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About the Author

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Abstract

Strategic communication is crucial for the success of civilian and military crisis management operations. Domestic publics have to be convinced that the operations are worth pursuing, and the publics in the countries where the operations take place have to be persuaded to support the missions' objectives. Two major security actors have recently increased their strategic communication efforts: the EU, with EULEX Kosovo, and NATO, with the ISAF mission. Through a comparative study of these two cases, this paper addresses the question how and why strategic communication of the EU and NATO in crisis management operations varies and what general principles of strategic communication of international organisations can be deduced. NATO has recently stepped up its communication activities due to domestic pressure, while communication for EULEX remains technical and information-oriented because of the political disagreements among EU member states regarding Kosovo. I argue that five factors determine the communicative roles of international organisations: the role of the member states, the need for domestic ratification, the possibility of promoting the international organisation through the operation, the international organisation's communicative capabilities and the importance of the foreign public to the success of the operation. The member states' communicative activity largely determines the communicative tasks of international organisations. If member states require domestic ratification, they are likely to boost their domestic communication efforts, which makes a 'unity of message' difficult for international organisations that then have to focus primarily on coordinating member states' domestic communication efforts. Additionally, member states are generally more reluctant to communicate to foreign publics, forcing international organisations to assume communicative leadership.

"You can't take the media side less seriously than you actually take the military operation itself."
Jamie Shea, former NATO spokesperson[1]

"Communication is politics, and politics is communication."
EU official[2]

1. Introduction: The Importance of Communication for Crisis Management

It was a telling, embarrassing moment. At a press conference in Afghanistan in September 2008, a journalist asked the German Defence Minister Franz Josef Jung: "Are we at war here?" Jung answered emphatically: "We are not at war!" Next to him stood the commander of NATO's operation in Afghanistan, the American four-star general David McKiernan, gazing at the questioner. Tersely, he formulated his contrary opinion: "Of course, we are at war."[3]

It does not happen very often that one can observe the failure of a communication strategy as closely as in this case. Two central players of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the crisis management operation in Afghanistan led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), contradicted each other over a central question of the mission in front of a dozen cameras. Even the least informed observer realised immediately that this was more than just a difference of opinion: it was a strategic rift.

Such problems are hardly conceivable for the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX). When the civilian crisis management operation launched by the European Union (EU) reached full operational capacity in April 2009, it went largely unnoticed by publics in the EU even though the deployment had been a controversial issue in international relations for about two years. Yet EULEX – the biggest civilian mission ever deployed by the Union – is also closely linked to public opinion, as a failure in Kosovo would mean a harsh setback for the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP).

The issue of strategic communication for crisis management operations has not been widely studied – even though it is of crucial importance to the success of these missions. First of all, domestic publics have to be in favour of crisis management operations, as a lack of domestic public support may limit the strategic alternatives of decision makers to a point where withdrawal is the only viable option. Second,

[1] J. Shea, "Kosovo – Then and Now", *NATO Review*, retrieved on 30 April 2009, www.nato.int/docu/review/2008/07/VID_JAMIE_SHEA/EN/index.htm.
[2] Interview with EU official C, Brussels, 17 March 2009.
[3] T. Sommer, "Pflicht, Mut und sehr viel Frust", *Zeit Online*, 16 October 2008.

foreign publics – the publics in the countries where the operations take place – are often crucial to the the missions' success. If the local population is against the presence of foreign actors, structural long-term changes in the country, which are often the objective of crisis management operations, cannot be realised.

This paper analyses strategic communication for crisis management operations of international organisations by examining two recent cases, namely ISAF and EULEX Kosovo. Both missions are of crucial importance to the respective international organisation because their success or failure will help decide the future of the crisis management activities of the EU and NATO. Both are large, long-term missions with far-reaching implications for domestic and foreign publics. Both are ongoing and represent the state-of-the-art in EU and NATO strategic communication. Furthermore, both missions represent the core activity of the respective international organisation: EULEX is a civilian rule of law mission which corresponds to the idea of the EU as a civilian power, while ISAF is a military operation conducted by the most powerful security alliance in the world. This difference allows a comparison of communications regarding civilian and military operations.[4]

The study addresses the following questions: How do the EU and NATO conduct strategic communication for EULEX and ISAF and which factors explain the similarities and differences of the two campaigns? What general principles for strategic communication for crisis management operations of international organisations can be deduced?

NATO has recently stepped up its communication efforts in order to meet rising public pressure both domestically and in Afghanistan, while EULEX's communication remains rather reactive and technical. I argue that this can be explained by the general principles of strategic communication for crisis management operations of international organisations: if an operation requires domestic ratification, member states become active and must be coordinated by the international organisation in order to achieve a 'unity of message'. In the absence of domestic pressure, the international organisation has the option of promoting the operation itself in order to enhance its reputation as a security player. As member states are mostly reluctant to address a foreign public, international organisations must assume communicative leadership in this regard.

The term *strategic communication* – and not one of the many other names for communication in the arena of foreign policy – has been chosen for this paper

[4] Interview with EU Official A, Bruges, 16 January 2009; interview with NATO official A, Brussels, 6 November 2008.

because it seems to be the most comprehensive expression. For instance, within NATO the term *public diplomacy* is limited to political communication, while military communication is left out. The term *media relations* ignores more direct forms of communication such as personal contact or the internet, while *strategic influence* has a connotation of twisted truth, if not propaganda.

Communication is defined, based on Bruhn, as the transmission of information and meaning in order to direct the attention, knowledge, attitude and behaviour of certain addressees.[5] This definition encompasses diverse forms of communication from media relations to contacts with the civil society and roadshows. The term *strategic communication* refers to the systematic planning of communication activities and underlines that communication as understood here is not a random act, but one that follows specific objectives.

So how do NATO and the EU conduct strategic communication for ISAF and EULEX?

2. ISAF

2.1. Background

In response to the attacks of 11 September 2001, the United States of America (USA) led a coalition of states into Afghanistan in order to oust the Taliban from power. After installing a new Afghan government, the international military presence in Afghanistan was split up: while the American operation Enduring Freedom was active country-wide hunting terrorists, ISAF protected the capital Kabul to create a safe space for the Afghan government and international actors to operate. ISAF was a coalition of the willing led by Britain and operated under a mandate from the UN Security Council.[6] Only on 11 August 2003 did NATO come into play, assuming leadership of the ISAF operation; it expanded its presence to the entire country by 2006.

It was only then – three years after taking over ISAF – that NATO realised that it had to increase its communication efforts. Public attention began shifting from Iraq to Afghanistan where NATO was increasingly involved in heavy fighting with the Taliban in the south and the east of the country. Suddenly, governments were announcing a growing number of casualties, and parts of the public began wondering whether NATO would be able to succeed in Afghanistan. This "made governments realise that

[5] M. Bruhn, *Unternehmens- und Marketingkommunikation: Handbuch für ein integriertes Kommunikationsmanagement*, Munich, Vahlen, 2005, p. 3.
[6] "NATO's Role in Afghanistan", *NATO website*.

public diplomacy is a critical instrument to sustain public and parliamentary support for operations there".[7]

The communication deficit was reinforced by the fact that many governments – most notably Germany, Great Britain and Canada – had argued vis-à-vis their home constituencies in 2003 that the ISAF campaign would mostly be a reconstruction and democracy-building effort. As the number of civilian and military casualties began to rise, it was increasingly difficult to maintain this defensive line of argument, not least because other members of the alliance wanted to communicate the combat nature of the campaign more openly.[8]

Thus, two problems had to be addressed by the new approach towards communication that NATO adopted from 2006 onwards. First, more time, energy and resources had to be devoted to communication efforts. Second, the enormous coordination challenges between the different actors had to be tackled in order to achieve the degree of 'unity of message' deemed necessary for a persuasive campaign in NATO countries and in Afghanistan.

2.2. Actors

Member state governments play the most important role in explaining and justifying the ISAF operation to their publics as they not only have the most direct access to national media, but also the highest democratic legitimacy and responsibility to decide on questions of war and combat. Although they are part of NATO, the member states remain sovereign with regard to political as well as communicative decisions. Member state governments, not NATO itself, bear the main responsibility for convincing their publics of the necessity of military operations, and they use the whole range of communication tools to do so. NATO member states have different political cultures, different historical backgrounds and different roles within the NATO operations. National caveats – the extent to which individual nations define their role within ISAF, especially regarding tasks or decisions they are not ready to assume – are of crucial importance for understanding NATO communication.[9]

Germany is the perfect example of a country which chooses its own path within the ISAF operation in terms of politics, military and communication. Traditionally, the political culture and public opinion of post-World War II Germany are very wary of out-of-territory military operations, and each deployment of the German army requires a mandate from the German parliament. This sets considerable limits on the

[7] S. Babst, "Reinventing NATO's Public Diplomacy", Rome, NATO Defence College, 2008, p. 4.
[8] Interview with NATO official B, Brussels, 13 February 2009.
[9] NATO official B.

autonomy of decision by the German government, which stated from the outset that the German military would only be deployed in the comparatively calm northern part of Afghanistan where the Taliban receive little support from the population.

This exceptional political and military position of Germany has been reflected by a communication strategy which has been described as "timid".[10] German officials have portrayed the operation as a largely peaceful, development-oriented endeavour and have for the most part remained silent about its dangers. The German communication approach avoids the more offensive tone of many of its allies, most notably the United States. From the beginning, Washington has framed the Afghanistan operations as a direct response to the 11 September 2001 attacks. The US engagement in Afghanistan is portrayed as a war in order to defeat terrorists with force, and even Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Barack Obama has not altered this line of argument.[11]

These diverging justifications of ISAF are not leading towards a 'unity of message' required for a successful communication strategy. This is why in July 2006 NATO created a Media Operations Centre within its Public Diplomacy Division, intended to streamline messages relating to ISAF. It oversees both NATO and member state communication. In the Media Operations Centre, all NATO media communication is planned, including the coordination of the different actors. The Media Operations Centre works closely with the office of the spokesperson of the Secretary General and prepares instruments that serve as guidelines, for instance the *master narratives* and the *monthly outlook*, which contain information and wording concerning topics which are of interest to the press. The Media Operations Centre also organises trips to Afghanistan for journalists and academics.[12]

NATO's main tool to reach the general public is its website.[13] Both the general NATO website and the thematic pages about ISAF are of surprisingly poor quality in terms of navigation, graphics, and the amount and presentation of information. The website is currently being revamped and shall in the future include more interactive features.[14] More progressively, NATO has launched *NATO TV*, a website that tries to be two things at once: on the one hand, high-ranking NATO officials argue that "we are very keen on not being perceived as propaganda. This is why we put raw

[10] C. Schwennicke, "Verdruckste Krieger", *Der Spiegel*, 30 June 2008, p. 36.
[11] B. Obama, "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan", West Point, 1 December 2009.
[12] NATO official A.
[13] Interview with NATO official C, Brussels, 23 April 2009.
[14] "NATO revamps its web site", *NATO website*, 27 March 2009.

footage on NATO TV".[15] On the other hand, *NATO TV* also includes edited, partly highly emotional material such as the documentary 'Taking the Fight to the Taliban'.[16]

In Afghanistan, ISAF headquarters in Kabul is the centre of NATO's communication activities. The ISAF commander and his spokesperson serve as the main contact points for the press. Furthermore, the five regional commands as well as all troop contributing nations have their own spokespersons who interact mainly with their respective national journalists. These spokespersons receive guidelines both from the Media Operations Centre at NATO headquarters and from their national militaries. As servants of two masters, they have to decide how to combine those two guidelines – which might, in extreme cases, contradict each other – themselves. As they are ultimately employed by their national militaries, to which they will return after their service in Afghanistan, they tend to lend more weight to their national framing of issues than to the NATO position.[17] This is also true for the high-level generals in Afghanistan who interact with journalists. One NATO official said that for the Media Operations Centre, it was hopeless to try to influence their behaviour vis-à-vis the press, and this perception reveals a lot about the power relationship between NATO and member states when it comes to getting the message across.[18]

While the aforementioned political and military communication efforts target the domestic publics or international and Afghan media, another branch of military communication is responsible for direct communication with the Afghan population: information operations. Long-term efforts in this regard usually involve troop-produced media content, for instance the biweekly, free newspaper *ISAF-News*. With 160.000 copies, it has the highest circulation of all Afghan newspapers and is widely distributed.[19]

But since media do not have the same extensive effect on opinion formation in Afghanistan as in Western societies, other forms of opinion-shaping have to be taken into account. ISAF closely monitors the Islamic discourse about terrorism. Before 7 July 2003, there had never been a suicide attack on Afghan soil, so many Afghans regard suicide attacks – one of the favoured means of insurgents today – as 'un-Afghan'. Increasingly, Afghan mullahs also label them as 'un-Islamic'. There are more and more *fatwas* (Islamic legal opinions) renouncing suicide attacks and drugs, and

[15] M. Stopford, NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General Strategic Communications Services, speech, Shadow NATO Summit, Brussels, 1 April 2009.
[16] "Taking the Fight to the Taliban", *NATO TV*.
[17] NATO official B.
[18] NATO official A.
[19] *Ibid*.

this has begun to influence Friday sermons across Afghanistan. NATO and NATO member states monitor the sermons of influential mullahs and know when they adopt new *fatwas* and whether they justify or even call for insurgency against foreign troops. This information can be forwarded to the Afghan Ministry of Religious Affairs, which then exerts influence on the mullahs.[20]

Although foreign actors have to leave action in religious matters within the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to local authorities, NATO does push for decisive action in those areas. For instance, the Afghan government is responsible for the curricula of the *madaris* (Islamic religious schools) and for schoolbooks as well as for the formation of new mullahs. NATO tries to ensure that *fatwas* denouncing suicide attacks and drug trafficking are taken into account in these domains, too.[21]

NATO troops often take part in local *shuras* (meetings among the tribal elders) in order to hear the concerns of local population and to influence the local opinion leaders, the elders, directly. In this regard, the ISAF mission is very unconventional and far removed from the understanding that many troop-contributing nations have of military operations.[22] The problem is that NATO is not adequately equipped for this task as it lacks a sufficient number of Dari- and Pashtu-speaking personnel. This constitutes a major weakness of NATO's communication efforts.[23]

A more controversial part of information operations are psychological operations, which are often associated with deception tactics.[24] The dissemination of false information raises moral as well as tactical questions. First, it damages ISAF's credibility with the population and the media; second, it cannot always be guaranteed that the target groups – the Afghan population, the Taliban and the Western population – are clearly separated. Information aimed at radical Afghans may be picked up by international media outlets and distributed in NATO member states, so that the domestic public is deceived as well.[25] While the US military is said to employ deception tactics, other nations are more reluctant to do so. The NATO information operations concept itself allows deception only under very limited circumstances.[26]

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[20] *Ibid*.
[21] *Ibid*.
[22] NATO official B.
[23] NATO official C.
[24] C. Lamb, *Review of Psychological Operations. Lessons Learned from Recent Operational Experience*, Washington D.C., National Defence University Press, 2005, p. 42.
[25] J. Ludowese, *Strategic Communication: Who Should Lead the Long War of Ideas?*, Carlisle, U.S. Army War College, 2006, p. 8.
[26] NATO, "Overview of Info Ops Documents", 30 April 2009, p. 15.

A new approach to integrating the different aspects of NATO's communication efforts in Afghanistan has been undertaken within ISAF headquarters in Kabul. There, new troop elements have been created which include personnel from different fields in order to coordinate and integrate their activities. Personnel from media operations, information operations, psychological operations and civil-military relations as well as legal and political advisors work together on strategic communication. Similar action has been taken by the NATO military command in the Supreme Headquarter Allied Power Europe (SHAPE) near Mons, Belgium, which is in charge of ISAF. At SHAPE, new organisational elements have been created, the *strategic communication cells* which comprise officials from different areas, including media relations, information operations, psychological operations and strategic communication.[27]

The fact that SHAPE and ISAF have explored new territory by abolishing the traditional division between different forms of communication has led to an intense discussion within NATO about strategic communication. The member states have realised that strategic communication has been neglected in the past, and that the changes proposed by SHAPE have such major implications for the operation as a whole that they have to be discussed and approved by the highest political and military bodies of NATO, the North Atlantic Council and the Military Committee.[28] This process is still underway, it will be interesting to observe how NATO adapts its future definition of and approach to strategic communication.

2.3. Messages

While the institutional set-up of ISAF communication poses considerable challenges, the content of the communication is no less problematic. NATO has two broad target groups for its strategic communication for ISAF: domestic publics and the Afghan public. The messages delivered to the two groups differ significantly.

2.3.1. Target Group 1: Domestic Publics

NATO and member state governments had neglected their domestic communication strategies for a simple reason: the domestic publics did not make an issue of it. Since 2006, though, citizens in Europe and North America have begun questioning the Afghanistan operation, wondering why their compatriots are dying in a far-flung place whose population does not seem to be too keen on Western influence.[29] Furthermore, the rising death toll continues to contradict NATO's official

[27] NATO official A.
[28] *Ibid*.
[29] Babst, *op.cit*., p. 4.

standpoint that it is not losing but winning against the Taliban.[30] Public support is necessary for the operation in general, but particularly crucial for the current surge, which entails an increase in soldiers, civilian personnel and money sent to the region. If domestic constituencies do not want to allocate further resources to Afghanistan, national politicians will be hesitant to offer more.

The strongest case for the Afghanistan operation is the fact that 11 September 2001 as well as the terrorist attacks in London (2004) and Madrid (2005) were planned in Afghanistan.[31] Terrorist training camps still exist in Afghanistan, and radical Islamists from Europe and other parts of the world travel there for inspiration and training. If the international force were to leave Afghanistan, it is possible that the country would, under the influence of the Taliban, develop once again into a safe haven for terrorists. This message can be directly linked to national interests. The former German Defence Minister Peter Struck has coined the notion that "the security of Germany is also defended in the Hindu Kush".[32]

The main problem with this line of argument is the Western publics' fear of terrorist attacks has significantly diminished. Due to the few actual attacks after 11 September 2001, many citizens feel no longer threatened. Indeed, many more European citizens died while fighting in Afghanistan than in terrorist attacks in Europe itself.[33] Paradoxically, fear of terrorist attacks is necessary to sustain public support for the Afghanistan operation, while the goal of the operation is to keep Western citizens free of fear. In the absence of terrorist attacks, it is increasingly difficult to convincingly argue that ISAF is necessary for security in Europe and North America. Yet the argument remains the basis for defending the operation as it directly links the target group's interest to Afghanistan.

Once it is established that Afghan security is essential to Western security, the second message that NATO wants to send out is that Afghan security depends on the presence of Western forces. In fact, few observers question that the Afghan security forces are too weak to independently fend off Taliban attacks. Eight years after being pushed from power, the Taliban movement still represents a considerable threat to the Afghan state and its institutions.

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[30] NATO official B.

[31] J. Biden, Vice-President of the United States, speech, NATO headquarters, Brussels, 10 March 2009.

[32] Cited in P. Strutynski, "'Die Sicherheit Deutschlands wird auch am Hindukusch verteidigt'", Kassel, Universität Kassel, 2007.

[33] N. MacFarlane, "New Security Challenges and Conflict Prevention", lecture, College of Europe, Bruges, 24 February 2009.

NATO strongly emphasises that ISAF is only an assistance mission to the Afghan government, and that the latter is responsible for the security situation.[34] With this message, NATO wants to put pressure on the Afghan government to step up efforts to take over more security tasks. The message is also a preparation of NATO's exit strategy, as it implies that NATO will leave as soon as the Afghan government is entirely capable of securing the country on its own. The risk of this message is twofold. First, it may be valid with respect to ISAF's official mandate, but it certainly does not mirror the reality on the ground where the foreign forces are the main guarantor of the stability of the current state system. Second, the argument is very defensive as it does not openly justify and motivate the operation, but rather tries to frame ISAF's action in an evasive manner. NATO's main communication objective should be to convince domestic publics of the need for further NATO presence in Afghanistan, and the notion that the Afghan forces, not NATO, are responsible for Afghan security softens this very argument.

But the problem with NATO's messages is not so much the selection of the messages, but rather the emphasis that different actors put on different messages and the general effort that leaders have made to push the messages into the public sphere. Both national leaders and senior NATO officials have neglected the important task of strongly targeting their home constituencies for too long. Not only have they chosen the wrong messages; they have not devoted enough time and energy into presenting them to the public. Leading politicians have merely reacted to popular criticism once it arose instead of preventing it by early, decisive communicative action.

2.3.2. Target Group 2: The Afghan Population

The majority of Afghans supports a continued presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan. Approval rates for ISAF have fluctuated in the last years between 63 and 80 percent, while the increased use of air strikes has damaged the reputation of international forces.[35] In Afghanistan, the 'battle for the hearts and minds' is one with clear fronts: the enemy is the Taliban movement. Roughly speaking, decreasing popular support for the Taliban equals higher approval for the Afghan government and foreign troops, and vice versa.

The Taliban have "created a sophisticated communications apparatus that projects an increasingly confident movement".[36] Even NATO communication officials express

[34] "NATO's role in Afghanistan", *op.cit.*
[35] NATO official A.
[36] International Crisis Group, "Taliban Propaganda: Winning the War of Words", Brussels/Kabul, 24 July 2008, p. i.

their deep professional respect for the Taliban's communication campaign. The Taliban use a wide range of instruments, most importantly several spokespersons who are available to local and foreign media around the clock via satellite phone. Furthermore, the Taliban operate a website which is updated several times a day in five languages; they produce magazines and leaflets; and they distribute sermons and battle reports via DVDs and audio cassettes. Recently, they have even used cell phones for their communication, for instance by offering free ringtones for download.[37]

One of the biggest challenges for NATO is the fact that the Taliban very rapidly exploit ISAF's military operations. Air campaigns, together with arbitrary detentions, have been the major factors that have undermined public support for NATO in Afghanistan. When an air strike occurs, the Taliban announce just hours – or even minutes – after the attack that a certain number of innocent civilians have been killed, and this (usually exaggerated) number has often been picked up by local and even international media. Only recently, international media started refraining from printing Taliban information as they have learned that Taliban figures are usually more fiction than fact.

While NATO is working on reducing its reaction time to Taliban disinformation, it uses several arguments to undermine Taliban credibility. Firstl it tries to depict the Taliban as illegitimate and un-Islamic through cooperation with Afghan Islamic institutions, for instance by indirectly influencing Friday sermons. NATO has started to emphasise the close connection between the Taliban and drug trafficking, thus assigning them criminal and economic rather than religious and ideological motives. Furthermore, NATO disseminates reports about illegal actions taken by Taliban members. For instance, NATO has spread a picture showing a Taliban fleeing from coalition forces in a *burka* (a traditional female garment), which is unacceptable from a cultural and Islamic point of view. US forces also used deception, for instance by spreading rumours about Taliban being involved in satanist practices.[38]

Besides delegitimizing the Taliban, the two main messages NATO sends to the Afghan public are that NATO is helping the country and that NATO is not an occupier but will leave as soon as Afghans are ready to provide for their own security. But the Afghan population cannot be won over by communication alone. Political measures to gain Afghan backing include the current surge: when NATO has more soldiers, it uses air strikes less frequently, which is likely to have positive effects on NATO's reputation. Even the most general policy decisions made by NATO – such as stepping up

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[38] NATO official A.

reconstruction and development aid – are, in a way, a means of showing the Afghan population that they profit from the presence of the international community.

Still, NATO is underperforming in terms of winning over the Afghan public.[39] Interaction with civil society does take place, but is still too limited. Especially with regard to the high illiteracy rate and the low reach of Afghan media, the number of Dari and Pashtu speaking officials who reach out to the Afghan population is far too low. NATO lacks language skills and has not managed to create lasting bonds with Afghan civil society. A faster reaction to Taliban disinformation will not be enough to convince Afghans that supporting ISAF is in their interest.[40]

NATO communication to domestic target groups has significantly improved in recent years, but still struggles to convince that ISAF is a worthwhile operation. Member states bear the primary responsibility for explaining to their home constituencies why soldiers are dying in Afghanistan, and the best argument for this is that ISAF is self-defence against future terrorism. NATO's role towards the domestic publics is largely to coordinate and complement member states' efforts. In Afghanistan, NATO has a much higher responsibility as member states are less active in addressing the Afghan population. NATO has started to improve its communication efforts towards the Afghan public, but current activities are insufficient to win Afghan hearts and minds.

3. EULEX Kosovo

3.1. Background

When the first EU officials went to Kosovo in April 2006 to prepare an ESDP operation aimed at supporting the local authorities as they prepared for independence, Kosovo, although officially a part of Serbia, was under the authority of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).[41] After several attempts by the EU and the USA to push for an agreement with Serbia and Russia about Kosovo's independence had failed, the EU decided on 16 February 2008 to launch a rule of law mission in order to strengthen Kosovar authorities which were supposed to take over responsibility for governing the territory from UNMIK. One day later, Kosovo unilaterally declared independence, a questionable move from a legal perspective. Many nations did not recognise Kosovo's independence, among them five EU member states who feared that the unilateral declaration of independence would

[39] NATO official C.
[40] *Ibid*.
[41] Représentation permanente de la France auprès de l'Union européenne, "Guide de la Politique Européenne de Sécurité et de Défense (PESD)", Brussels, November 2008, p. 51.

strengthen separatist movements in their own countries. Still, all EU member states continued to support the deployment of EULEX.[42]

Fearing EULEX was a means to implement Kosovo's independence, Russia denied it a mandate in the UN Security Council, thus putting the entire operation into question. As Serbia, a potential candidate for EU accession, did not want to affront the EU too severely, it agreed to a legal construction whereby EULEX was deployed under the umbrella of the UN mission, under the condition that EULEX would remain strictly neutral to the status of Kosovo, that is, the question of its independence.[43]

As the largest and most important civilian mission ever launched by the EU, EULEX was seen as an opportunity to step up communication efforts for ESDP operations. ESDP operations are an opportunity for the EU to show to a wider public that it is a powerful and responsible international actor. Communication for ESDP operations could be at the heart of efforts to shape the perception of the EU's foreign policy. Yet the EU has failed to do so during past ESPD missions for several reasons. First of all, many ESDP operations were deployed either for symbolic or for learning reasons. Before boasting of its capacities, the EU wanted to make sure it had mastered the respective missions. This corresponded with the EU's technical approach to international politics and to communication. The EU did not try to 'sell' its operations, but rather distributed information and factsheets to journalists – even more so for operations with limited scope and objectives.[44]

This status quo was deemed insufficient by EU communication officials as it did not enable the EU to use the full communicative potential of ESDP operations in order to display the EU as a strong international actor. In this respect, EULEX Kosovo was supposed to usher in a new era. However, I will show that political difficulties outside of the mission's responsibility have prevented EULEX from living up to these expectations.[45]

3.2. Actors

There are two main actors involved in the process of communicating EULEX to the public: the office of the spokesperson of the High Representative and the Press and Public Information Office (PPIO), which is part of the mission and situated in the mission headquarters in Pristina, Kosovo. Member states are not very involved in

[42] E. Vucheva, "MEPs call on whole of EU to recognise Kosovo", *EU observer*, 5 February 2009.
[43] J. Deimel & A. García Schmidt, "Kosovo 2009: Uncertain Future", *Spotlight Europe*, no. 01/2009, pp. 1-8.
[44] EU official A.
[45] EU official C.

communicating the operation, while coordination with other actors both inside and outside the EU plays a vital role.

The spokesperson of the High Representative is the informal head of the communication activities for EULEX Kosovo and guides the work of the PPIO. Although the PPIO in Pristina is formally accountable to the head of mission and to the Political and Security Committee, a Council body which is composed of member states' ambassadors, the office of the spokesperson has taken informal responsibility for being the main channel of all ESDP operations to the outside world. The spokesperson herself insists that her office is the front desk for all communication activities, and that the PPIO is directly accountable to her.[46]

The tasks of the office of the spokesperson are twofold. The spokesperson herself is the only authorised speaker in Brussels for EULEX, which means that only she and the High Representative can be quoted by the press. Meanwhile, the bulk of the press work in Brussels is managed by a communications advisor who acts as the focal point for the media, giving regular background briefings.[47] The communication advisor also guides the work of the PPIO through regular interaction. It is the first time that such a position has been created within an ESDP operation.[48]

The tasks of the offices in Brussels and Pristina are delineated as follows: while Brussels is responsible for the strategic planning and the press work for stories which either originate in Brussels or are of strategic importance, all operational and micro-management duties are referred to the PPIO in Pristina. Questions referring to the Kosovar public – 'local information for local consumption' – are only communicated in Pristina, and Brussels does not interfere with the way the PPIO presents those local stories to the press.[49]

The PPIO is much larger than the Brussels office. While in the office of the spokesperson, only two people – the communications advisor and the spokesperson herself for whom EULEX is only a small part of her duties – deal with EULEX Kosovo, the PPIO employs 16 personnel, including administrative workers and interpreters. The PPIO develops its own press lines, manages the website, organises local events and meetings with civil society and has even produced TV advertisements, a novelty for ESDP operations.[50]

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[46] Interview with EU official B, Brussels, 16 February 2009.
[47] *Ibid*.
[48] EU official C.
[49] EU official B.
[50] Council of the European Union, "EULEX Kosovo breaks new ground for ESDP", *ESDP Newsletter*, no. 7, Winter 2009, p. 9.

The quality of these instruments differs. The website, albeit rather dry and factual, adheres to the standard of political webpages, including appropriate design, structure and information – something that cannot be said of all websites of ESDP operations. The site includes a participatory element – the possibility to directly contact the head of mission – which can be seen as a first step to use the internet not only as a means of one-way communication, but as a platform for interaction. On the negative side, until mid-April 2009, the Albanian and Serbian language versions were still under construction, with pictures missing and texts containing numerous spelling mistakes, especially in Serbian language. Furthermore, the website includes audiovisual material, but only in unedited, raw versions. Although this material could be helpful for TV journalists, ordinary visitors of the site are confronted with half-baked video clips which irritate rather than illuminate.[51]

The three TV advertisements which briefly present the mission to the Kosovo public do not meet professional advertising standards. They lack a basic creative concept and professional production; indeed, they give the impression of being self-produced by EULEX. In addition, their dry tonality underlines the unappealing, unemotional and technical parts of the EU's image. It is doubtful whether the spots' poor quality can stimulate efforts to gain support in Kosovo for the EULEX operation.[52]

More successful is EULEX's outreach to Kosovar civil society. The PPIO organises regular meetings with local communities throughout Kosovo. EU officials underline the importance of civil society dialogue and their determination to reach out to NGOs and local structures, so that "civil society groups can be communicators of a common message, providing information and taking a lead when it comes to checks and balances in the rule of law area".[53] This activity is not limited to the Kosovar Albanian population; EULEX also reaches out to the Serbian community in Kosovo.[54]

EU member states are not very involved in the communication efforts for EULEX Kosovo. Contrary to the situation within NATO, there are no national caveats in the EU.[55] EU member states cannot define special roles for their seconded staff within ESDP operations, so their roles within the missions differ mainly with respect to the number of staff they are deploying. National personnel deployed in ESDP operations are under the direct command of the head of mission. As the member states'

[51] *EULEX Kosovo website*, retrieved on 10 and 30 April 2009.
[52] "TV Advertisements", *EULEX Kosovo website*.
[53] Council of the European Union, "Co-operation with civil society – not only dialogue about dialogue", *ESDP Newsletter*, no. 7, Winter 2009, p. 10.
[54] *Ibid*, pp. 10-11.
[55] The exception is Denmark which has opted out of the ESDP.

governments are not directly involved in managing the operation, their communicative approaches are similar. Even those member states which do not recognise Kosovo as an independent country have approved EULEX and contribute or are planning to contribute national staff to the mission.[56]

In practice, member states do of course mention the EULEX operation in communicative activities related to Kosovo in general, but they do not undertake additional initiatives such as national press trips or special websites. Instead, the websites of the foreign ministries of two large EU member states, Germany and France, prominently feature EU documents and a link to the EULEX website, thus referring visitors with a deeper interest in EULEX to the EU.[57] EU officials point out that rather than obstructing a common approach, the perspectives of different member states can be used by EULEX to promote certain stories for the press, for instance by offering the story of a French judge to a French journalist. In this sense, the different member states are rather seen as a communicative chance rather than as a challenge.[58]

EULEX has to coordinate with the member states as well as with other EU actors in the region. Besides EULEX, the EU is present in Kosovo through an EU Special Representative and a European Commission Liaison Office. Notably, the three actors jointly conducted a roadshow called 'Come to Europe' in spring 2008 which announced the deployment of EULEX and presented the action of the EU in Kosovo. The roadshow was an attempt to directly involve and get into contact with the Kosovar population, and was presented in both Albanian and Serbian. The 'Come to Europe' roadshow was significant insofar as it represented a turning point in EU communication for ESDP operations: it did not rely on one-way communication, but involved dialogue and participatory elements. A survey by a Kosovar research institute has shown that the roadshow was effective in relaying EU messages to the general populace.[59]

3.3. Messages

EU communication for EULEX has three relatively distinct target groups: the EU publics, Kosovar Albanians and the Serbian community in Kosovo and Serbia. The strategies towards the three groups vary considerably, as their attitudes towards the deployment of EULEX are fundamentally different.

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[56] EU official C.
[57] Auswärtiges Amt, "Kosovo", 8 October 2008; Ministère des Affaires Etrangères et Européennes, "Kosovo", 7 March 2008.
[58] EU official B.
[59] "Come to Europe: The EU public information roadshow in Kosovo", unpublished, pp. 34-35.

3.3.1. Target Group 1: EU Publics

It has been argued above that ESDP operations in general and EULEX Kosovo in particular offer a great opportunity to portray the EU as a strong and responsible international actor. When the EU started planning a civilian mission in Kosovo in spring 2006, this was exactly the approach it wanted to take: the plan was to push the communicative dimension of the operation strongly in order to strengthen the image of the EU's foreign policy.[60]

But due to political developments, this strategy was impossible to pursue: in order to portray EULEX as a symbol for a coherent, effective EU foreign policy, EULEX had to be a legitimate, credible, internationally agreed mission. In 2006, the EU had hoped that EULEX could be such a mission due to (1) a mandate of the UN Security Council, (2) an agreement about Kosovo's status and (3) a common position of all member states towards Kosovo. All three hopes were in vain, and this delayed the deployment of EULEX as well as damaging its reputation even before the mission began.

The lack of a UN Security Council mandate necessitated a creative legal construction in order to place EULEX under the umbrella of the UN mission to Kosovo. That has undermined the legitimacy of EULEX.[61] The different attitudes of EU member states towards Kosovo's status as well as pressure from Russia and Serbia have led to the status neutrality of EULEX. Although all member states – involving the ones that do not recognise Kosovo – did agree to launch EULEX, thereby proving that the deployment of EULEX was detached from the status question, the lack of unity within the EU did cast a damning light on the civilian mission. It became apparent that the EU did not possess the diplomatic weight to push through a solution for a problem that touched its vital interests. Furthermore, the eternal dilemma of EU foreign policy decision-making became obvious: the requirement of unanimity in the Council especially in controversial issues drastically limits the EU's ability to speak and act as one international actor. If one also takes into account EULEX's lack of legitimacy, it is hardly conceivable to portray EULEX as a success story of EU foreign policy towards the EU public.

The fact that several member states have not recognised Kosovo is not only of symbolic value. Since the EU member states have diverging political positions, the EU as such has to largely ignore the political dimension of its involvement in Kosovo in its communication efforts. As the EU's foreign policy is based on unanimity, the EU has to act and communicate on the basis of the lowest common denominator. This leaves no other choice for EU communication efforts than to present EULEX as an

[60] EU official C.
[61] Interview with Wolfgang Lieb, political commentator, Berlin, 21 February 2009.

apolitical, technical mission, and this is why one major message that EULEX sends out is that the operation could be deployed without Kosovar independence. In a sense, the message is a non-message: its main characteristic is that EULEX officials remain completely silent about the question of Kosovo's status. EULEX has to be presented as being totally detached from the status question, and as the status question is the overarching theme of media reports and public discussion about Kosovo, EULEX communication has to refrain from participating in or even shaping this discourse, which means that EULEX has to downplay its own political denotation. The focus of communication is not on what EULEX stands for, but on what EULEX is. This follows the tradition of what Fiske de Gouveia and Plumridge have dubbed *European Infopolitik*, meaning that EU public diplomacy focuses on "accurate and impartial information" rather than on a more influence-oriented strategy of "selling" foreign policy.[62]

The technical approach towards the EU public does not only refer to the messages which are sent out, but also to the degree of proactivity. EU officials acknowledge that due to political difficulties, they cannot communicate EULEX as proactively as they had hoped from the outset in 2006.[63] Rather, public relations efforts remain low-key. The EU does not try to push EULEX in the media, but rather explains the operation to those journalists who actively ask for statements or clarifications, which is a defensive, passive communication strategy.

However, EULEX is presented as a sign of the EU's growing foreign policy capabilities in one respect: the EU continuously promotes it as the largest civilian mission it has ever deployed.

3.3.2. Target Group 2: The Kosovar Albanian Public

For the Kosovar Albanian press and public, the questions of Kosovo's status and independence rank at the top of the agenda. The Kosovar press is highly sensitive to supposed threats to independence, and the division of the EU on the issue has created a certain amount of mistrust among the Kosovar Albanian public.[64]

The biggest communicative challenge for EULEX are the high expectations that the Kosovar Albanian public holds of the EU and EULEX. Due to the strong support of most Western countries for Kosovo's independence and a decade-long experience with a UN mission which had executive powers and actually ran the Kosovar administration, the Kosovar public has become accustomed to thinking that the

[62] P. Fiske de Gouveia & H. Plumridge, *European Infopolitik: Developing EU Public Diplomacy Strategy*, London, The Foreign Policy Centre, 2005, p. 9.
[63] EU official C.
[64] *Ibid*.

international community is responsible for solving Kosovo's problems. Consequently, much of the press reporting in Kosovo accuses EULEX of not doing enough, especially regarding Kosovar Serbian territories. Many Kosovar Albanians expect EULEX to integrate the Serbian parts of Kosovo into the Albanian Kosovar structures from the beginning. This demand is seen by EULEX officials as naive; they point out that there has been a real separation between the Albanian and Serbian parts of Kosovo for ten years, and that this division will not be overcome by forces from the outside.[65]

EULEX had repeatedly had to explain to the Kosovar Albanian press and public that its mandate is much narrower than that of the UN mission, and that EULEX is not running the administration but merely assisting the Kosovo government and administration through advice, training and mentoring. Consequently, the main slogan on EULEX's website is "supporting local ownership" in order to underline that the Kosovo government bears the main responsibility for the country.[66]

Thus, EULEX constantly has to explain that it is less powerful and important than many Kosovar Albanians think and suggest, that its mandate is limited, that its functions are modest. This line of argument is defensive. Instead of advertising its strengths, EULEX underlines the limits of its own capacity. The negative spin that EULEX gives its own work is understandable from a political point of view, but it still does not further the image of EULEX as an effective and positive actor.

Still, the EU's communication towards Kosovar Albanians is not limited to the defensive message of delegating responsibility to the Kosovo government. The main positive argument that EULEX puts forth is the promise of a Kosovar future within the EU. This line of argument is a well-established strategy in order to stimulate pro-EU reform in countries which are or might be candidates for EU accession. It has been extensively argued that with the help of the 'golden carrot' of EU membership, the EU triggered some of the most dramatic political and socioeconomic changes in recent history, most notably in Central and Eastern European countries. Many observers point out, though, that due to enlargement fatigue in the EU public, it is risky to promise future membership to any country, as the disappointment of a possible rejection of their application might result in anti-EU sentiments within the political leadership and the population.[67]

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[65] *Ibid*.
[66] See *EULEX Kosovo website*, *loc. cit*.
[67] A. Ghione, "The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), developed in 2004, is doomed to failure as it does not hold out the prospect of EU membership", Bruges, College of Europe, 2008, unpublished, p. 4.

EULEX communication officials do not share these reservations. By choosing 'Come to Europe' as the name of the roadshow which introduced and explained the EU and EULEX to a wider population in Kosovo, the EU opened a membership perspective for Kosovo. Meanwhile, the central policy of EULEX is the promotion of the rule of law in Kosovo. The confidence of the Kosovar population into the legitimacy and credibility of Kosovar rule of law institutions – the police, the customs, the judicial system – has to be built from scratch. In a country where, if your car is stolen, you are likely to go to the local mafia boss in order to claim it back, it is not an easy task to convince people of the strength, rightfulness and trustworthiness of state institutions.[68]

This is a communicative and political challenge at the same time, as only real changes on the ground will affect the Kosovars' attitude – but communication efforts and especially the dialogue with civil society play a vital role in restoring trust in the rule of law. Furthermore, the practical work by which EULEX strengthens the rule of law in Kosovo is at the centre of EULEX's everyday media relations which portray the small success stories of the operation. This gives Kosovar Albanians, but also Kosovar Serbs an idea of the changes EULEX brings to Kosovo.

3.3.3. Target Group 3: Serbs and Kosovar Serbs

The stance of Kosovar Serbs is crucial to the success of EULEX. Kosovar Serbs – especially those living in the northern part of Kosovo which borders Serbia – generally regard themselves as Serbs and refuse to be governed by Kosovar Albanians. Under the UN administration, northern Kosovo was practically a part of Serbia, as it participated in Serbian national elections, was influenced by Serbian media and had its own administration which had very few links with the Kosovar Albanian structures.[69]

While it remained unclear until the last minute whether EULEX would be capable of operating in the Serbian parts of Kosovo as well, the fact that it succeeded in doing so has triggered very positive reactions from the Kosovar Albanian press.[70] Still, it is not yet established to what extent Kosovar Serbian officials and people will cooperate with EULEX. If it turns out that EULEX will be helpful in integrating Kosovar Serbian structures into the general Kosovo administration, this will be an important sign for the territorial integrity of Kosovo. If, on the other hand, northern Kosovo remains largely separated from the rest of Kosovo, it is highly unlikely that Serbia will ever recognise the state of Kosovo within its current borders.

[68] EU official C.
[69] *Ibid*.
[70] *Ibid*.

It is the objective of EULEX to convince Kosovar Serbs that the deployment of EULEX is in their interest. Since most Kosovar Serbs are influenced by Belgrade media, EULEX has to reach out to the Serbian public as well. While some Kosovar Serbian leaders promote closer cooperation with EULEX and the Kosovar Albanian government, they meet harsh opposition from nationalist Serbs in Kosovo and Serbia. In fact, EULEX's biggest communicative opponents are nationalist Serbian politicians who publicly claim that EULEX is implementing Kosovo's independence. As the EULEX operation is neutral to the status of Kosovo, this claim is factually incorrect, and EULEX communication officials work hard to explain EULEX's mandate and role to Serbian journalists in order to stop the dissemination of false information.[71]

Beyond defending itself against Serbian nationalists, EULEX also has to convince Kosovar Serbs that the operation is actually in their interest. EULEX tackles this question by repeatedly stating its promotion of multi-ethnicity in the administration of Kosovo. This is supposed to show the Kosovar Serbs that they are not left out in the future of Kosovo, and that possible Kosovar Albanian attempts to sideline Kosovar Serbian interests will be confronted by EULEX.

Finally, the EU also uses the promise of future EU membership towards Kosovar Serbs. The aforementioned roadshow 'Come to Europe' was staged under the same name (in Serbian translation) in Serbian enclaves within Kosovo, and it was meant to convince Kosovar Serbs that they would be better off as part of the EU – without going into detail about whether this would entail an autonomous nation of Kosovo.

4. Conclusion: The Communicative Roles of International Organisations

Strategic communication for crisis management operations is an issue gaining in importance. The analysis of two case studies of large, important operations which represent the state-of-the-art communication efforts of the EU and NATO has identified similarities and differences between the communication activities of the two organisations.

NATO has paid the high price of domestic discontent for its long negligence of strategic communication for ISAF. Recently, communication for ISAF has seen a significant increase in attention, energy and resources, but remains difficult. NATO's effort of trying to reconcile the different positions, namely between member states that emphasise reconstruction efforts and those that stress the military aspect, has shown some results – not least because national leaders have pushed for an equilibrium of civilian and military action on a political level, too. Especially on the

[71] *Ibid*.

domestic front, the Media Operations Centre, NATO TV and the soon-to-be revamped website are clear signs that NATO takes responsibility for selling ISAF to domestic publics. Finally, NATO's domestic role is restricted as member states take the lead role in explaining to their publics why their compatriots are fighting in Afghanistan.

Communication with the Afghan public so far lacks a similar improvement. NATO has hardly been able to counter Taliban disinformation, and it has not invested enough in people with adequate language skills who can reach out to the local civil society. Recent initiatives in which actors of different communication disciplines – media relations, public affairs, information operations, psychological operations, and others – work together in newly created strategic communication cells point in the right direction and have triggered high-level discussion on strategic communication. NATO efforts in this respect are still evolving, and although these activities come too late, it seems that NATO has learned its lesson.

EULEX communication goals are comparatively modest. Early plans to present EULEX as a symbol for the evolving strong international actorness of the EU have been undermined by political disagreements inside and outside of the Union about the status of Kosovo and the mission itself. These developments have led EULEX to pursue a reactive, defensive strategy towards the domestic public in which the technical tasks of the operation are highlighted rather than its political importance.

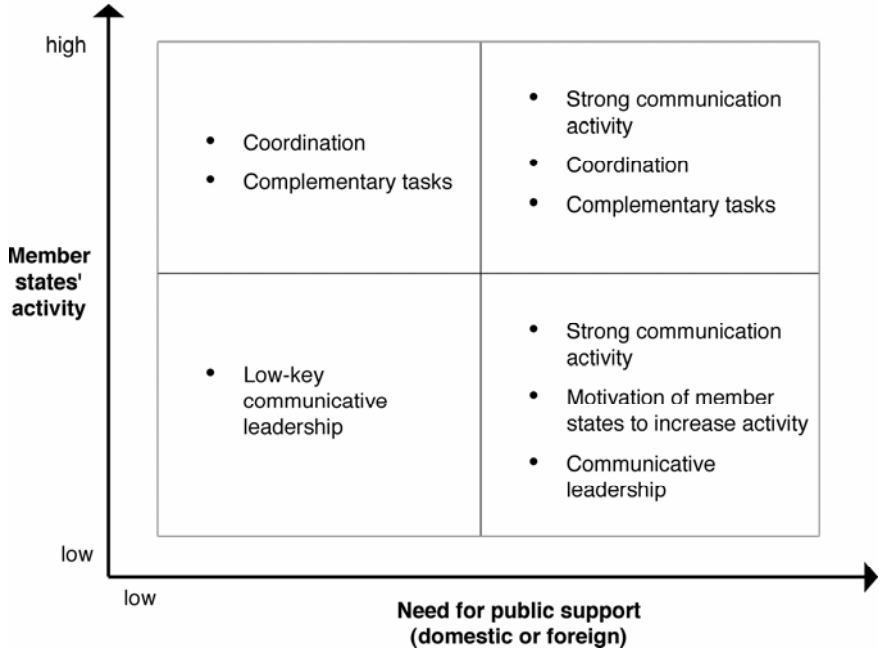
While only one EU official in Brussels is in charge of communicating EULEX to the EU publics, the Press and Public Information Office in Pristina comprises 16 personnel. Consequently, communication towards the publics in Kosovo – both the Kosovar Albanians and the Kosovar Serbs – is more developed. Besides commendable efforts to overcome one-way communication and to enter into dialogue through a roadshow, an interactive feature on the website, regular meetings with civil society, and the poor quality of some instruments (most notably the TV advertisements) are inadequate for professional political communication. The promise of future EU membership – a controversial strategy as it raises expectations – helps to rally local support of EU action in Kosovo.

Although the empirical basis of this study is too small to allow for definite general observations, the case studies suggest that the following elements are determining factors for strategic communication for crisis management operations of international organisations:

- the role of the member states,
- the need for domestic ratification,

- the possibility of promoting the international organisation through the operation,
- the communicative capabilities of the international organisation, and
- the importance of the foreign public to the success of the operation.

Figure 1: Different communicative roles of international organisations



Source: author's classification.

Figure 1 shows the different communicative tasks that international organisations may assume based on the role of the member states and the need for public support. The general rule regarding member state involvement in crisis management operations of international organisations seems to be the following: if an operation requires domestic ratification – which is usually the case for robust military interventions – member states increase their communication activities. This, in a second step, leads to a situation where general unity of message is hard to achieve due to the multitude of actors involved in the communication process, especially if the actors have different national priorities or caveats as in the case of NATO. The positive effect of the need for domestic ratification is that member states concentrate their attention on the communicative aspects of an operation, leading to a greater provision of resources.

These actions limit the role of the international organisation to fulfilling coordinating or complementary tasks. For the short-term operational media work, the international organisation needs a sufficiently large press department. The bigger the communicative capabilities of the international organisation, the more it can influence national journalists according to a common strategy, for instance by press trips, background meetings, etc. If member states do not react sufficiently to

communicative needs towards the domestic publics, the international organisation can motivate them to do more.

If, on the other hand, domestic ratification is not needed because the operation is uncontroversial, member states will be much less likely to communicate proactively. This facilitates the realisation of a unity of message, even if this message might be focussed on the lowest common denominator, and leaves the international organisation the choice to either neglect communication towards the domestic public – which creates risks for later, more controversial operations because no trust in the international organisation has been created in the public – or to push communication in order to present the crisis management operation as a symbol for the positive, strong role the organisation plays on the international scene. This is only possible, though, if the international organisation realises the communicative potential of crisis management operations and has sufficient communicative capabilities to pursue such a strategy. The risk is that without member state attention, international organisations may lack the resources necessary to conduct powerful campaigns.

The communicative capabilities of an international organisation depend in large part on whether the member states have understood the importance of communication or not. In the case of NATO, strong investments in communication resulted from pressure on the member states. As EU member states have not yet felt such pressure from ESDP operations, they have not yet rectified the problem of the EU's insufficient communication capabilities.

The problems of this finding are twofold. First, it is not always clear from the outset of an operation whether it will require informal domestic ratification or not. ISAF was largely uncontroversial at first, so member states did not allocate a lot of attention to communication. Only at a later stage did ISAF cause substantial domestic public pressure which might have been softened by earlier proactive communication. Meanwhile, it is possible that EULEX will turn into a controversial mission, for instance if Serbia and Russia take a more confrontational position. In this case, the EU and its member states would suddenly have to explain EULEX to the EU public, and wish that they had done so earlier.

Second, the argument that strong domestic pressure leads to higher resources for communication activities is detached from the importance of the foreign public. It has been argued that resources for communication activities partly depend on member states' awareness of the importance of communication, and that this is in turn dependent on the need for domestic ratification. But what if there is no need for

domestic ratification – and consequently a small communication budget – but a strong need to target the foreign public?

Member states are quite sensitive to communicative pressure from their own domestic publics, but both case studies have shown that they are less interested in the foreign public, although this is changing in the case of Afghanistan due to spillovers from rising attention to the domestic publics. This means that international organisations must take the primary responsibility for communicating with the foreign public, and they have to persuade their member states of the need to provide resources accordingly. While the role of international organisations in communicating to the domestic publics depends on the involvement of member states, international organisations have to understand that they are the main drivers of communication to the foreign public. In the case of EULEX, this has already materialised, although communication officials have so far proven unable of convincing policy-makers that an increase in communication staff would have a greater positive effect than sending the same number of border officials.

Most importantly, all actors have to move from a culture of reacting to public pressure to a strategy of early, proactive communication to domestic and foreign publics. This study has shown that awareness of international organisations and their member states of the importance of strategic communication for crisis management operations is rising. The translation of this insight into practical changes is an ongoing process, and it will be interesting to observe how this emerging field will develop in the coming years.

Further research is needed to monitor these developments and to confirm and expand the arguments of this study which relies on the relatively modest empirical basis of two case studies. In particular, the qualitative approach of this study should to be complemented by quantitative research covering a wide range of crisis management operations in order to verify the findings of this paper.

Finally, a sorrowful anecdote gives rise to hope. In October 2008, at a funeral for soldiers who had died in Afghanistan, former German Defence Minister Franz Josef Jung used, for the first time, the word 'Gefallene' which translates as "casualties of war".[72] In October 2009, his successor Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg went a step further by calling the operation a 'war'[73]. This word choice shows that efforts to create a larger 'unity of message' can achieve success – even in challenging communicative situations.

[72] C. Thiels, "Jung spricht erstmals von Gefallenen", *tagesschau.de*, 24 October 2009.
[73] "'Krieg' für Guttenberg kein Tabu mehr", *tagesschau.de*, 3 November 2009.

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