece and North Korea.¹⁹

Tensions within NATO

The next issue to be examined is how the implications of the war for NATO were reported. The most important theme in the *FT*'s coverage of the Balkan war was the strategic purpose of NATO as a military alliance and the tensions that existed within it. Between 23 March and 26 April, i.e. in the first five weeks of the war, the newspaper carried 14 articles discussing this matter.²⁰ Two points the paper stressed were, first, the high degree of risk and unpredictability in NATO's action and, second, the ambiguity surrounding its strategic intentions.

The main questions raised by the *FT* were: what would be the effect of NATO's action on the West's relationship with Russia? And what were NATO's objectives in going to war? (To enforce the Rambouillet terms? To prevent ethnic cleansing? To prevent the conflict extending within the

region?). As far as the *FT* was concerned, the bottom line was that NATO should not lose the war. To do so would be 'to face the prospect of humiliation' and this would damage NATO's 'ambitions to be a regional policeman' (*FT*, 26 March 1999).

From the *FT*'s perspective, there were three points of structural tension surrounding NATO's action. First, and least discussed by the newspaper, was the relationship between NATO and the UN. The bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade dramatized this issue in view of China's position on the UN Security Council. In discussing this, the *FT* made one of its few references to the fact that 'France . . . has a stronger belief . . . [than the US and Britain] in the importance of winning UN legitimacy for Nato actions' (*FT*, 11 May 1999).

The second source of conflict, one discussed in a little more detail, was the USA's desire to develop NATO's policing role. There were two main difficulties with this. As *FT* columnist Quentin Peel put it, on the one hand the US is unwilling to commit ground troops for fear of battlefield casualties while, on the other hand, NATO's EU members are 'cautious about playing a big role outside the Nato area, and far more concerned to strengthen the European contribution to the Atlantic alliance' (*FT*, 8 April 1999).

This leads on to the third source of conflict, one that preoccupies the newspaper. It is the tension between the EU members of NATO and the USA. The *FT* recognized that some EU leaders had a long-term goal of conducting military operations without relying on American resources (including the capacity for reconnaissance and precision bombing). On 22 April, Peel called for 'the Europeans to resume security leadership on their own continent'. In the previous week, another contributor, William Wallace,²¹ called for a more effective and united presentation of European interests to the American political audience.

For their part, *LM* journalists exhibited strong scepticism about the veracity and accuracy of NATO briefings and were very scathing about the spin put on events after the Anglo-Saxon hijacking of the channels of communication. When Jamie Shea took over as NATO spokesperson the style of the briefings became more Anglo-Saxon. After British government press officers were sent to help NATO improve its PR, the French were incensed by the spin put on events.

Rosenzweig complained in *LM* that Alastair Campbell believes that the press corps does not want boring facts but human interest stories. He cites the briefing of 20 April which focused on the rape of young Albanian women rather than details of the military campaign as an illustration of how the main source of information on the campaign had

been distracted from its main purpose to become a propaganda machine.²² *LM* journalists had been very circumspect in the reporting of alleged atrocities until convinced.

The stories of Albanians used as human shields were first reported by *LM* as unverified, with extensive use of inverted commas, the conditional and the subjunctive, all stylistic devices of French to indicate that the writer cannot vouch for the accuracy of the information being given.²³ It is only in the last weeks of the war when the evidence appears incontrovertible that the inverted commas drop and the existence of 'boucliers humains' are presented as facts. The British press was, in comparison, far less cautious.

Another traditional French position is apparent in the high level of suspicion manifest towards the US.²⁴ There was clearly not the consensus evident in the UK. Those most opposed to military intervention included Hue and the French Communist Party, a number of Socialists including significantly the interior minister, Chevènement, and some of the old Gaullist Right. Although France is at present governed under the cohabitation system (the president and the prime minister are from different parties) there was no dissension between the two ruling parties.

FAZ also dedicates some attention to differences within NATO, albeit in a more pragmatic spirit. On 19 May, it argues that tensions within NATO are not surprising, given the fact that the alliance comprises 19 members. However, it recognizes that these tensions might have consequences in times of war, especially when the American leader is seen to be wavering. On one side *FAZ* locates the UK, on the other, Germany and Italy ('not to mention Greece'). It argues that the UK has always been used to military things and is driven by an almost aggressive human rights rhetoric. The Blair government is receptive to the idea of sending ground troops to Kosovo. So far, Germany and Italy have put their solidarity with the alliance despite the criticism of strong domestic opposition. However, both exclude ground troops since this would put domestic affairs under too much pressure and might lose public support.

Paying attention across national borders

There was a significant difference between the British, French and German papers in the extent to which they analysed each other's internal political situation and their respective contribution to resolving the Balkan situation. The most prominent feature of the *FT*'s coverage in this

respect is the positive spin it put on the German contribution to the war and to European initiatives. On 5 April, under the headline 'Purposeful Germans Line Up Behind Nato', the paper noted the strength of public support for the air strikes.

Eleven days later, on 16 April, the *FT* reported Schröder's 'unremitting efforts to end the fighting'. It recognized that this was partly because of Germany's chairing of the EU Council as well as G7 and G8. However, just as important as these 'temporary institutional responsibilities' was Schröder's open acknowledgement of 'the historical burden obliging Germany to be particularly active in defusing crises in Europe'. Again, on 29 April, the *FT* recognized the energy displayed in (to quote its headline) the 'German Drive in Search for a Settlement'. The *FT* also covered the problems of the 'red-green' coalition in two articles during the period of the war.²⁵

The French displayed a high level of awareness of the difficulties of Schröder in keeping his government coalition intact in the context of the German commitment to action in Kosovo. *LM* was aware of the difficulties posed by the inclination towards pacifism and non-involvement in postwar Germany. The French paper monitored the German view of the war quite closely. Germany and its military capacity and attitudes towards armed engagement are, of course, subjects which the French press concerns itself with regularly. A review of the press at any time where there appears to be a revival of German power bears witness to the high profile of this topic in France. See, for example, the comment on German reunification in 1989 and on the first 14 July parade where German troops participated as members of Eurocorps.²⁶

In an interview in *LM* on 24 April, Joschka Fischer, the German foreign secretary, reinforced a number of the preoccupations of the French: the legacy of the Second World War in Germany; the danger of the coalition cracking as Germany ditched its pacifist policies; the limited nature of German commitment. Fischer used the interview to signal his wish for continued Franco-German cooperation as the motor for European integration. He speaks of a European standard against which the actions of Milosevic must be measured. 'Milosevic is a throwback to the Europe of the 1930s. His Europe is not ours.'²⁷ He stressed the need to present the Kosovan war as a moral imperative in Germany.

LM permits itself some irritation that France's major contribution has not gained greater recognition. France actually played a central role in the military operation, being the state which initially sent the second largest contingent of aircraft (after the US).²⁸ This is noted with some national pride. A slightly self-congratulatory piece²⁹ on 9 April reports

how French planes, although old, acquitted themselves well and how the pilots' effectiveness surprised the Americans. A few days later, an article³⁰ bemoaned the fact that France's contribution was overlooked in the American press and that it seemed that the American public was not even aware of French participation. Although the British public are not mentioned specifically, the situation would probably have been the same in the UK; French involvement was not given much coverage in British broadsheets and even less in the tabloids.

FAZ was arguably the most outward looking of all three papers. For example, it paid great attention to the fact that in Germany as in France, there was a government which comprised socialists and greens.³¹ As in France, where the president belongs to a different party from the prime minister, the political power base of the German government is under constant threat from a strong opposition. Both the French and German governments are much more susceptible to radical criticism. They have to act more cautiously than the British government, which enjoys a vast majority in parliament, a single party government and no threat from the (weak) second chamber.

The fragility of the 'continental' political situation is contrasted, implicitly at least, with a more robust and self-assertive British position. The latter, it seems, is prone to audacious action, even trying to challenge American leadership in certain respects. These political perceptions are reported by *FAZ* together with other factors such as cultural and historical issues related to France's special relationship with NATO, its strong cross-party anti-Americanism and its historical support for the Serbs. *FAZ* also notes many times that the war is producing unlikely political bedfellows in both France and Germany. The paper analyses the ways that the political classes in both societies have acted under similar political circumstances in the past.

For its part, the *FT* paid relatively little attention to debates about the war among political elites and in intellectual circles outside Britain and the US. One exception was its report on 25 May about a debate at the Moscow School of Political Studies between Russian politicians and policy advisers on the one hand and 'pro-Nato westerners' from Europe and America.³² The paper's most detailed analysis of the long-term historical origins of the conflicts in southeast Europe drew for inspiration upon an American source: Huntington's work on the 'clash of civilizations' (Huntington, 1998).³³

This makes a striking contrast with *FAZ* and *LM*, which provided detailed coverage of the positions taken by key intellectuals. During the Kosovo conflict, *FAZ* published more than 40 articles in its *Feuilleton*

and reprinted them as a book under the title *The Western Crusade* (Schirmacher, 1999). These essays are written by well-known intellectuals, poets, writers and novelists from Eastern and Western Europe, Germany, China and the US. They include celebrities like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Susan Sontag, Vargas Llosa, Norman Mailer and Seamus Heaney, and politicians like Rudolf Scharping and Felipe Gonzalez. *FAZ* also reported extensively on the intellectual discourse in other EU countries, especially France and the UK.

In *LM*'s sister paper *Le Monde diplomatique*, there were articles from a number of eminent intellectuals from outside France. For example, Noam Chomsky wrote one of the lead articles in the May edition, Edward Said in the August. *Le Monde diplomatique* was also a forum for journalists from outside France. For example, Robert Fisk gave a lengthy analysis from a British perspective in the August issue, Amnon Kapeliouk showed how the Kosovo situation was seen in Israel in May.

Conclusion

Our findings indicate clearly that during the Kosovan war there was a degree of synchronization in the focus of public attention mediated through the press in three of the member states of the EU. This is hardly surprising in a situation of crisis where all three states were engaged in the same military campaign. There were, however, marked differences among the French, German and British papers studied in their contents and perspectives, dictated both by national contexts and by national agendas.

For *LM*, the inability of the Europeans to 'police' their own continent without US intervention provoked continual reflection. At the same time, there was an undercurrent of distrust with respect to 'Anglo-Saxon' domination over the 'message' issuing from NATO headquarters. By contrast, the *FT* did not comment in any depth on the possibility that there might be 'spin' in the press releases from NATO and its heavily British press team. Like other parts of the British media, the *FT* was content to relay the message that this was a fight against evil.

The German media was not so outspoken about this. The problems Germany was facing during the crisis were seen as serious. The newly elected government had to show its loyalty to NATO and therefore be ready to share part of the burden. At the same time, it had to define its position within the alliance afresh (i.e. after the departure of the Kohl government), vis-a-vis American, British and French positions, which were not always well aligned. In this situation, *FAZ* basically supported

the government by reporting in a factual manner, and did not openly expose it to criticism. The problems of the red–green government were seen as ‘national’ problems rather than ‘party’ problems.

How realistic was it to expect that the Balkan war over Kosovo would provide a push in the direction of the emergence of a European public sphere? It is true that in certain contexts Europe was an actor. The Germans as president of the EU during the period of the war hosted meetings and coordinated peace initiatives. Among all the European institutions it was the intergovernmental Council of Ministers which was most active on the Kosovan issue.³⁴ The EU heads of state met on 14 April and closed ranks to present a united front on Kosovo.

However, the war was not simply a European issue nor were European institutions the only arena for bargaining and debate. Europe’s heads of state met under the aegis of NATO in New York in late April and as G8 in Birmingham, UK in early May. They were actors in the game mainly through the status of their nation-state rather than their EU membership. The EU grouping provided one forum among many.

The European dimension was weakened by the almost total absence of the European Commission. This stemmed mostly from the difficult position of the Commission at that juncture. Disgraced by recent accusations of corruption and fraud, the Commissioners had recently resigned en masse.³⁵ The Commission, which might at other periods have had some influence on events, particularly on the trade sanctions against Serbia, had very little status or influence in this crucial period for Europe.

There is a final irony. The campaign for the European elections was taking place at the same time as the war and the election itself took place at the very time (10–13 June 1999) when the military peace was being agreed in Kosovo. These elections provided the very context in which the European public sphere might be expected to display considerable life. In fact, the leading national politicians in the three countries downplayed the campaign. It achieved very little prominence in the press. The turnout was low.³⁶

Notes

1. The conflict over Kosovo has spawned a growing literature including the following: Andryszewski (2000), Holbrooke (1999), Garapon and Mongin (1999), Kushner (1999), Laurent (1999), Malcolm (1998), Mertus (1999), Rodman (1999), Ross (2000), Schirrmacher (1999) and Weller (1999).
2. For an extended discussion, see the papers in Smith and Wright (1999).

3. This is difficult to interpret. It may be an artefact of differences between the way the issue was 'framed' in the three societies.
4. The *FT* almost never puts the phrase 'War in Kosovo' into a headline (seven out of 458).
5. Secretary-general Javier Solana stressed from the beginning of the air attacks that NATO is not waging war against Yugoslavia but that the actions are directed against the Yugoslav leadership. Of key importance was the aim of 'stopping violence' and bringing 'an end to the humanitarian catastrophe now taking place in Kosovo' (see <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/pr99e.htm>).
6. Photographs are rare and subordinate to the text; the tradition in the paper not to include them has only recently been broken. The Plantu cartoon on the front page is always political, usually mordant and demands a good knowledge of current political events to make any sense.
7. Whether it also showed a growing tendency in France to deal with issues from a European perspective is less obvious but may be discerned in certain commentators. Articles from *LM* cited in this article are as follows: 'L'Europe et l'ONU mettent en place des aides d'urgence', 2 April 1999; 'Kosovo: l'OTAN dénonce les "boucliers humains", mais sans "preuve formelle"', 18 May 1999; 'Le Rôle de l'OTAN au coeur des divergences françaises', 2 June 1999; 'Malgré des désaccords les Etats-Unis continuent de travailler avec Moscou' (by P. de Beer), 11–12 April 1999; 'A Cologne, devant les chefs d'Etat européens, le président finlandais raconte son marathon', 5 June 1999; 'En Allemagne, la coalition de gauche fait bloc malgré les états d'âme des Verts' (by A. Leparmentier), 4 April 1999; 'Slobodan Milosevic représente l'Europe des années 30. Ce n'est pas la nôtre' (by A. Leparmentier and D. Vernet), 24 April 1999; 'Les Verts allemands demandent une pause dans les bombardements', 14 May 1999; 'Sur la base d'Istrana les Français respectent scrupuleusement le NATO secret' (by P. Broussard), 9 April 1999; 'Pas de paix sans indépendance de l'Europe' (by M. Gallo and C. Pasqua), 2 April 1999; 'Le PS français propose à ses homologues les références d'une issue politique' (by M. Noblecourt), 15 April 1999.
8. Such headlines were more common in some other UK broadsheets, e.g. *The Independent* ('Nightmare of a Ruined Land Lies in Wait', 7 May 1999; 'The Hell of Tent Cities', 10 May 1999; 'Kosovo's Trail of Misery', 12 May 1999; 'Serbs "Went on a Rampage of Violence"', 3 June 1999); *The Daily Telegraph* ('Agony and Tears for Families in Exodus', 5 May 1999; 'The Hard and Warped Face of Balkan Man', 17 May 1999; 'Kosovo Capital Faces New Wave of Serb Terror', 26 May 1999).
9. Like the daily *Le Monde*, the monthly *Le Monde diplomatique* and *Le Monde des débats* are the publications which serve the political class and the intellectual community in France. They provide a source of information which the French regard as relatively trustworthy and a platform much sought after by

- opinion-makers. It is not unreasonable to see the concerns and positions of *LM* as a reflection of what is thought and discussed within a Paris-based power elite.
- 10 'Le Rôle de l'OTAN au coeur des divergences françaises'. It should be added that in the final phase of the war *LM* made much of the Ahtisaari's role as emissary from the EU and peacemaker: for example, in 'A Cologne, devant les chefs d'Etat européens, le président finlandais raconte son marathon'.
 11. 'EU Leaders Nominate Prodi to Head Commission', *FT*, 25 March 1999.
 12. Just over a week later, the *FT* reported on a German government paper, tabled at the EU foreign ministers' meeting at Luxembourg, calling for a regional stability plan for the Balkans; see *FT*, 9 April 1999.
 13. It was a hope for the future rather than a relevant solution to immediate events, since enlargement would only happen over a relatively lengthy period. Reported in 'Le PS français propose à ses homologues les références d'une issue politique'.
 14. These historical links perhaps also account for the strong coverage of events and attitudes in Macedonia and Montenegro. However, this is only a partial explanation since both countries received good coverage in the *FT*, especially Macedonia.
 15. 'La Grande-Bretagne a, dès le début du conflit, été en pointe dans l'entreprise de la diabolisation de Slobodan Milosevic' (in 'M. Blair est déterminé à faire tomber M. Milosevic', *LM*, 22 April 1999: 3).
 16. For example, 'Milosevic Prepares for Last Stand' (*FT*, 24 March 1999) and 'Tightening Ranks', *FT*, 31 March 1999.
 17. For instance, 'Kremlin Faces a Tricky Balancing Act,' *FT*, 26 March 1999; 'Soul-Searching in Moscow', *FT*, 15 April 1999; and 'Athens Urges Bombing Halt on Orthodox Easter', *FT*, 6 April 1999.
 18. Prince Lazar, the leader of this feudal state, was defeated by the Turks in 1389. Notwithstanding this, the Serbs turned this defeat into their national founding myth. This myth was evoked by Milosevic when on 28 June 1989 he declared at the 'holy place': 'Today, six centuries later, we are again on the battle field and look forward to new fights.' Since this speech, more than 200,000 people have been killed in the former Yugoslavia. What is more, Milosevic was successful in making millions of Yugoslavs believe that there is a worldwide conspiracy against the Serb people. Serbian hostility against the Turks can be explained, in part, by this ancient myth (as can Greek sympathy for the Serbs, but this is another matter).
 19. The same writer adds that Milosevic had the hope of strengthening his power by NATO air strikes and he expected to see Kosovo partitioned (something that had been recommended by the Serb Academy of Sciences in 1986); see *Die Ziet*, 11 February 1999.
 20. See also the piece titled 'No Time to Party', *FT*, 12 March 1999. The other articles appeared on 23 March, 24 March, 25 March (2), 26 March (2), 31

- March, 7 April, 8 April, 14 April, 15 April, 22 April, 23 April (2) and 26 April (2).
21. 'Meeting of Minds', *FT*, 14 April 1999. Wallace is professor of international relations at the London School of Economics.
 22. See 'M. Blair est déterminé à faire tomber M. Milosevic', *LM*, 22 April 1999: 3.
 23. 'Kosovo: l'OTAN dénonce les "boucliers humains", mais sans "preuve formelle" '.
 24. Anti-American sentiment among public figures can be traced back to de Gaulle and the French attempt to become the leader of the non-aligned world in the 1960s. The survival of these traditional allegiances and prejudices are among the reasons for a split in the political class on support for NATO action.
 25. See articles in *FT* on 31 March 1999 and 12 May 1999. Compare *LM*'s report of 14 May 1999 on the Greens' conference in Bielefeld, which relays the growing unease as the bombing has escalated and shows how the coalition is under increasing pressure: 'Les Verts Allemands demandent une pause dans les bombardements'.
 26. One of *LM*'s first in-depth articles on German reaction traces the evolution of the pacifist faction in the coalition: 'En Allemagne, la coalition de gauche fait bloc malgré les états d'âme des Verts'.
 27. 'Slobodan Milosevic représente l'Europe des années 30. Ce n'est pas la nôtre'.
 28. *LM* reports that on 15 April 1999, the US had 480 planes committed to the Kosovan conflict, France 60, UK 34, Italy 30, Netherlands 18, Belgium 14, Germany 13, Turkey 11, Canada 8, etc.
 29. 'Sur la base d'Istrana les Français respectent scrupuleusement le NATO secret'.
 30. 'La Participation française aux opérations au Kosovo est quasiment ignorée des Américains', in 'Malgré des désaccords les Etats-Unis continuent de travailler avec Moscou'.
 31. In the case of France, the government also included communists.
 32. The westerners included Dominique Moisi, a 'prominent French commentator on foreign affairs and *FT* columnist' (*FT*, 25 May 1999).
 33. 'Christendom's ancient split filters today's view of Kosovo', *FT*, 4 May 1999.
 34. Inevitably given that political and foreign affairs was reserved as one of the two intergovernmental pillars of the Maastricht Treaty. It is mostly economic affairs and the social and judicial issues that derive from them which are dealt with supernationally in the EU.
 35. For a discussion, see Smith and Wright (1999: 1–18).
 36. Research assistance in respect of British reportage of the war was carried out by Penny Smith.

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