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**Laura Kyrke-Smith**  
**Information Intervention and the case of Kosovo:**  
**Realising the Responsibility to Protect**

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# Information Intervention and the Case of Kosovo: Realising the Responsibility to Protect

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## **Abstract:**

*Since the 1990s there has been unprecedented international intervention in the affairs of sovereign states, increasingly endorsed by the notion of the 'responsibility to protect'. One aspect almost entirely overlooked in the academic literature, despite its proliferation in practice, is information intervention: that is, the role of information in such interventions. This article focuses on the international intervention in Kosovo's information environment as an element of post-conflict 'rebuilding' since 1999. In particular, it explores three contested aspects of the intervention: first, the transfer of responsibility for information and media management to local level; second, the antagonism between proponents of liberalisation and of regulation of local media; and third, the animosity between the competing approaches of 'public diplomacy' and 'media development'. The article exposes the limitations of our current understanding of information intervention, to argue that refining the concept and giving it greater prominence in future interventions is imperative if the 'responsibility to protect' is to be realised.*

## **Introduction**

Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed (Preamble of the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, November 1945).

Since the 1990s there have been unprecedented international interventions in the affairs of sovereign states from Somalia to East Timor and Kosovo, with a corresponding burgeoning of literature. One aspect almost entirely overlooked, however, is information intervention: that is, the role of information in such interventions.

First, the term information intervention will be defined and, having explored its definition, its limitations exposed. As an example, the information intervention by NATO and United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in Kosovo since 1999 will be outlined.

Second, the focus will be to establish the role of information intervention within the 'responsibility to protect' paradigm, and particularly at the 'rebuilding' stage; for it is in the post-conflict stage that information interveners have been most active. The role of information in complementing and potentially reducing the use of force in implementing the 'responsibility to protect' will also specifically be considered. International Relations theorists benefit from this analysis, for while the role of the media in prompting intervention has been studied,<sup>1</sup> the place for local media has been overlooked. Local media, the primary carriers of information in the given society, constitute the core component of information intervention.

Third, there will be deeper scrutiny of three central and disputed aspects of information intervention, in the context of Kosovo: first, the question of transfer of responsibility to local level; second, the antagonism between proponents of liberalisation and of regulation of local media; and third, the animosity between the competing approaches of 'public diplomacy' and 'media development'. In a final section, the concept of public diplomacy will be redefined: an improved understanding, it is proposed, is integral to the success of future information interventions. These points of contention sit uncomfortably within the 'responsibility to protect' paradigm as it is currently understood, and alternative theoretical approaches are necessary to resolve ongoing contention. Overall, 'moral pragmatism' provides a conceptual framework to make future interventions – with a central information component – more inclined towards lasting success.

## **Defining information intervention**

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<sup>1</sup> On the 'CNN effect' see Minear *et al* (1996); for Western media coverage of the NATO bombing see Hammond and Herman (2000).

The most comprehensive definition to date is provided by Monroe Price and Mark Thompson: 'the extensive external management, manipulation, or seizure of information space in conflict zones' (2002:8). Price and Thompson build on Jamie Metzl's definition of 'soft form of humanitarian intervention' between 'the extremes of massive, armed humanitarian intervention and mere symbolic action' (see Metzl 1997). As a concept, information intervention is not new. The August 1945 Potsdam Agreement required Eastern Europe's occupiers to 'prevent all Nazi and militarist propaganda' with the long-term intention to construct a more democratic media space. Yet while information intervention proliferates in practice, the term remains contested: indeed, 'it has not yet congealed to the point where analysts can get to work' (Price & Thompson 2002: 3). On key issues, debate is stale and yet unresolved.

First, time frames and responsibility remain disputed. Metzl envisages three possible strands to information intervention: monitoring of incendiary media, 'peace broadcasting' of neutral news and information into crisis zones, and the jamming of TV and radio broadcasts (1997: 16). While Metzl focuses on pre-crisis and crisis point, Price and Thompson extend analysis to post-conflict peacebuilding and democratic development. In terms of responsibility, Metzl asserts that, with lack of alternatives, the main institutional organ is the UN (1997: 19). Price and Thompson, however, emphasise that NGOs, individual states and multilateral organisations are crucial.

Second, the question of legitimacy remains contested. Information intervention is justifiable to prevent incitement to genocide under the Genocide Convention. Metzl argues that had it been applied in 1994 Rwanda, genocide could have been avoided (1997: 16). But precisely because of this failure, this justification is of little practical utility (Farrior 2002). More applicable has been Chapter VII of the UN Charter, condoning information intervention as a measure against threats to international peace and security (Blinderman 2002). Alternatively, organisations such as UNESCO advocate information intervention as legitimate humanitarian assistance, overriding sovereignty where states cannot provide for their populations (Darbishire 2002). It is uncertain, moreover, whether using force is

legitimate. Eric Blinderman maintains that under UN Charter Article 2 (4), states are prohibited to use all force against another state except in self-defence or with UN Security Council authorisation. Metzl, however, accepts that jamming 'risks provoking an armed response', and armed force itself may be necessary (1997: 18). An uncomfortable possibility is raised: is international law sufficiently instructive to be the main point of reference?

While the 'responsibility to protect' offers insight on these matters, in the post-conflict environment, three further points are less easily resolved. The first concerns the limits of information intervention and transfer to local responsibility. The second specifically concerns media regulation. In practice, dispute has tended to settle in favour of media regulators, but a host of freedom of expression NGOs remain deeply discontented with what is considered denial of the fundamental human right to freedom of expression.<sup>2</sup>

Third, and most significantly, the question of motive remains contested, with a rift in approach between public diplomacy and indigenous media development activity. Public diplomacy conventionally involves addressing hostile propaganda and conducting rival propaganda. In conflict situations, most notoriously with Radio-Television Libre des Mille Collines, the Hutu-controlled Rwandan radio station operative during the genocide, local forces seize the media to pursue their goals: the media becomes a crucial political tool. Countering this, as soon as possible, is the first task of the interveners. In addition, 'information operations'<sup>3</sup> and public information are introduced to communicate the purpose of the interveners' presence and manage its reputation. Metzl's suggested actions are aggressive, focusing on immediate causes and consequences of conflict. It is essential, for 'in an era of mass communications and electronic transmission, the public matters. The 'street is a potent force' (Hoffman 2002: 84). Public diplomacy might be termed the 'political' approach to information intervention.

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<sup>2</sup> As covered in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

<sup>3</sup> Defined as: 'information operations (IO) are described as the integrated employment of electronic warfare (EW), computer network operations (CNO), psychological operations (PSYOP), military deception (MILDEC), and operations security (OPSEC), in concert with specified supporting and related capabilities, to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp adversarial human and automated decision making while protecting our own' (Joint Chiefs of Staff 2006).

In contrast, media development activity is traditionally guided by human rights, opposed to any challenge to the sanctity of information. It is longer-term, involving establishment and development of indigenous media to promote reconciliation, democratic development, and expansion of civil liberties, both through the media and by virtue of the development of a free and fair media. Additionally, media development focuses on implementing a legal, regulatory and institutional framework for a viable media sector; an 'enabling environment' (Krug & Price 2003). This is 'developmental' information intervention.

There is tension between on the one hand using the media for specific directed purposes and on the other conveying the message that media should be free and fair. The developmental approach feels threatened by excessively overt or aggressive public diplomacy activity: 'perceptions that media are intended to serve the needs of external propaganda... may damage the credibility of media development efforts, [which] can be fatal to a peace operation' (Price & Thompson 2002: 9).

Adherents of public diplomacy, on the other hand, only promote information intervention that directly satisfies their political goals. The UN has traditionally taken this narrow political approach. Kofi Annan (2000) referred to the 'power of communication' as 'source of leverage... not only to push the parties to abide by their commitments, but also to insist on respect for themselves and their mandate'. Andrew Puddephatt notes its ongoing prevalence, appealing that we must learn to 'recognise the importance of media development both instrumentally *and* for the way it builds democracy and human rights' (2006: 26).

With UN intervention in East Timor, however, the problematic overlap with media development was first recognised, in the tension between attempts to provide objective information to the population, and media under the influence of authorities opposed to the mission's mandate. The implication was clear: peacekeeping operations required access to local media to protect their own

security, and to build credibility with the local population (Wimhurst 2002). Louise Frechette, Deputy Secretary-General, acknowledged:

Our first challenge is to explain to the population at large the role of a United Nations mission.... Our second, and equally important challenge, is to begin fostering a local press... Building a free and thriving press is an essential component of our post-conflict strategy in every mission (Frechette 2000).

Yet Metzl argues that there remains too much 'ad-hockery', and failure to adequately distinguish between public diplomacy and media development:

Goal number one is developing indigenous media... Goal number two is to establish an effective mouthpiece for the international community... Goal number three is to create an environment in which everybody – ourselves included – acts responsibly.... If those three points were clearly delineated... and a dialogue was begun immediately with groups on the ground, it would help every other aspect of a peace operation (Metzl cited in Thompson 2002: 51-52).

Failure to resolve ongoing tensions leads some theorists to abandon the term 'information intervention' altogether: it seems too broad, too indistinct (Thompson 2007). Refining understanding is essential to preserve its validity, and to allow information a central role in realising future interventions.

## **The information intervention in Kosovo**

The international intervention in Kosovo has arguably been the most ambitious and contentious to date, with a major information intervention component. The broader intervention is well-documented, so a brief outline will suffice. The information component of the intervention, both the public diplomacy and media development strands, will be considered in greater detail.

### *International intervention in Kosovo*

In April 1999, after talks at Rambouillet failed, NATO deployed 1000 aircraft in a high altitude bombing campaign to end hostilities between Serbs and Albanians. 'It is a war based not on territorial ambitions, but on values', according to Tony Blair (1999). In other words, NATO's first 'humanitarian war' (Roberts 1999). Up to 10,000 soldiers and civilians were killed in total, but after three months fighting almost ceased. NATO were criticised for increasing the number of casualties, for taking action too late, and for refusing to risk the lives of its servicemen. The bombing was not UN-authorised, but Kofi Annan retrospectively declared it 'illegal but legitimate' (IICK 2000).

On 10 June 1999, as the bombing ended, UN Security Council Resolution 1244 established UNMIK, pursuant to Chapter VII of the UN Charter, as an interim civilian administration. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) heads UNMIK, with responsibility divided among four 'pillars'. SRSG performs executive functions but also issues generally applicable normative acts, performing a legislative function too. Pillars I and II were UN-led and then transferred to institutions of provisional self-government, overseeing police and justice and civil administration retrospectively. Pillar IV, economic development and reconstruction, is European Union-led. Media development falls within Pillar III, bearing responsibility for democratisation and institution building, under the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Alongside UNMIK, NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) was deployed, initially involving around 50,000 troops; and now reduced to 16,000.

Initially welcomed, hostility towards UNMIK has steadily increased. Final status talks were slow to commence; UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari only released the Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement in February 2007. Kosovans now expect transfer to 'supervised' independence under an International Civilian Office by the end of 2007 (UN Security Council 2007).

*Information intervention during the NATO bombing*



During the NATO bombing, Slobodan Milosevic exploited the media: Jamie Shea, NATO spokesperson, stated, 'we were fighting him with weapons and he was fighting us back with pictures' (2001: 210). Milosevic targeted his own population and NATO information capacity directly, authorising hackers to attack the NATO website and send mail containing viruses; organising 'a systematic ping bombardment of our server that went on for ten days and totally incapacitated it... a sort of a Love-Bug from Belgrade' (Shea 2001: 211).

Correspondingly, NATO launched a series of information intervention initiatives, even before military intervention. In early 1999, the United States set up an Albanian television programme called 'Agreement for Peace', reaching 70% of Kosovo's population (Thompson 2002: 53), on which leading US figures appeared to make the case for Rambouillet. From April 1999 the US established a radio transmitters network – the 'Ring Around Serbia' – to project Serbian-language programming of international stations such as BBC World Service in to Serbia, supplying it with alternative sources of information to Milosevic's propaganda. 'NATO Allied Voice Radio Television Station' was beamed in to Serbia, and internet sites established to echo its messages. In addition, 100 million leaflets were dropped. They instructed people to evacuate prior to bombing raids, and targeted centres of Serbian population informing them that it was the Milosevic regime, not civilians, who were the target. Serbia also dropped leaflets over Kosovo, with scare tactics such as 'NATO is using biological warfare!' (Friedman 1999).

The most contentious aspect of the initial information intervention was the NATO bombing of Radio Television of Serbia (RTS), on 23 April 1999. Sixteen civilians were killed and a further four seriously wounded. The measure was ineffective: RTS broadcasting resumed from elsewhere within four hours of the attack.

*Information intervention under UNMIK: public diplomacy*

Under international administration, public diplomacy activities have continued extensively. UNMIK's information activities are centered in the Division of Public Information. A radio unit produces programmes for local rebroadcast and runs its own outlet, Radio Blue Sky. A television unit produces programmes in Albanian, English and Serbian, aired on Kosovo-wide television, 'covering a broad range of issues explaining the activities of UNMIK and its four pillars, UN agencies, KFOR and other international organisations' (UNMIK Division of Public Information). Most popular is Albanian-language 'Ekonomia e Re', exploring economic reconstruction and development issues. There is one Serb-language news and features programme: 'Danas I Sutra'. In addition, UNMIK publishes a monthly magazine entitled 'Focus Kosovo', with interviews and features articles on life in Kosovo, and particularly matters relating to UNMIK. The OSCE and EU also have small Press and Public Information offices responsible for public information campaigns about their activities, and serving as a focal point for press enquiries.

The channelling of attention and resources in to UNMIK's own media output has been criticised for privileging the international community's messaging over local media capacity-building (Hoffman 2007: 94). Despite often billing itself as developmental, output is essentially UNMIK's own public information. Former Temporary Media Commissioner (TMC) Anna DiLellio asserts: 'people never read UNMIK publications - why would you want to read a government newspaper?' (DiLellio 2006). Of 'Danas I Sutra' Jeff Biele, former UNMIK Press Office chief, admits 'I censor it... we're not going to put it in there, if someone says UNMIK is terrible' (Biele 2006).

KFOR also has a public diplomacy wing. Initially KFOR's mandate was narrow: 'to deter renewed hostility and threats against Kosovo by Yugoslav and Serb forces' (NATO 2000). As hostilities ceased, KFOR's activities expanded beyond conventional peacekeeping: 'KFOR focuses on building a secure environment in which all citizens, irrespective of their ethnic origins, can live in peace and, where international aid, democracy and civil society are gradually gaining strength' (NATO 2000). Chief Public Information Officer Colonel Senger adds nation building to the mandate, for 'nation building is force protection' (Senger 2006). While initially

its information activities focused on information operations in support of narrowly military peacekeeping operations, public diplomacy activities have now also expanded accordingly. The information operations division remains, under the Chief-of-Staff's supervision, to directly support the activities of KFOR troops. But the expanding Public Information Office, under the command of KFOR Commander-in-Chief also gives regular briefings to local press and arranges publicity. Local media analysts monitor content relating to KFOR, and produce the 'KFOR Chronicle' for internal circulation. Individual divisions of troops also run public information campaigns (see for example Task Force Falcon 2002).

#### *Information intervention under UNMIK: media development*

The other main strand of intervention is media development. Drawing lessons from Bosnia, OSCE was vested with a stronger mandate than previous missions: 'to contribute to the creation of conditions that support freedom of the press and freedom of information in Kosovo' OSCE would perform 'all substantive and preparatory work on media issues' while the SRSG oversaw key decisions (OSCE 1999; Mertus & Thompson 2002: 261). OSCE operates alongside numerous NGOs and donors.

In part, OSCE supports the growth of indigenous media. One of its first activities, in June 1999, was to establish the public broadcaster, Radio-Television Kosovo. American donors simultaneously focused on developing independent commercial media outlets, and this European - American divide in approach remains. There was a vast and immediate expansion of media outlets. 116 local radio stations are now operative in the country, as well as ninety-four radio stations (four Kosovo-wide) and twenty-two TV channels (three Kosovo-wide: RTK, RTV21 and Koha Vision) (UNMIK 2007), and an increase too of internet, cable TV and mobile phone media. But quality and sustainability suffered, and NGOs have increasingly shifted from opening new outlets to improving existing ones. A 2005 OSCE report concluded: 'the concept of "survival of the financially fittest" will not leave the most qualified stations alive or serve the public interest' (Laue 2005). Andrew

Puddephatt adds, 'it is possible to have too much media for there to be coherent public space for debate' (Puddephatt 2006: 17). There is increasing emphasis on market research, improving media literacy and educating audiences about their rights vis-à-vis the media (Selimaj 2006).

Newspapers have not received the same donor funding, but ten Albanian-language dailies currently operate with a total combined circulation of 20,000 (Index Kosova 2007). All, except *Express* and possibly *Zeri*, are allied to political parties. As Youth Initiative for Human Rights's Alfred Marleku explains, 'if you are PDK, you read *Epoca e Re* ... If you are with Veton Surroi you will read *Koha Ditore* ... People read what they want to hear' (Marleku 2006). An overwhelming majority, currently 87%, prefers television. In contrast, only 4% prefer radio, and 7% newspapers (Index Kosova 2007). Nonetheless larger newspapers such as *Koha Ditore* are influential in that political elites read them.<sup>4</sup>

There has been some criticism of the failure to provide media for Serbs and other minorities (Haraszti 2004). Serbs live in enclaves, closely linked to Belgrade, and this pattern is reflected in the media: Serbs consume media from Belgrade or locally, and never from Pristina (USAID 2004). There is no Serb newspaper in Kosovo, and Serb-language TV and media, such as RTK bulletins, are unpopular. Baton Hoxhui, editor of *Express*, claims 'Express is the only newspaper covering Serbs... people see us as traitors' (Hoxhiu 2006). Associated Press journalist Senad Sabovic argues that the Kosovo-wide media are deliberately antagonistic: 'they do stupid things like broadcast really nationalistic shows after 12 when the internationals go to sleep, little tricks like cutting down on Serbian language and so on' (Sabovic 2006). The OSCE advocates expanding local public service broadcasters to benefit minorities, as in Montenegro, but there has been no progress to date (Haraszti 2006). Only one improvement is evident: KOSMA, a new network of five core Serb radio stations allowing programme sharing and exchange of information, at least improves the quality of Serb media if not enables a shared Serb- Albanian media space.

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed study of *Koha Ditore* see Limani 2003.

Second, besides support for media outlets, there has been extensive journalistic training. Most journalists are inexperienced, as a USAID report finds: 'in many cases, journalists do not appear to have grasped the basics of their profession. They publish allegations without offering the right of reply. 'Impartiality' is the process of carrying a sound bite from every single political party, whatever the story... journalists often arrive without having researched the subject in question' (USAID 2004: 42). 'Protocol journalism' prevails. In response, IREX offers technical training for production staff, and international news organisations such as the BBC and Reuters offer content training. Consultants work with government, political parties and legal institutions to improve their media interactions (Krasniqi 2006).

These processes, however, have faced significant criticism. Editors complain that training is biased towards correspondents: 'I mean, what is the point in training journalists if it's bad editors that decide what's published?' (Qena 2006). Technical training is privileged over qualitative training, with poor quality journalism the result: 'you just gave them the cameras to spread their stupidity', Balkans Investigative Reporting Network's Jeta Xharra remarks (Xharra 2006). Training abroad often lacks contextual relevance and long-term impact. As Vetevendosje's Albin Kurti states:

They take 5 Albanians, 5 Serbs, send them to Belfast, that's 'ethnic management measures, conflict prevention'... there's no follow-up to that, they go there and eat some exotic meals which look like Kandinsky artwork, and when they come back here they barely have milk and bread (Kurti 2006).

Increasingly there are efforts to localise training, such as the Norwegian-sponsored Kosovo Institute for Journalism and Communication (KIJAC) and the Kosovo Media Institute. IREX have also facilitated the establishment of groups such as the Association of Professional Journalists and the media owners' association, AMPEC. But progress remains slow.

The third aim of the OSCE is to establish the enabling environment; to implement a legislative framework to guarantee freedom of speech and access to information.

Initially there were no immediate moves towards regulation, but the approach to October 2000 elections raised concern. ‘Vigilante journalism’ increased, and in spring 2000 a Serb UNMIK employee, Petar Topoljski, was murdered after an article in daily newspaper *Dita*. *Dita* was fined and temporarily shut down by SRSG Bernard Kouchner. This was a draconian and contentious move, and OSCE chief Daan Everts wrote to Kouchner tersely stating that a preferred approach would have been simply ordering an apology or retraction (Mertus & Thompson 2002: 270). *Koha Ditore*, aggravated by this apparent rule by decree, offered to reserve several pages for *Dita*’s editorials while its offices were closed. DiLellio explains: ‘this handling of the case, which it is not inappropriate to call imperial, catalysed local journalists and editors against the international administration’ (2005: 67).

As a response to rising hostilities and to Topoljski’s murder, a firmer normative base for media intervention was developed, comprised of SRSG Regulations 2000/36 and 2000/37 (UNMIK 2000b; 2000c), as well as supplementary acts in the form of Codes of Conduct, drafted by the newly-appointed TMC and promulgated as law by SRSG. SRSG 2000/4 is also an element of the normative basis, legislating ‘on the Prohibition against Inciting to National, Racial, Religious or Ethnic Hatred, Discord or Intolerance’ (UNMIK 2000a). Yet as ‘merely a temporary replacement for an absent government authority,’ UNMIK are limited in their ability to promulgate laws (UNHCHR 2007). OSCE increasingly offers advice to parliamentary committees to draft their own media legislation.

The TMC, now replaced by the Independent Media Commission, was appointed to oversee broadcast regulation. It also had limited powers over print media, imposing fines on *Dita* and *Bota Sot*, until the adoption of the self-regulatory model - the Press Council - in 2005. The Council, directly owned by the print media, now has extensive powers to set the Code of Conduct, impose fines, and compel newspapers to print its adjudications. As TMC, DiLellio aimed for transition from disciplinary agency to mediator, strengthening the Media Appeals Board to make the TMC more accountable. The main activity of the IMC is now licensing.

Since 2000, the media has only once come under severe criticism, when footage on RTK was linked to the March 2004 riots. RTK did not face serious sanctions, and an OSCE report simultaneously condemned and forgave the action: 'the media cannot generate sentiments or hostilities overnight', it conceded, but it did inject 'emotional, unsubstantiated reporting' in an already tense situation (Haraszti 2004: 15). Overall, this one incident should not distort what is acknowledged to be an increasingly stable information environment.

### **From 'humanitarian intervention' to 'responsibility to protect': the role of information**

Having outlined the information intervention in Kosovo, the article will now turn to the shift in international relations rhetoric from 'humanitarian intervention' to the 'responsibility to protect'. The centrality of information intervention within this paradigm, which is currently overlooked, will be established.

#### *Beyond sovereignty: 'the responsibility to protect'*

It is now widely accepted that the Westphalian sovereignty norm, historically overstated (see Krasner 1999), can be overridden. As Kofi Annan (1999) declared, 'state sovereignty, in its most basic sense, is being redefined', resting on whether states are capable of acting as responsible sovereigns. Recognising this trend, the UN has adopted 'the responsibility to protect', outlined in the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS 2001). The report establishes that where states are unable to protect citizens, the international community must replace swift interventionist actions with deeper involvement in three main stages: preventing, reacting to and rebuilding after conflict. Rebuilding may involve international transitional administrations in a range of forms from 'supervision' to direct governance (see Caplan 2005). But throughout, the referent object is not states - implying the right to intervene is a privilege of the powerful -

but local populations. Guaranteeing human rights – ‘human protection’ (ICISS 2001) - takes precedence.

Nicholas Wheeler outlines the new interventionism from a solidarist perspective, charting a steady increase in interventionist actions articulated in humanitarian terms. Intervention, he argues, has become a moral duty in ‘supreme humanitarian emergencies’; though the ‘gaze’ of interveners remains ‘selective’ (Wheeler 2000). Even since 9/11 humanitarian rhetoric remains powerful: Tony Blair justified intervention in Iraq as ‘an act of humanity’ (BBC 2003).

In terms of responsibility, ICISS acknowledges that a whole range of actors may be involved (see ICISS 2001). Indeed, besides the four-pillar system in Kosovo, there are hundreds of individual state development agencies, international consultants, private companies and NGOs involved, and KFOR. Yet in Kosovo, as in interventions more broadly, the UN continues to lead. If initially non-UN actors conduct interventions, the role of longer-term peacebuilding falls to the UN, in missions from UNTAC and UNMIL to UNPROFOR. Adopting Neta Crawford’s constructivist concept of international norm arbitration (1993), the UN remains the most democratic sphere in which norms are developed - imperfect, but nevertheless a global forum unlike any other - leading the ‘shift in moral consciousness’ towards humanitarianism that Wheeler (2000) demands.

The ‘responsibility to protect’ also requires unprecedented long term planning. No interventionist strategy can be fully comprehensive, but referring to Kosovo Sabovic establishes the need for at least an outline plan: ‘the war part was excellent: NATO won a victory without a single mistake. But after June 1999: no strategy – just day-to-day crisis management’ (Sabovic 2006).

The steady erosion of sovereignty is no more evident than in the transformation in global media and communications, facilitated by the spread of the internet. Communications is just one aspect of ‘interventions in slow motion’ - Neta Crawford’s phrase to denote increasing global interdependence (cited in Farer *et al* 2005: 17). The international communications environment is a component part of



the 'norm cascade' in favour of humanitarianism, for the media plays a key role in structuring this normative discourse (Finnemore 1996). Yet the role of information has been disregarded.

*The 'responsibility to protect': what role for information?*

Information plays a role throughout the three stages of intervention: first, in prevention, and then during conflict, the ICISS explicitly mentions the role of local media (ICISS 2001). But it is post-conflict that information intervention has been most thoroughly tested; and most thoroughly overlooked. Kosovo, William Strobel argues, 'was a potent reminder why nations should not undertake conflict and conflict management without a full understanding of, and a plan for, information at every stage of the effort' (Strobel 2001: 685).

A key goal of the 'rebuilding' strand of the responsibility to protect is democratic development. The idea that information plays a key role as the 'connective tissue' in developing and deepening democracy is well established. Freedom of expression and the public sphere are constitutive features of democracy: 'the principal means through which citizens and their elected representatives communicate in their reciprocal efforts to inform and influence' (Gunther & Mughan 2001: 1). The media are both a source of political information and guarantors of government accountability. Indeed, Amartya Sen outlines the need for the 'transparency guarantees' that play 'a clear instrumental role in preventing corruption, financial irresponsibility and underhanded dealings' and allow for public discussion; 'an inescapably important requirement of good public policy' (Sen 1999: 39), ensuring that government is responsive and responsible.

Information plays a key role in development too. Sen refers specifically to famine prevention but a wider body of literature concurs that 'open, inclusive, participatory communication and information processes are prerequisites for successful, sustainable development... communication is an essential element of all development interventions' (Panos 2007: 15-16).

In terms of post-conflict reconstruction, then, effective information intervention has several potential roles. If the media begins to function effectively in a transitional state, it socialises both mass and elite audiences to the new rules of the democratic game (Gunther & Mughan 2001: 416). It consolidates statehood and also a broader sense of national identity (Anderson 1991). But it also serves as a platform for debate around the construction and implementation of successful developmental policy within the intervention. Democratic rule must by nature be the free choice of those involved: 'when democracy is externally imposed, it becomes associated with aggression and is an assault on national pride' (Parekh 2007: 14). So when a state collapses, and democratic development falls to the interveners, the media's importance in presenting the public with free choice in the reconstruction of statehood and wider development only increases in importance.

*The use of force in implementing the 'responsibility to protect': what role for information?*

The intervention in Kosovo was particularly contentious for the use of force, yet Brown (2001) established that it was 'the right – and humanitarian – response to a difficult situation'; and future 'humanitarian war' remains an 'uncomfortable possibility' (Roberts 1999). ICISS subsequently established that military intervention may be legitimate 'in extreme cases', but subject to stringent safeguards; to certain 'just war' criteria. Specifically outlined by the ICISS is the need to abide by the just cause threshold (namely ethnic cleansing or large-scale loss of life), certain precautionary principles (right intention, last resort, proportional means, reasonable prospects), right authority, and also a set of operational principles (ICISS 2001). Tom Farer (2005) appends that users of force must at least seek UN approval retrospectively, if not at the time of the action. Moreover, in a 2004 UN High Level Panel it was added that force must be used transparently, subject to judicial scrutiny (UNGA 2004).

The use of force for information intervention remains widely opposed. Reporters Without Borders conclude that ‘propaganda can be combated only with words, through extensive didactic explanation, and certainly not with bombs’ (Reporters Without Borders 2001), echoing widespread sentiment. Realistically however, the RTS bombing – setting a precedent<sup>5</sup> - demonstrates that information interveners will resort to force. Such actions cannot be altogether ruled out.

ICISS offers no specific guidelines on force in information intervention, but the same criteria should apply: and in this respect, the RTS bombing was of dubious legitimacy. Besides objections on human rights grounds, such as those brought to the European Court of Human Rights, in *Bankovic and others v. NATO* (see ECHR 2001), two main just war principles are cited in opposition to the RTS bombing.

First, ‘right intention’ is dubious. Clare Short, UK Secretary of State for International Development, argued: ‘The propaganda machine is prolonging the war and it’s a legitimate target’ (cited in Norton-Taylor 1999). But RTS was targeted also because it undermined NATO’s actions: as Blair stated, ‘we were aware that those pictures would come back... there would be an instinctive sympathy for the victims of the campaign’ (Blair 2000). The bombing did not directly contribute to ending hostilities on the ground.

Second, Amnesty International found that because civilians had been the primary focus of attack, it constituted a ‘war crime’, and violated the ‘proportionality rule’ in the 1949 Geneva Convention Protocol 1 (2000: 47). Blair denied targeting civilians, blaming Serb officials: ‘they could have moved those people out of the building. They knew it was a target and they didn’t’ (2000). But nevertheless NATO knew civilian lives were at risk. In information interventions, it must be the source of the ability to transmit information, not civilians, targeted. Unlike the wider use of force, civilian deaths in information intervention can, with due care, be altogether avoided.

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<sup>5</sup> For subsequent examples see International Federation of Journalists 2000.

Criteria on the use of force are not formally lodged at the UN, and international law therefore is an unsatisfactory source of legitimation: legal principles in this area are incomplete. Even Blinderman admits that law is subject to modification, and should shift in particular towards endorsing jamming (Blinderman 2002). More important is what Chris Brown terms 'moral pragmatism', making the best decisions possible with limited legal resources in a given context; and just war criteria remain the most firm basis for decisions on whether and how force is appropriate (Brown 2004). Force is just one of many options open to interveners, and indeed will likely be a component of what in fact a systemic response. Long-term outcome is a factor too: Ingrid Lehmann endorses forceful intervention for enhancing the likelihood of an intervention's success, in part dependent on public opinion in the targeted society (Lehmann 1999). In Bosnia there was outcry from NGOs when in 1997 four transmitters were seized from the Serb Radio Television network, but it was subsequently judged imperative for longer-term democratic transition (Darbishire 2002: 344).

There is, therefore, a place for information in using force to implement the responsibility to protect. Its proper role remains dangerously underexplored, but just war criteria are an apt starting point. Particularly notable about information intervention, however, is the wide range of non-force options available. Blinderman (2006) argues that jamming, the most extreme measure of Metzl's trichotomy, is, because it is 'coercive', legally prohibited regardless of the nature of the human rights crisis (the sole exception provided by the Genocide Convention). Yet while jamming is undoubtedly 'coercive', and non-jamming options, such as the 'Ring around Serbia', are clearly preferable, jamming remains a better option than the full use of force risking loss of life. Blinderman indeed admits that law is subject to modification, and should shift towards endorsing it. Implementing a range of non-forceful information interventions may prevent or subdue conflict; and IR theorists must consider these more thoroughly, for they may decrease the uncomfortable possibility of deploying force outright.

## **Realising the ‘responsibility to protect’: beyond principles?**

Having established the centrality of information to the responsibility to protect, the article will now explore those aspects of information intervention left unsatisfied by this paradigm.

### *‘Imperial tutelage?’ The difficulties of localising responsibility*

ICISS emphasises putting ‘victims’ first, warning against the development of an ‘unhealthy dependency on the intervening authority’ that would ‘stultify the regrowth of local institutions’ (ICISS 2001). Thus in the rebuilding phase, responsibility must be steadily shifted to local level, as the interveners ‘do themselves out of a job’ (IICK 2000). The experience of Kosovo, however, indicates that localising responsibility has been problematic and, more fundamentally, suggests that the paradigm of transfer to local responsibility embedded in the ‘responsibility to protect’ may not, pragmatically, be most appropriate.

Within the UN itself there has been reluctance to devolve responsibility to mission level; powers ultimately vested in New York, rather than at SRSG level, reduce flexibility and immediacy of response to local feedback. But within UNMIK too, there has been failure to put ‘locals’ first. As Tim Allen and Nicole Stremlau note: ‘The political concerns of external actors take precedence over the realities on the ground. There is a strong desire... to have a “victory”’ (2005: 6). In consequence, protest groups such as Vetevendosje have frequently accused ‘UNMIKistan’ of ‘humanitarian imperialism’, or of replicating the distant political authority of the former Yugoslavia (Ignatieff 2003: 2, 17). Obstructivism in introducing media regulation – explored in the next section - is one example of UNMIK bowing to international pressure (in this case from freedom of expression NGOs) to the detriment of the local mission.

In part, the failure to ‘think local’ was a consequence of uncertainty regarding the duration of UNMIK’s mandate and the absence of initial clarity over its remit. But it was also reflective of wider attitudes, as DiLellio explains:

There is the belief that by being ignorant of the local culture, politics, and language, one would be more objective. The fact that I learned a modicum of Albanian... was considered by the UN and OSCE international staff very suspicious. It was seen as the first step in a slippery slope toward going native (2005: 70).

After March 2004, attitudes began to shift. Bieley explains: ‘our relationship with our local partners has changed- there's more consultation, more of an actual attitude of partnership’ (Bieley 2006). But changes have been sluggish. In journalistic training, for example, international consultants are still preferred, causing resentment and encouraging a culture of dependency (Bytici 2006). Moreover, there has been persistent disregard for Kosovo’s journalistic context, notably the ‘period of “non-media” in the 1990s’, in media training programmes (Selimaj 2006).

Realistically, however, local media were not in a position to have full responsibility immediately transferred to them. The process of cultivating a sense of journalistic responsibility, as well as local responsibility more broadly, cannot be swift and straightforward. Rather, it involves lengthy dialogic processes; ongoing processes of interaction between ‘local’ and ‘international’ events and actors, as the process of activating the TMC, for example, illustrates. Caplan draws a rigid distinction between ‘international’ and ‘local’, arguing for clear demarcation; but Kosovo shows that this distinction, too, is neither always apparent nor appropriate.

A far improved model is ‘networked intervention’, proposed by Ann Holohan (2005: 2). UNMIK, Holohan argues, was weakened by ‘organisational imperialism’, when ‘democracy in postconflict zones is too large a project to be done by any one or handful of hierarchical organisations’ (2005: 276). A crucial aspect is trust-building; often overlooked in Kosovo (Caplan 2005: 198). Implementing ‘the responsibility to protect’, this implies, requires not transfer to local responsibility but locally-rooted

partnerships to protect from the outset. The focus becomes how power and responsibility are exercised, not who exercises it; a dialogic process in which responsibility operates at multiple levels, ever subject to negotiation. For the model to function effectively actors must interact with full recognition of their responsibilities towards others in the network: the exercise of what Brown, on Aristotelian premises, terms ‘moral pragmatism’, is imperative (see Brown 2004).

Holohan argues that better use of ICTs would have assisted in fostering trust, as well as better coordination and institutional memory, by allowing compilation of shared online resources. But information and its carriers, the media – supplementing face-to-face communication – play a far wider role in providing and fostering a ‘common interpretative space’ (Holohan 2005: 30, 114). It is in this space that actors, both international and local, negotiate from the outset their overlapping responsibilities and partnerships, and participate in the dialogues that create networks and make interventions operative and effective: something IR theorists have overlooked. Effective information intervention must foster creation of a sphere for these purposes.

*Regulation versus liberalisation: is the ‘add free press and stir’ approach redundant?*

Sovereignty is no longer a legitimate barrier to information intervention, even that involving force. Yet in rebuilding, the legitimate extent of interference remains deeply contested. Some forms of information intervention, such as monitoring or broadcasting, simply add information to the mix: they do not restrict freedom of expression. Other forms, however, are more restrictionist; and tension arises between promoting freedom of expression and the validity of interference with this right. This has put some of UNMIK’s legislation in conflict with domestic legislation elsewhere, notably the US Constitution First Amendment.

In Kosovo there was a campaign against OSCE’s mandate from the outset, on human rights grounds. The International Federation of Journalists claimed ‘OSCE

is supposed to provide the building blocks of press freedom and democracy, and now it is being asked to play the role of the press police. None of this makes sense' (IFJ 2000b). Others supported some regulation, but were critical of over-prescription. IREX's Andrew Clayton cites the IMC's decision to support the liberal TV station Hertz while refusing to issue a license to the more radical station Most. It is, he contends, 'a bit like having a community whose politics is *The Daily Telegraph*, and only giving them *The Guardian*... they'll end up hating it, throwing it away... not even wrapping the chips in it'. Media outlets must have more autonomy in content choice, even if the final product is 'not our cup of tea' (Clayton 2006), and interveners must accept that 'conflict sells better than cooperation': media is by nature sensational (Beleli et al 2002).

But many argue that, at least in the early years of UNMIK, there was 'strong, strong hate speech every day', and particularly in the Serb print media, which went unmonitored (Sabovic 2006). Moreover, DiLellio recalls several incidents where hate speech was not explicitly used but events broadcast were framed to deliberately provoke antagonism (DiLellio 2005: 77). Hate speech is notoriously difficult to define, but evidently some extent of regulatory intervention was necessary. And this ultimately prevailed, as security concerns took precedence over the ideological debates on hate speech and freedom of expression.

SRSB established regulation as a necessary step towards creating a 'democratic society in which civil discussions and political debates must take place in a responsible and non-violent manner' (OSCE 2000a). Thompson agrees: 'unsophisticated liberalisation of the media can potentially undermine the state building project', and media freedom itself is easier to build on a foundation of excessive regulation than too early liberalisation (Putzel & Van-Der Zwan 2006: 22). The aim remained 'purist' but the means were pragmatist; a distinction press freedom advocates appeared unable to make. Kosovan journalists themselves overwhelmingly favoured regulation: recalling *Dita*'s closure, Hoxhiu states 'it was a draconian punishment, but it was good, we needed that' (Hoxhui 2006). Journalists perceived 'internationals', at least initially, to have legitimate authority to act (Sabovic 2006).



Advocates of media liberalisation remain determined that the fundamental human right to freedom of expression is the cornerstone of information intervention. This is flawed however, in two key respects. First, as Stephanie Farrior (2002) demonstrates, regulation is in fact perfectly in line with human rights norms, which place clear limitations on the right to free speech in the case of hate speech or incitement to discrimination. These norms were clearly embedded in the September 2000 Code of Conduct for the Broadcast Media in Kosovo, compiled in consultation with groups such as ARTICLE 19 (OSCE 2000b). Freedom of information, moreover, is not absolute: withholding information, particularly sensitive political information, will at times be necessary and legitimate if in the public interest. The absolutist position neglects the reality of the state-media relationship in even the most established democracies. No state is entirely barred from occasional interventionism: techniques of both prior restraint and post-publication censorship are pervasive, especially in time of 'crisis' (Keane 1991: 96).

The rights-based approach to intervention, underlying 'the responsibility to protect' and also increasingly advocated by theorists of information intervention (see World Congress 2006) is in fact problematic more broadly. One example from Kosovo, affecting both information intervention and the broader intervention, is the tension between individual and communal rights. Quite typically, Sabovic states 'I am an Albanian first, and then a journalist' (Bytici 2006). The consequence has been 'campaigning journalism' on distinct ethnic communal grounds, combined, for Kosovar Albanians, with the 'resistance journalism' culture of the Yugoslav period (Xharra 2006); the media has not had the reconciliatory effects that it might otherwise have done. More broadly, Serb and other minority rights have been prioritised over the majority Albanian population's rights, and overall distinct ethnic communities' rights have prevailed over a more all-encompassing definition.

Second, an argument from human rights principles is problematic for being neither conducive, nor a comprehensive guide, to taking action. It can be argued that we must uphold freedom of expression to reduce violence, or make peace talks go smoothly; not because of abstract rights or duties. Some rights may be prioritised

over others: in the post-*Dita* regulatory moves, protection of rights to life and liberty took precedence over the right to freedom of expression. Rights, furthermore, exist only with corresponding duties. In precarious and potentially violent situations, journalists have a particularly important duty to exercise freedom of expression so as not to increase societal tension. This notion of media responsibility can be likened to Bhikhu Parekh's account of Athenian democracy, perhaps the most appropriate in postconflict situations, in which 'they might... restrict individual freedom when it appears to threaten their shared values and way of life' (2007: 11).

In information intervention, as well as intervention more broadly, then, the normative basis must be flexible (Krug & Price 2002). Human rights provide a framework for action, not a solution in themselves. Moral pragmatism is preferable to moral absolutism: by injecting a degree of 'operational realism' in negotiating the path that human rights take (see Brown 2004).

*Interventionist motives and outcomes: denial of the political?*

ICISS acknowledges that motives for implementing the 'responsibility to protect' will be mixed, consisting of four main strands: moral, financial, national interest (which may include being seen to be a good international citizen) and partisan. Brown concurs: the very notion of 'humanitarian intervention' perpetuates a realist mindset which measures humanitarianism against a supposedly selfish norm, failing to reflect the diverse motives that guide interventions (2004). ICISS assumes, however, that the result will be neutrally humanitarian in nature; that, in Michael Barnett's terms, 'Wilsonianism' will triumph over 'Dunantism' (2005). But realistically, past interventions indicate that none are entirely a-political; indeed denial of the perceived partiality of the intervening actor has contributed to failed interventions in the past, such as that of the US in Somalia in the early 1990s.

Advocates of the developmental approach to information intervention continue to refuse to accept any use of information for the conveying of a specific political or public relations agenda. For Blinderman (2002) information intervention is

legitimate only if non-discriminatory, and not for the intervener's own political advantage. The World Congress on Communications for Development concluded that 'Communication for Development is about... building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating and learning for sustained and meaningful change. *It is not public relations or corporate communication*' (World Congress 2006; emphasis added). Outsiders' interests are considered particularly dangerous. WPFC's European representative Ronald Koven feared that 'foreigners are going to impose their standards and codes of conduct on independent media journalists in Kosovo... where before the war there was a perfectly adequate independent Albanian-language press' (cited in Erlanger 1999). David Rieff (2000) is highly critical of the role of NGOs, not because their work is without value, but because politics determines their agenda. The concern with political interests shows too in the debates between the 'European' and 'American' approaches to media development. Clayton (2006) argues: 'the problem with public broadcasters... is the line between public and state is very blurred, and people in government regard the public media as their mouthpiece'. Opponents highlight that 'independent' media also suffer political or commercial interference.

Underlying the assumption of the apolitical nature of information interventions is fear of public diplomacy. The official approach in Kosovo has been to rigidly separate public diplomacy from media development, and throughout the academic literature, too, there is a presumption of the value of separation. One interpretation is that public relations activities are initially imperative, but media development activity must ultimately replace them. Others argue that they can coexist, but must be kept theoretically separate and institutionally differentiated in practice.

In practice, however, the lines have always been blurred, since the first information interventions in post-World War II Germany and Japan. The task of the Allies was referred to as 'political re-education' or 'democratic propaganda'; their own agenda of democratisation, motivated by their own self-interest in preventing further outbreak of war, predominated. Activities consisted of both Allied broadcasting and reconstruction of German media outlets, sitting clearly neither in the 'public diplomacy' nor the 'media development' camps. Press freedom was limited and

conditional: in Japan a ten-point press code 'forbade any criticism of the Allies... and condemned any 'propaganda line' in news reporting' (Pronay & Wilson 1985: 206).

KFOR's activities offer fine examples of the blurring of lines, both internally and in its relationship with other intervening actors. Phil Taylor (2002) delineates the boundaries of its information intervention: the retraining of troops to operate in a difficult psychological climate; winning the 'hearts and minds' of citizens, and aiming for wider rebuilding of Kosovo's psychology ('re-education' campaign). Puddephatt argues that KFOR must conduct public diplomacy, and 'only become involved in media development if other international agencies with the experience, legitimacy and credibility are unable to provide this kind of support' (2006: 20). KFOR's public diplomacy campaigns, however, have in part been developmental in nature: it ran, for example, anti-corruption campaigns, officially under UNMIK's responsibility. This was much to UNMIK's irritation (Senger 2006), but KFOR's current mandate, to 'establish a safe and secure environment', does not logically exclude such activities.

KFOR has consistently played a role in media development, too, by buying advertising slots on local radio stations that in some cases constitute up to one third of their broadcasting material. In one case, German KFOR also got involved in training journalists and production for the morning show of a station in Prizren (Clayton 2006). The sustainability of many local radio stations has thus become dependent on the political and fluctuating will of, in this case, the military: when KFOR withdraws, these stations' finances will be severely depleted. Quick flicks through many newspapers show that they too are almost entirely dependent on UNMIK and KFOR for advertising revenue. Such interventions are problematic, moreover, because KFOR are unselective and have supported notoriously radical and intolerant media (Senger 2006).

Julie Mertus further highlights the overlap of public diplomacy and media development in other respects. Initially UNMIK's Press and Public Information Department was responsible for issuing provisional broadcasting licenses, and

KFOR also oversaw broadcasting locally (Mertus 2002: 264). Negotiations over Radio-Television Kosova's (RTK) establishment were conducted between the European Broadcasting Union and the UN, bypassing the OSCE; and UNMIK programmes occupied prime viewing slots. Locals termed it 'Radio-Television Kouchner' (Bytici 2006).

Not only did responsibility overlap, but media development was continually imbued with political agendas. The initial proposed role of RTK was confused. While the OSCE argued that UNMIK should relaunch RTK 'as a genuine public broadcaster', it also insisted that it must broadcast 'vital public information... [giving] priority to international news services... and to messages essential to UNMIK' (Mertus 2002: 226). The TMC's development is also instructive. UNMIK was reluctant to grant it independence: as DiLellio (2006) admits, 'Oh yes, the pressures are there. You have to learn not to give in, but they are certainly there'. Journalists, too, expected reproachful phonecalls if critical of UNMIK (Bytici 2006). The TMC remained closely allied to SRSG; indeed, he directly appointed the TMC (Krug & Price 2002: 161-163). More widely, the TMC was distrusted for both identifying violations and imposing sanctions, 'effectively making him judge in his own cause' (DiLellio 2005: 70).

Information intervention is thus necessarily political in itself and, moreover, indicative of the wider politicisation inherent in implementing the 'responsibility to protect'.

## **Realising the 'responsibility to protect': the centrality of effective public diplomacy**

### *Redefining public diplomacy*

In the aftermath of 9/11, public diplomacy grew in appeal, as Western states subsumed information intervention activity within the 'war on terror' paradigm. Political uses of information took precedence, and military uses too: Price and

Thompson note a 'dangerous convergence between 'psyops' and civilian uses of information technology' (2002: 4). Yet despite this, there have been ongoing attempts to refine the concept of public diplomacy, unnoticed by information intervention theorists. The 'political' begins to resemble the 'developmental' approach; with implications for our understanding of intervention more broadly.

Mark Leonard offers the clearest and most recent definition of public diplomacy, accepting there is no 'one size fits all' approach but firmly establishing that public diplomacy is more complex than a simple accessory to political or military victory. Leonard emphasises three main dimensions: effective news management, strategic communication of key messages (not just reaction to and rebuttal of the news agenda), and 'long-term relationship-building' and development (Leonard 2002: 105). Public diplomacy vis-à-vis other actors, he argues, may be competitive or co-operative, or a blend of the two: the opinion of the target group is not necessarily antagonistic. To embrace this multi-pronged approach, actors must move 'beyond propaganda', incorporating more professional communications skills. 'The tone and feel of many messages is declamatory and about telling rather than proving through actions, symbols and words – or engaging in dialogue with a real intent to listen', he states. Leonard argues: 'governments need to change the tone of public diplomacy – so that it is less about winning arguments and more about engagement' (2002: 6). This chimes perfectly with Richard Caplan's assertion that the presence of international interveners in transitional administrations must be negotiable, flexible, and seeking improvement of policies through honest dialogue (2005).

Using information for political ends is not, per se, problematic; as John Keane reminds us, in all countries 'government advertising is big and serious business' (1991: 104). In some respects this may even detract from the desire of the government to intervene in the content of the media: John Tusa (1989) states that 'in the past press officers have wanted to channel and control the journalists... Today, they see us as... not dissimilar to an advertising slot'. Interventions must strive for clarity and appeal of operational aims and in this, information is crucial. Indeed some interveners remain too reluctant to conduct public diplomacy: NGOs,

for example, have often failed to establish independent relationships with the local media to this end (Puddephatt 2002: 16). ‘Interests’ cannot be realistically removed from the equation in any information environment. As Sandra Melone argues, ‘while we would not want to endorse the idea that the news media may be controlled and used for specific purposes, even that of peace, the perception that journalists ought to be ‘neutral’ needs to be overcome’ (see Beleli *et al* 2002: 2).

When it becomes problematic, however, is when engagement with the local population is neglected. ‘The first challenge is to understand the target audience and start from where they are’, and then aim to ‘prove your relevance’, Leonard argues. This is particularly important in what Leonard describes as an era of ‘post-imperial sensitivity’ (2005: 46-48). In light of recent convergence of public diplomacy, media development and deception cultures within military interventions (under the banner of ‘influence operations’ or ‘perception management’), as Phil Taylor (2002) notes, the military need to take particularly special precautions in this respect. Deception activities for military purposes must at all times be kept distinct.

There has been a shift in culture in UNMIK towards engagement, especially since the 2004 riots. Bieleley teases out what, in part, this entails: ‘showing we are partners with the local institutions’, for instance conveying the personal relationship between SRSG and the Kosovo Prime Minister. ‘You need to go out and look like equals. OK, you bring this person to NY and they’re not equals because not allowed to speak in the Security Council chamber. But you bring them there’ (Bieleley 2006). For this, the individual personalities of SRSGs are important, and Soren Jesen Peterson was particularly successful: ‘he was very personable, always liked the camera, found time for the journalists’ (Bieleley 2006). In a further example, Senger’s public diplomacy attempted to demonstrate that the local police force – not KFOR – bore responsibility for maintaining order during the 28 November 2006 Vetevendosje demonstrations. His message was clear: that ‘the people here are prudent enough to counter violence, or to refrain from violence – and in saying this we hope to strengthen them in their responsibility as citizens’ (Senger 2006).

But beyond showing engagement and local empowerment, an effective public diplomacy strategy can also foster it. Bieley (2006) admits that UNMIK's public diplomacy has been far more successful when it has engaged and listened too: 'being accessible, available, speaking their language – that makes a big difference... Future missions should get in touch more with local people and put those people in the public information operation'. 'Ekonomia e Re' is UNMIK's best attempt at this yet, increasingly interactive, on the whole dealing with issues of genuine concern to locals; and hence its relative popularity.

Information, moreover, can be used effectively for political ends. Media theorists doubt the efficacy of overt propaganda, but recognise that the media may have more subtle, indirect effects that amount to political persuasion through agenda setting, priming responses and 'framing' (Gunther & Mughan 2000: 17). This is a subtle process: messages must be credible to be persuasive, especially in a sophisticated, media literate context like Kosovo. In Kosovo, public diplomacy has been slow to heed this advice. NATO's leaflet-dropping campaigns focused on scare tactics<sup>6</sup> with no concern for target audience. The current 'Kosovision' campaign instructs Pristina's inhabitants through colourfully illustrated billboards that they must 'live on the bright side'; Kosovans find this both patronising and inappropriate, and KFOR's own PIO admitted they were 'useless' (Senger 2006). Leonard is also adamant that 'warts and all' local impressions, in this case of UNMIK, would not do UNMIK the harm it fears (2005: 47). Yet Arta Pillana, a senior producer at UNMIK TV, admits that 'there are things that I would report as a free journalist that I cannot report working for UNMIK'. There are issues left uncovered for fear that it would implicate UNMIK and prejudice the mission's success (Pillana 2006).

Many who interact with local media remain fully opposed to the idea that the media may end up critiquing their own policies; hence UNMIK's often overly interventionist stance. But as Keane highlights, however, a key role of information is to facilitate disagreement, allowing for disapproval and revision of established societal and political procedures and norms, and for effective debate of policy:

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<sup>6</sup> A typical leaflet showed a picture of an Apache attack helicopter and stated 'Don't wait for us'.



‘democratic procedures enable citizens to think twice and say no’ (1991: 176). Simon Haselock agrees: the media must be ‘the antagonist and conscience’ of the executive, the legislative and the judiciary, and public diplomacy must acknowledge and enable this dissent and debate (Gowing & Haselock 2004).

Finally, there must be maximum assistance to enable local actors to conduct their own public diplomacy too; something slow to occur in Kosovo. Independent Media Commissioner Naile Selimaj’s current priority is raise awareness of their activities: ‘this means making people realise they can trust IMC, know that they are fully lawful and fully independent’ (2006). This is exactly the kind of localised public diplomacy, embedded in rights education and fostering interaction with the institution in question, to the public’s benefit, that is potentially a successful model for replication by other local and international institutions.

### *The new public diplomacy: implications for interventions*

What the redefinition of public diplomacy offers is an effective model for balancing competing motives for intervention, and for the ongoing political as well as humanitarian aspects to interveners’ activities. Interventions remain, at heart, acts of power; but still, political interests and moral impulses are intertwined. ‘Developmental’ information interveners – although reluctant to admit it - have political agendas: no intervention is agenda-free. So too are ‘political’ information interveners at least in part motivated by humanitarian imperatives.

Rigid separation of media development and public diplomacy, in this light, is neither feasible nor essential to effective information intervention. Rather, what is imperative is that each actor, within both approaches, cultivates the humanitarian element of their work to the benefit of the society in question, fully engaging and recognising that this is ultimately to their own benefit too. In this context, Fernando Teson highlights the importance of focusing ultimately on outcome; that being ‘whether the intervention has rescued the victims of oppression, and whether human rights have subsequently been restored’ (1988: 64). If outcome takes

precedence, the mixed political and developmental motives for interventionist actions carry less significance. This is crucial in the information sphere, but also in the attitude towards interventionist activities more widely; as IR theorists must better recognise.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is first necessary to emphasise the limits of information intervention; and hence its importance to international relations theorists and practitioners. Many are over-ambitious about the transformative potential of information intervention. Werner Wendt, Head of OSCE's Mission in Kosovo, declares: 'Kosovo's print media... are only at the outset of their journey towards becoming a key factor in engineering Kosovo's political, social and economic framework' (OSCE 2006). Such high expectations, however, are unrealistic. Soft power is difficult to use directly; it must corroborate with a wider programme of action. Shea stated of the NATO intervention: 'ultimately, media campaigns do not win conflicts. Diplomats, politicians and pilots do that' (Shea 2001: 219). The media themselves would neither consider their role to have this transformative potential - as Bytici (2006) states, 'my intention is not to build society, it is to do good stories' - nor realistically be empowered to in states that are in early stages of development and democratisation. The media is only part of the mix of post-conflict, but it is nevertheless an ingredient which interventions cannot do without.

Caplan describes UNMIK as the 'least worst option': interventions are rarely perfect but realistically they are ongoing, frequently for the long term, and usually to be encouraged (2005: 62). As Chesterman (2001) reminds us: 'the problem is not the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention, but the overwhelming prevalence of inhumanitarian non-intervention'. Within these, there is - more than ever - a need to consolidate an understanding of and approach to information intervention: during 'rebuilding', but also in 'preventing' and 'reacting' too. Metzl advocates the establishment of a new department devoted to information within the UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations: this would be just the beginning.

Our current approach to information intervention has many shortcomings, but a better paradigm can be constructed. Information intervention must be rooted in the concept of the responsibility to protect; and at the same time an empowered communications environment is a vital aspect of realizing this responsibility. Yet the notion of the 'responsibility to protect' does not solve the problem of implementation, in three key areas.

First, in an interconnected world, there can be no rigid distinction between international and local, and no smooth transfer to localising responsibility; but rather a process of ongoing dialogue, of 'networked intervention'. Second, the human rights grounding is problematic, in part because rights language is not conducive to action, and in part because of the shortcomings of the concept of rights itself. Human rights advocates have frequently neglected the necessity of a more proactive interventionism, for example to regulate media. Third, the notion of humanitarianism that pervades the 'responsibility to protect' neglects the inherent politicisation and interest-driven nature of interventionist activities. By redefining public diplomacy, reconciliation of the media development and public diplomacy paradigms that sit antagonistically at the heart of the information intervention paradigm is urged. Injecting information intervention with moral pragmatism both clarifies its definition and encourages IR theorists and practitioners to recognise the benefits of more thoroughly integrating information intervention in future interventions.

The information intervention in Kosovo is the most all-encompassing that has occurred to date. Conclusions drawn, however, are of ever-increasing relevance in light of subsequent interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. What the experience of Kosovo provides is a 'module' (Krug & Price 2002), and a reservoir of lessons, which can be drawn upon in future interventions. Very similar issues are being played out in Iraq: the Coalition Provisional Authority faced similar accusations to UNMIK (BBC World Service Trust), the Iraq Media Network struggles 'to serve two masters – one the CPA and the other the Iraqi people' (BBC Monitoring 2004), and neighbouring and Western states attempt to win 'hearts and minds' through incessant beaming of foreign programmes in to the territory.

Constructivist theorists emphasise the process of dialogue that contributes towards 'norm entrepreneurship' international society (see Finnemore & Sikkink 1998). Successful information intervention is an inherent component of this process; for it is in the sphere of information, in the 'court of world opinion' (Shue 1998), that these debates take place. Recognising the challenges of our interrelationship with the sphere of information is imperative in advancing this cause: in contributing to the steady 'norm cascade' (Finnemore & Sikkink 1998) in the humanitarian direction. What debates around information intervention show is that there are no single guiding rules for action, but a combination of actors, with different interests and motives, competing for dominance in the sphere. What counts, above all, is not consistent application of abstract principle, but the creation of a space for debate of competing principles and the exercise of moral pragmatism, of a 'thoughtful humanitarianism' (Brown 2004). Information and its transmitters – the media – are absolutely fundamental in this negotiation of humanitarianism in international society.

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## **Interviews**

Fatos Bytici - freelance journalist/Reuters (3 December 2006).

Jeff Bieleley - Chief of Press Office, UNMIK (5 December 2006).

Andrew Clayton - Chief of Party, IREX Kosovo (4 December 2006).

Anna DiLellio - former Temporary Media Commissioner (2 December 2006).

Ilir Dugolli - Head of Special Research Projects, Kosovo Institute for Policy Research and Development (3 December 2006).

Willem Houwen - Director, Kosovo Institute for Journalism and Communication (7 December 2006).

Baton Hoxhiu - Editor, *Express* (6 December 2006).

Memli Krasniqi - Head of Youth Wing, Democratic Party of Kosovo (2 December 2006).

Albin Kurti - leader of Vetevendosje (8 December 2006).

Alfred Marleku - Youth Initiative for Human Rights (4 December 2006).

Arta Pllana - TV Producer, UNMIK (5 December 2006).

Nebi Qena - Head of News and Current Affairs, Radio-Television Kosovo (7 December 2006).

Nezir Rama - Kosovapress (8 December 2006).

Senad Sabovic - International Crisis Group (6 December 2006).

Naile Selimaj - Independent Media Commissioner (8 December 2006).

Colonel Rainer Senger - Chief Public Information Officer, KFOR (8 December 2006).

Mark Thompson - freelance writer and consultant (21 April 2007).

Jeta Xharra - Balkans Investigative Reporting Network (7 December 2006).

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