“Sorry, you are not as important!”

A study about the unequal media treatment of different terrorist attacks in the world in 2015 – *Aftonbladet*

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Abstract

Since the start of the 21st century, and with the 9/11 events, terrorism has been in the focus of media more than ever. The aim of this study is to analyze the behavior of a Swedish newspaper, *Aftonbladet*, and its coverage of terrorist acts that happened through the world in 2015. Through a post-colonialist angle, the study will follow the how the “Us-Versus-Them” is constructed in *Aftonbladet*’s coverage. This will be done by comparing differences in articles related to various events that have happened in 2015, depending on their specificities. Following the descriptive statistics and discourse analysis methods, the study will be concluded with the fact that there was a difference of treatment of terrorist attacks from *Aftonbladet*, depending if the events regard “Us” or “Them”.

Keywords: Terrorism, Media, Coverage, Post-colonialism, Identity
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

During 2015, many terrorist attacks have happened around the world, causing the death and injury of thousands of civilians (Alpert, 2015). Some of those sad events took part in the West, while many others happened on different locations around the globe. If it is agreed that all victims of terrorism deserve mourning and respect, a general observation was that the coverage was unequal between different terrorist acts (Malik, 2015). Frantz Fanon, one of the founding-fathers of the post-colonialist theory claimed that “The feeling of inferiority of the colonized is the correlative to the European’s feeling of superiority” (Fanon, 1952: 69).

If the acts happening in the West have been covered minute by minute, and commemorated largely through different ways, those happening elsewhere have received much fewer attention, if not to say any, even if the victims were sometimes in larger numbers.

This “inequality” in coverage was largely criticized and created many controversies and debates. An example of this criticism was the observations of the Facebook’s security check that was activated after Paris attacks, but not in Beirut bombings one day earlier (Ng, 2015). The criticism extends also to the use of completely different words and expressions to describe the acts and their perpetrators depending on their origin (Cruz, 2015). Not only social media companies such as Facebook were accused of this double standard policy, but even the “traditional media”. Questions like why and how is the distinction made between different terrorist attacks started to raise more and more. The purpose of this thesis is to highlight those questions and try to answer them using the post-colonialist theory.

1.2 Research question and Purpose

Going through the observations and opinions presented in the introduction, the research question became clearer and clearer. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate if there is a difference of treatment of terrorist attacks by media depending on the place where the terrorist acts happen, and the origin of the victims/attackers, following a post-colonial angle. As the question is large and general, I have chosen to focus on a Swedish media (the newspaper Aftonbladet) and a set of events with the timespan of one year (2015). The idea will be to compare the difference of coverage, through the number of articles, and then analyze the use of words regarding a set of chosen terrorist events that had happened during 2015. The analysis
will then try to explain how is this difference of treatment build, by using the post-colonialist theory, and the concept of “Us-Versus-Them”.

**The main question will be:**

Does *Aftonbladet* differentiate terrorist acts depending on where they happen and who are the victims and the perpetrators? If yes, how can the post-colonial theory interpret this difference using the construction of the “Us-Versus-Them” concept in *Aftonbladet*’s coverage?

The motivation behind the research question, as explained in the introduction, is both its actual aspect, and the controversy that is still following it. Criticism and pointing out media coverage of terrorist attacks is indeed a current subject that came into light in many occasions, mainly during last year. Moreover, academic research in this area is limited, especially in Sweden. Through this thesis, my ambition is to investigate and correlate the post-colonialist theory with media coverage of terrorism, in an academic way

**1.3 Earlier Research**

In my text, two elements are combined with each other: (i) The construction of the “Us-Versus-Them” in a Post-colonial perspective, and (ii) Media framing of terrorism.

Earlier Research is frequent and abundant in both domains. The “Us-Versus-Them” is a classical concept in the post-colonial theory, and has been studied for example by Edward Said in his book Orientalism. It explains how orientalists from west constructed the concept of “Us” the modern west, versus “Them”, the others living in a different system of values, classified as lower, and not on the same level.

**Media framing of terrorism** is also a classical area of study. Many researches have been conducted over it, and different theories were applied to analyze it, mainly securitization. Cohen-Almagor has for instance studied in his article ”Media Coverage of Acts of Terrorism” how “media coverage of terrorist events was problematic and irresponsible” (Cohen-Almagor, 2005: 386). Svetlana Anufrienko has also studied relation between modern terrorism and media through the article “The Modern Terrorism, The Media and the Democracy”. The article investigated the reasons of established relationship between modern terror and mass media. One very important and relevant point for our study was that the article “criticized the point of view that terrorism can exist only in democratic states” (Anufrienko, 2013: 293).

However, a combination of both elements (post-colonialism and media covering terrorism) was difficult to find in previous studies. Only one article has studied the media behavior regarding
terrorism by comparing the difference of coverage depending on the geographical location: “Framing terrorism: geography-based media coverage variations of the 2004 commuter train bombings in Madrid and the 2009 twin suicide car bombings in Baghdad” of Sarah May Patrick. As its long title states, the article studies how media influences how readers comprehend an attack depending on its location. Patrick analyzed in particular the construction of islamophobia by media that cover differently events in West than in East.

Given the rich and useful information that I have gathered from earlier research, my thesis will continue on Patrick’s path, by extending the study from Islamophobia in particular to Post-colonialism in general, and from two single events (Madrid Vs Baghdad) to a set of events covering one year (2015).

1.4 Theory

In International Relation studies, theories are the key tools in analyzing various situations. Each theory uses different frameworks and angles of study. Explanation of one situation can thus vary a lot depending on which theory is used to explain it. In this study regarding media behavior towards terrorism, I will use the post-colonial theory as an angle of study. The study will analyse if the Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet constructs the “Us-Versus-Them” concept through its coverage of terrorist acts. The “Us-Versus-Them” is one of the fundaments of the postcolonial theory, and will be used through the whole analysis. Results will also be discussed with respect to the Post-colonial theory and its framework.

1.4.1 Post-Colonialism

The post-colonialist theory is a critical theory that has raised as an answer to the legacy of the colonial period and its consequences for the native people of the regions colonized by the West. Post-colonialist theory covers various domains related to International Relations such as feminism or Marxism. It is a relatively new theory that has started to raise in the middle of the 20th century. The imperialist expansion of Europe into the rest of the world created a relationship of superiority and Eurocentrism for one part, and inferiority and denigration for oneself for another part. Europe presented itself as the civilizing part bringing values to “uneducated” people. Original culture and values were denigrated, and even encouraged to be forgotten and denigrated.

Post-colonialism states that colonialism does not end with the end of colonial occupation, but rather extends to a set of values that remain such as culture and separation between the
“civilized north” and “underdeveloped south”. Factors such as language, culture, religion, identity and ethnicity are all relevant in this separation. By speaking an African native language with his compatriots, one is most likely to be seen as “uneducated” than if he spoke French or English. Through adopting a “Westernized” way of life (clothes, habits...), a person tries to show its appurtenance to the “civilized side”. Factors of separation are various, and participate all in the definition of the line of division between the West and the “Others”.

The key concepts of this theory were set by many scholars. Among those one can cite Frantz Fanon, who criticized how black people would denigrate themselves in order to confirm to “white” standards. “The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards” (Fanon 1952: 9).

Another prominent Post-Colonialist theoretician was Edward Said. His book Orientalism written in 1978 is considered as one of the highly influential sources in post-colonial studies. Orientalism explains how the concept of “Us-Versus-Them” was built through narrations of western orientalists, who visited the East and narrated it from their point of view. Said discusses especially the “collective notion identifying “us” Europeans as against all “those” non-Europeans” (Said, 1978: 7). This notion will be one of the key notion in this study, and is defined in the section below.

1.4.2 Us-Versus-Them

Edward Said, one of the prominent post-colonialists, talks about “this universal practice of designating in one’s mind a familiar space which is “ours” and an unfamiliar space beyond “ours” which is “theirs” ” (Said 1978: 54). The concept of “Us-Versus-Them” relies on identification factors that determine whether a person or a country is considered from “us” or not. Ethnicity, culture, language, religion or geography are all relevant in this discussion. In the West, a relatively homogenous culture entity, all are considered as members of “us”. Common factors decide that if you come for instance from a country with “white Christian” tradition, speaking a western European language, then you are one of “Us”. While if you are from a non-white, non-western country, that your cultural background and traditions are different, then you are considered as one of “Them”.

The perspective of “Us-Versus-Them” is clearly a point of departure to analyze the media behavior regarding terrorist acts. This approach will in fact study if Aftonbladet constructs a difference between terrorist attacks depending if it affects “Us” or “Them”. In the case of a positive answer, then this difference will be shown. The construction of “Us-Versus-Them” in
our case can be interpreted as the difference of coverage, for example by giving more importance to events related to who we consider are members of “Us”, and having less interest for “Them”. Use of words are also important, if some victims are described by specific terms (related to “Us”), while others are considered as “Them”. Not only importance is relevant, but also framing. In an “Us-Versus-Them” perspective, the view to victims and perpetrators is very subjective depending if they belong to “Us” or “Them”.

If those elements are present, we can conclude that Aftonbladet constructed in fact an “Us-Versus-Them” identity when covering terrorist attacks in 2015.

1.5 Method and Material

1.5.1 Method

For simplification reason, the study regards only one Swedish media, which is the newspaper Aftonbladet. The thesis can then be considered as a single case study. The focus of a case study is “to answer “how” and “why” questions” (Yin, 2006: 23). In my thesis, the interest is to answer the “how” question. Each study case should have a unit that is studied. In the scope of this thesis, the unit will be the newspaper Aftonbladet, and the study will be about how this newspaper is constructing the “Us-Versus-Them” by covering differently terrorist events that have happened in 2015 depending on a set of factors.

In order to study my research question and to be able to investigate it in a complete way, I have decided to use first descriptive statistics, and then Critical Discourse Analysis.

- Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics that I will use will consist on counting the number of articles that Aftonbladet has allocated for each of the studied terrorist events in 2015. The list of events is detailed in the next section. Table 1 below summarizes how the data will be gathered:

Table 1. Example of List of Attacks with related number of articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search Word</th>
<th>Timespan for search</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Victims</th>
<th>Perpetrators</th>
<th>Number of Articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: Event 1</td>
<td>“Event 1”</td>
<td>1/1/2015 – 1/2/2015</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>Number: xx Citizenship: xx</td>
<td>Group Affiliation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My method illustrated in the table compares (data) information related to some terrorist attacks that have happened in 2015. The comparison criteria is the number of articles written about
each attack in *Aftonbladet*. Attacks are searched by giving specific keywords (Search Word) to each event and try to search it in *Aftonbladet*. Typically, a keyword would be the city where the attack happened, or a name related to the event (Charlie Hebdo, Sanaa, Garissa…). I have also included the citizenship of victims, as it is a relevant element in the analysis.

**Critical Discourse Analysis**

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a “critical theory of language which sees the use of language as a form of social practice” (Janks 1997: 329). Words are in fact not neutral and have different connotations depending on how and when they are used. I will use the three dimensions analysis that was proposed by Fairclough (Janks 1997: 329):

“1 – Text analysis (description);
2 – Processing analysis (interpretation);
3 – Social analysis (explanation),”

The analysis of the language and words used to describe different acts will be of a use during this study. I will analyze how the use of some words can be related to a specific place or ethnicity while other words can be used to describe a similar event with same consequences, but happening elsewhere, or with different victims and perpetrators. Table 2 summarizes the approach that I would like to follow for my discourse analysis:

**Table 2. Words used in covering an attack**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event 1</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Victims (Ethnicity)</th>
<th>Perpetrators</th>
<th>Words used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event 1</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>Terrorist / Mentally disturbed…</td>
<td>Very sad Tragedy / Just another explosion…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the study is combining different methods, it can be considered as a **Triangulation**. Triangulation in social sciences is “defined as the mixing of data or methods so that diverse viewpoints or standpoints cast light upon a topic” (Olsen, 2004: 3). In the case of this study, the combination of two methods will contribute to answer the research questions. From one side, descriptive statistics, by comparing data, will answer the question if there is a difference of coverage or not. From another, discourse analysis will focus on characteristically elements of this difference, and highlight the “Us-Versus-Them” aspect, and show if it is present in *Aftonbladet’s* articles.
1.5.2 Material

My material will be articles from Swedish newspaper *Aftonbladet*. One reason for this choice is that this media is one of the most followed (and thus influential) in the country (TU, 2015). News that are broadcasted on this media (and the choice of words) affect a large audience in Sweden. *Aftonbladet* describe themselves as independent socio-democratic (*Aftonbladet* 2015). Articles will be covering events that have happened under the year 2015. In order to have a fair comparison, the events should be of a same extend, so I will always compare difference in behavior between events with approximately the same extend (close number of casualties, material damage, or any other relevant factor that can show that events are comparably in theory).

Material that I have chosen is divided into two parts. The first part regards events that will studied by descriptive statistics. For this, I have chosen 12 representative events that have happened in 2015. The reason why I have specifically chosen exactly each of those events can be either for their relevance (high number of causalities) or because they have happened on the same day (one on the west and the other elsewhere). The events are listed in Table 3 below.

Table 3. List of studied terrorist attacks in 2015 by chronological order.

*Source: see Appendix*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Casualties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baga Massacre</td>
<td>3 - 7 January</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Unknown (150 +)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie Hebdo Shooting</td>
<td>7 January</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanaa Car Bombing</td>
<td>7 January</td>
<td>Sanaa, Yemen</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fotokol massacre</td>
<td>4 February</td>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanaa Mosque bombing</td>
<td>20 March</td>
<td>Sanaa, Yemen</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garissa College attack</td>
<td>2 April</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sousse Attacks</td>
<td>26 June</td>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kukawa Massacre</td>
<td>1 July</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankara Bombings</td>
<td>10 October</td>
<td>Ankara, Turkey</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinai Plane Bombing</td>
<td>31 October</td>
<td>Sinai, Egypt</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beirut Bombings</td>
<td>12 November</td>
<td>Beirut</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris Attacks</td>
<td>13 November</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the second part (Discourse analysis), the comparison will be limited to two events. I have chosen to compare how Aftonbladet has covered Garissa Attack in Kenya and Paris Attacks in France. The reason for the choice of exactly those two events in particular is their comparability. They have indeed a comparable number of casualties (148/130), and in both cases, innocent civilians were killed, in countries that are considered as “stable”. The main noticeable difference between them is that one has happened in the West (Paris), while the other happened outside of it (Kenya). For each event, I will apply the Critical Discourse Analysis over three Aftonbladet articles related to it. For the Paris Attacks, I chose one descriptive article that was issued directly after the attacks, a second one giving tribute to victims, and a third discussing one of the perpetrators. In the case of Garissa attacks, I chose one article issued directly after the Attack, a second one describing also the attacks, but with more information, and a third one about the victims. The reason behind this choice is that I wanted to have articles about the same subjects in both cases, and because the most relevant (for CDA) articles in the case of an attack are the descriptive ones that come directly after it.

1.5.3 Critical evaluation of Sources

An issue that could be noticed is that my thesis is written in English, while it studies behavior of Swedish media. As Swedish media is mostly using the Swedish language for broadcasting and writing, I had to translate words and sentences that I used in my analysis from Swedish to English. This translation effort, as any translation, cannot completely reflect the original meanings, but I tried to find the most appropriate words, and as close as possible to the ideas in Swedish. This is also the reason why my discourse analysis includes first the version in Swedish, then the English translation, so that Swedish speakers can choose and understand the original version which bears the most “pure” meaning.

1.6 Definitions

In order to perform my analysis in a clear way, clarification and operationalization of three concepts is necessary: Terrorism, identity and the West. Those three concepts are very important to the study, as they are central items in the analysis. As those concepts can have many definitions, I have chosen to apply for each the definition that will be closest to our theoretical framework: Post colonialism.

- **Terrorism**: “The illegitimate use of force to achieve a political objective when innocent people are targeted.” (Anufrienko 2013: 294) This definition is the most appropriate one in the scope of our study, even if the word legitimate is questionable, as it is a relative
concept. Some parts in one conflict can consider their use of force as legitimate, while others think the opposite.

- **Identity**: “Identity is a set of characteristics determining who or what a person or thing is” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016). Our interest will be in this study about how people and states identify themselves according to given characteristics, such as culture, religion, ethnicity or language. When they are common, one is considered as part of “Us”, otherwise he become one of “them”.

- **The West**: Said defines the West as what is opposed to the Orient. “Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” (Said, 1978: 2). In order to give it a geographical extend, we can define West as a set of states sharing the same view of the world, from different cultural, political and economic aspects, including Western Europe, North America and Australia.

2. Media behavior study

My analysis of the *Aftonbladet* behavior is divided into two separate parts, for which results will be combined in the conclusion section, in order to understand the construction of the “Us-Versus-Them” identification. In the first part, I have gathered the number of articles that *Aftonbladet* had written about 12 terrorist events in 2015. In the second part, I have compared through a discourse analysis method how different was the coverage of Paris Attacks in November 2015 with Garissa college attacks in Kenya.

2.1 Coverage in Numbers

The part Coverage in Numbers is the part following descriptive statistics method. In the table 4 below, I have gathered a set of 12 terrorist attacks that have happened around the world in 2015, and found the number of articles related to each of them in Aftonbladet (*Aftonbladet*, 2016).

*Table 4. List of attacks with number of articles written in Aftonbladet*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Search word</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Victims</th>
<th>Perpetrators</th>
<th>Number Articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Event Name</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td>Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlie Hebdo shooting</td>
<td>Charlie Hebdo</td>
<td>7/1/2015</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>ISIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanaa car bombing</td>
<td>Sanaa</td>
<td>7/1/2015</td>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fotokol massacre</td>
<td>Fotokol</td>
<td>4/2/2015</td>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>Boko Haram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanaa Mosque bombing</td>
<td>Sanaa</td>
<td>20/3/2015</td>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>ISIS Yemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sousse Attacks</td>
<td>Sousse</td>
<td>26/6/2015</td>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Western Tourists</td>
<td>ISIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kukawa massacre</td>
<td>Kukawa</td>
<td>1/7/2015</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Boko Haram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankara Bombings</td>
<td>Ankara</td>
<td>10/10/2015</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>ISIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinai Plane</td>
<td>Metrojet</td>
<td>31/10/2015</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>Mostly Russia</td>
<td>ISIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beirut bombings</td>
<td>Beirut</td>
<td>12/11/2015</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>ISIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris Attacks</td>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>13/11/2015</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>ISIS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Nr:** Number  **Nat:** Citizenship
Elements in the Table that have a yellow background are those that have happened in west, while other attacks have a normal background. We can already notice from a first reading of the Table the big difference of number of articles between the two attacks in Paris, and the other attacks. The attack that has received most attention was the Paris attacks with 275 articles in one month, followed by the Charlie Hebdo shootings with 79 articles. It is the two events that have happened in the West. The next attack was far behind (Sousse Attacks), with 15 articles dedicated to it in June 2015. It is important to notice though that victims in Sousse attacks were mostly western tourists. This can already lead us to conclude that the three most covered attacks happened either in west or had western victims. Sinai plane, the attack with most casualties, has been the subject of only five *Aftonbladet’s* articles. Sanaa car bombing and Beirut bombing happened respectively the same day as Charlie Hebdo shooting and Paris Attacks, but received only 4 (Sanaa) and 7 (Beirut) articles.

Even more noticeable, two attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram, the Fotokol Massacre (Cameroon, 90 dead), and the Kukawa Massacre (Nigeria, 145 dead) had zero coverage. Those two events happened in Africa, and the victims were local citizens.

According to Table 4, the two attacks in the West and other attacks had comparable number of casualties, happened sometimes on the same date, and had “comparable” perpetrators (ISIS, Al Qaeda or Boko Haram). The only difference between them is the location. When an attack happened in France, it was given a much higher coverage than if it happened in Turkey. The Table answer then the first question, by showing that there is in fact a difference of coverage between different attacks. In a post-colonial context, the comparison can be interpreted as giving more interest to “us” (France in this case), than “Them” (all other attacks). France is considered as a part of the “West”, and events affecting this region are directly felt in Sweden. Nigeria and Cameroon however are “Them”, which explains little interest in covering them, and even zero articles about two attacks that resulted in nearly hundred victims.

### 2.2 Discourse analysis

The Discourse analysis part will highlight the differences in language between six different articles of *Aftonbladet*. The six chosen articles correspond to two events: Three articles are about the Paris Attack In November 2015, while the three others regard the Garissa college attack in April 2015.
2.2.1 Paris Attacks

The Paris attacks are a set of launched assaults on the stade de France, Bataclan concert venue and several bars and restaurants on 13 November 2015. It resulted by the dead of 130 people (RTE News, 2015). Those attacks were perpetrated by militants of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

The First studied article is the Article “Over 100 dead after attacks in Paris”. This article was issued the 13th November, which is the same day of the attacks. The article is rather long and contains 792 words. It is a descriptive article that narrates the events, and gives information that was available at that time. Perpetrators are qualified as “perpetrators” and victims as “the dead”. The article contains a live timeline of the events, and a map of Paris. The presence of a timeline shows how big the interest in this event from Aftonbladet is.

The second article is called “They fell victim to terror”. It was issued two days following the attacks, in the 15th November. This article gives the profiles of some of the victims. One can notice that pictures are used. The description is rather personal, elements like age, work and a short story are used to make the reader feel closer to the victims.

The third article is ”Information: Salah Abdeslam has fled to Syria”. This article was issued the 30th of November. It starts with a picture of Salah Abdeslam, one of the perpetrators of the Paris Attacks. Three interesting things are to be retained from this article. First, it has the form of a breaking information, which shows the big interest that the newspaper had in it. The second element is that Aftonbladet has written a whole article just about one of the perpetrators, which shows the deep interest it had in this event. Third, the article was issued 17 days after the events, which means that this event was a subject of coverage for a rather long period.

Elements of language in the three articles together can be summarized in the Table 5 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Victims</th>
<th>Perpetrators</th>
<th>Words used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paris Attacks</td>
<td>Paris - France</td>
<td>+ “Studenter, ingeniörer och försäljare” Students, engineers and salesman</td>
<td>+ Known and called by name: “Salah Abdeslam”</td>
<td>+ “Terrordåden” Terrorist Attacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+ ”Föll offer” Fell Victim</td>
<td>+ “Terroristerna” The Terrorists</td>
<td>+ ”Flera vittnen uppgjer” Many witnesses state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>+ ”Vid 23.28 uppgjer” At 23.28 (…) says</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From information collected in the three articles and the Table 5, one can observe that the articles dedicated to the Paris attack are rather long, detailed and show the big interest *Aftonbladet* had in covering those events. This high interest can for example be seen by the live reports done by *Aftonbladet*, giving even minute per minute updates (“at 23.28 someone reported”...), and asking witnesses. When describing the victims, *Aftonbladet* used familiar words such as “students, engineers”. The combination of this description with the live and extended coverage makes the reader know a lot about the victims and become familiar with them. The victims become close to us, even members of “us”. When reporting about perpetrators, an interesting fact in the article about Salah Abdelslam is that there is no mention at any moment that he is a Belgian citizen born in Belgium. The article instead is highlighting the fact that he might be in Syria, as a sign that he is not from “Us”, but with “Them”.

**2.2.2 Garissa Attack**

Garissa attack is an armed attack perpetrated by the extremist group Al-Shabab the 2 April 2015 on a university campus of the city of Garissa, in Kenya. The attack resulted on the dead of 148 people, most of them being students (BBC, 2015).

The first article in this discourse analysis was issued the 2nd April, the same day of the Attack. It is called “Al Shabab: Holding Christian hostages”. The article contains 409 words. It is a short descriptive article about the information available at that time. One interesting fact is that *Aftonbladet* reports in one sentence that “the group affirms detaining Christian persons as hostages”. Then, later in the text reports “The armed men were shooting everything they saw”. Why would interest of information only be for the “Christian” then?

The second article dedicated to Garissa events in *Aftonbladet* is called: “At least 147 dead in a school attack in Kenya”. It was also issued the 2nd April, but has more recent information about the events. However, this article is even shorter than the first one even if it is an updated version. It contains indeed just 267 words.

The third article “Now the victims of the massacre are honored on social media” was issued five days after the Attack, in the 7th April. The article presents some of the victims of the Garissa attack. Presentation is not from *Aftonbladet*, but rather a collection of five Tweets that has been dedicated to the victims. Each tweet presents a picture and short presentation of the victim. The text in the articles gives the impression that the interest is more about the social media and hashtags, than about presenting the victims themselves. One relevant sentence confirming that, is “Nu sprids namn och bilder på offren i sociala medier över hela världen” that
can be translated to: “Now the names and pictures of the victims are spreading in Social Media through the whole world”.

Table 6. Words used by Aftonbladet to Cover Garissa Attacks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Victims</th>
<th>Perpetrators</th>
<th>Words used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

From the collected information in the three articles and the Table 6, the following ideas can be concluded about Aftonbladet’s coverage of Garissa Attack:

First of all, articles about Garissa attacks are shorter than those dedicated to Paris Attacks. When describing the attacks, the word Skärtorsdagen (Maundy Thursday) was used to give the date of the Attack. This date has a religious reference, and can be linked with the first article naming “Christian” hostages. However, unlike the first article (where the word “Christian” was said by Al-Shabab, and was “just” reported by Aftonbladet), the use of “Maundy Thursday” in the second article is a choice of Aftonbladet itself. Not only Maundy Thursday is used, but even Easter Sunday and Easter Monday are used to describe the date instead for the normal calendar date.

The use of a religious reference is likely to be an intent of identification from Aftonbladet, to identify the “Christian” as “ours”. Another important observation is that the word Christian used by Aftonbladet was not quoted, even if they say that it was in Al-Shabaab’s speech. This can be interpreted as if Aftonbladet takes this as a fact and communicates it to its readers. Moreover, in the three articles there is no reference to the victims other than the Christian ones that Aftonbladet talked about, even if they said earlier that “the terrorists were shooting everything they saw”. When describing the perpetrators, Aftonbladet used the qualification “Somalian terrorist Organization Al-Shabab”. The use of the image of a whole country is typically a sign of orientalism, and is the complete opposite of what Aftonbladet did for Salah
Abdelslam, where it was very cautious with not mentioning his Belgian appurtenance. But Somalian are different from “Us”, they are “Them”, and this can explain why Aftonbladet has used it in combination with Al-Shabaab. Finally, the fact that there was no article about the perpetrators shows that interest in this attack was lower.

3. Conclusions

3.1 Discussion of Results

From the results that we have collected in the analysis part, the most basic result is that there is in fact a difference of coverage of Aftonbladet between different terrorist Attacks that have happened in 2015. Table 4 gave us an overview about this difference. While the attacks in the West attacks were covered extensively, others had fewer interest, and two were even not mentioned at all.

Considering the two attacks that we have studied with the Critical discourse Analysis, one can observe immediately the difference. While Aftonbladet wrote 275 articles about Paris Attacks, it has only dedicated 10 to Garissa attack. Both attacks are comparable in number of casualties, and were both perpetrated by “terrorist” groups. The difference between them was geographical, one Attack happened in the West (Paris), but not the other (Garissa). This difference did not only depend on where the event happens, but also on who was affected (either as a victim or perpetrator).

Taking a postcolonial angle, we have seen how the victims were divided into two categories: The ones deserving more attention (ours), and the others. France is a country in the West, sharing many common characteristics with Sweden. In this context, the interest was clearly bigger in the case of the Paris attacks, with:

- Higher number of articles
- Longer articles
- More extended coverage, live timeline of events... Making the events of Paris dramatic, and more likely to affect one’s feelings then those of Garissa.
- More interest in the Paris victims and their personal life: Combining faces and smiles with the text. It is true that Aftonbladet dedicated an article to Garissa victims, but it was a gathering of Tweets and social media, “maybe” just not be criticized later.
- Even when the interest was about the Garissa Attack, most of the focus was regarding “Christian” students, and references to Christianity and “our” heritage was very present.
The same logic can be applied to the perpetrators, but in a different order: The ones deserving more attention (the others), and “ours”.

- Al-Shabaab was called “Somalian terrorist organization”, while there was no mention to where Salah Abdelslam comes from. Focus was instead about his relation with Syria, and with the “Others”, even if he has spent all his life in Europe, with “Us”.
- Interest in Perpetrators in Garissa case was very limited, while it was an important part of the coverage in the Paris Attacks. This can be explained by the higher interest Aftonbladet is having for the Paris attacks, since the victims are “our” and the perpetrator is “Them” (even if he is actually “our” but was presented by Aftonbladet as a member of “Them”).

### 3.2 Suggestions for further work

In this work, I have tried to use the theoretical tool of Post-colonialism and the concept of “Us-Versus-Them” to study the difference of coverage Aftonbladet applied to different terrorist attacks in 2015. My aim was to contribute with a study in this area where not a lot of research was done previously. As this work is not complete, it can be enriched and extended in different aspects, among which:

- Extend the study to International media, not only Swedish
- Extend the study cases to other situations that were not studied, for example that the perpetrator has a “Western” ethnicity, and how he would be described…
- Perform a Discourse Analysis about terrorist attacks but not related to media, rather to politicians for example. This can be done with help of other theories such as securitization.
- Extend the study outside of the Media circle, for example to social Media. This can be done with a quantitative statistical method analyzing the number of Facebook posts related to an event, hashtags, likes, retweets… Which gives a tendency about a given population of a country or region.
References

Books


Articles


Internet Sources

- Ng, Kate (2015) *Facebook criticized over Paris attack ‘safety check’ after no action on Beirut bombing*, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/facebook-criticised-


Appendix

Sources for Table 3


**Articles used in Discourse Analysis**

• **Paris Attacks**

  o Aftonbladet (2015) *Över 100 döda efter attacker i Paris*  
    [http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article21761633.ab](http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article21761633.ab) (Last Visited: 2016-05-31)

  o Aftonbladet (2015) *De föll offer för terorn*  
    [http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article21767144.ab](http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article21767144.ab) (Last Visited: 2016-05-31)

  o Aftonbladet (2015) *Uppgifter: Salah Abdelslam har flytt till Syrien*  
    [http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article21858389.ab](http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article21858389.ab) (Last Visited: 2016-05-31)

• **Garissa Attack**

    [http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article20566892.ab](http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article20566892.ab) (Last Visited: 2016-05-31)

  o Aftonbladet (2015) *Minst 147 döda i skolattack i Kenya*  
    [http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article20571136.ab](http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article20571136.ab) (Last Visited: 2016-05-31)

  o Aftonbladet (2015) *Nu hedras offren för massakern på sociala medier*  
    [http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article20589408.ab](http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article20589408.ab) (Last Visited: 2016-05-31)