



SPECIAL SECTION

Strategic publicity

On international intervention and the performativity of public communication in postconflict Macedonia

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This article analyzes how diplomats from the United States, European Union, and allied organizations marshaled public communication as a political tool in the Republic of Macedonia following the country's 2001 armed conflict. During this period, American and European officials used press conferences, media interviews, public addresses, press releases, and official reports to evaluate and comment on political decisions facing the country. Through an ethnographic elaboration of foreign representatives' participation in the Macedonian public sphere on politics, the article develops how foreign officials' commentary was performative in that its pragmatic effect—of expressing approval or disapproval—produced new and consequential contexts that would affect how others (e.g., Macedonian politicians) participated in the public. In tracing the powerful but fragile ways in which such public interdiscursivity functioned to modulate political decision-making in Macedonia, the article links scholarship on governmentality with that on the public sphere to advance a deeper reading of communicative dimensions of governmentality as well as the governmental politics of publicity.

Keywords: publics, the public sphere, international intervention, transnational governance, governmentality, Macedonia

A senior American diplomat once mentioned to me a truism that had existed among members of the United States Foreign Service. Until recently, he reported, professional wisdom held that the quickest way to derail one's career was to end up quoted in the local press when on an assignment abroad. It was assumed that one's words could only be taken out of context and that in diplomacy, unlike celebrity, there is such thing as bad press. The times have changed. Addressing foreign publics is now a core aspect of diplomatic practice. So-called public diplomacy is now



understood as a crucial tool by which states seek to cultivate international relations. Furthermore, high-ranking diplomats, like my interlocutor, must now undergo training in media relations before taking up posts. Simply put, the discourse and practice of marketing and public relations—what is called “strategic communication” in diplomatic circles—now permeate transnational politics.¹

This article analyzes a particular case—the conduct of European and American officials in the Republic of Macedonia following the country’s 2001 armed conflict—to examine some of the social and political consequences of the public turn in international diplomacy. During Macedonia’s seven-month conflict in 2001, ethnic Albanian insurgents clashed with state military and police forces, ostensibly seeking greater rights and representation within a state dominated by the country’s ethnic Macedonian majority. With the wars in nearby Bosnia and Kosovo still fresh in memory, a flood of international officials and agencies poured into Macedonia, tasked to de-escalate the conflict. Significantly, in that August, diplomats from the European Union and the United States successfully helped to negotiate a peace treaty, named the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA), which brought the armed hostilities to a halt. The OFA stipulated legislation and constitutional amendments that would both strengthen minority group representation in state administration and also decentralize many functions and powers of government to the municipal level.

The treaty thus commenced a difficult process of political reform that came to define the postconflict period. However, the OFA and the reform process that it authorized also cemented a new figure within the postconflict political scene: the Euro-American official. In the postconflict period, numerous North Atlantic governments and organizations—whether the United States, European Union, NATO, OSCE, or UNDP—sponsored projects to monitor and assist with the ongoing efforts at stabilization and reform. Yet beyond these concrete and delimited projects, European and American officials representing these institutions did something else. They talked. In public. About Macedonian political issues. And, they did so frequently. That is, via press conferences, media interviews, public addresses, press releases, and reports, these foreign officials²—my shorthand term for this coterie of European and American diplomats—saturated the Macedonian public sphere

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1. Tellingly, the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act of 2009 required the US President to submit a “national framework for strategic communication” to the Congress. The Obama Administration’s framework defined strategic communication as, “(a) the synchronization of words and deeds and how they will be perceived by selected audiences, as well as (b) programs and activities deliberately aimed at communicating and engaging with intended audiences, including those implemented by public affairs, public diplomacy, and information operations professionals.” The complete framework document can be accessed at <https://fas.org/man/eprint/pubdip.pdf>.
 2. My use of the term “foreign official” echoes the label that Macedonians used to refer to European and American officials, which was simply “foreigners” (in the Macedonian language, *stranci*). While the term *stranci* could be used to refer to any persons from outside of Macedonia or the Balkan region, during the postconflict period, the default referent of the term was in fact the EU and US officials who had taken on active roles in the country’s politics.



on politics with tailored recommendations for and evaluations of political issues in Macedonia.³

This article examines the qualities, conditions, and consequences of foreign officials' incursion into the Macedonian public sphere in order to link the cultural politics of mass publicity to contemporary practices of international intervention and transnational governance. As I demonstrate below, given the political authority of the United States, European Union, and allied organizations in Macedonia during the postconflict period, foreign officials' participation in the Macedonian public sphere did not merely insert another voice or another perspective into the public discussion of the postconflict reform process. Rather, the unique status and style of foreign officials bestowed their commentary with a metacultural character (Urban 2001). That is, their broadcasted evaluations, expectations, and recommendations on policy issues in Macedonia served to frame particular proposals, particular forms of political conduct, and particular manners of public speech as compatible with Euro-Atlantic integration and its liberal democratic principles while casting other political strategies and speech forms as impediments toward the goals of EU and NATO accession. Macedonian political actors thus had to adjust to a postconflict political reality in which their own contributions to the Macedonian public sphere might possibly be subjected to foreign officials' public commentary and its consequences.

In practice, European and American officials' commentary on Macedonian politics encompassed a variety of text, speech, and performance genres. In some instances, formal reports on Macedonia's preparedness to join NATO or the European Union contained statements on the (in)sufficiency of ongoing political reform. The publication of these reports would then occasion a press conference in which a ranking official or spokesperson would elaborate on these statements or comment on a current political flashpoint. In other instances, some political flashpoint in Macedonia, such as legislative deadlock in the Macedonian Parliament, would lead the US or EU ambassador to describe in a media interview how failed action would negatively affect Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic integration. Yet, despite the occasional nature of such public interventions, the net effect was a near constant litany of commentary and assessment on the political decision-making process in Macedonia.

For scholars who live or conduct research in countries that find themselves categorized as part of the "developing world," behavior such as that displayed by American and European diplomats in Macedonia will likely be familiar. Quite obviously, the presumption that a diplomat can or should comment publicly on the affairs of a foreign country and the willingness of local news media to report on or otherwise facilitate such commentary rests on inequalities in transnational political power that are not unique to Macedonia. The behavior thus mirrors a geopolitical map defined by where North Atlantic governments and institutions

3. I follow Craig Calhoun (2002) in conceptualizing the public sphere as an assemblage of overlapping publics oriented to a common polity. I use the formulation, *the public sphere on politics*, to refer to those publics organized around the official political affairs of a country in contrast to publics attending to other matters, e.g., entertainment, sports, health, religion. See also Francis Cody (2011).

have decided to champion political reform, economic development, human rights legislation, or other forms of liberal expansion. Indeed, one might conclude that such pronouncements are but the epiphenomena of deeper forces of European and American political economic hegemony.

The argument of this article, however, contends that foreign officials' political commentary in postconflict Macedonia, and in other contexts as well, should be understood as more than mere words. I approach foreign officials' serial pronouncements on Macedonian politics as constituting a form of transnational political power in its own right, one that operated through targeted discursive interventions into the Macedonian public sphere on politics, what I call "strategic publicity." Drawing on seminal work in speech act theory and in linguistic anthropology, I argue that American and European officials' public evaluations of the Macedonian political process had a *performative* character: the event of their utterance also accomplished a socially significant action. As speech acts, performances of public commentary typically served to express American and European (dis)approval of some policy proposal or political strategy. However, the efficacy of such performative utterances would often ripple across the Macedonian public sphere—prompting responses, coloring commentary, influencing decisions—in ways that affected how or whether other texts, that is, others' contributions to the public, circulated. While such discursive intervention did not necessarily result in the implementation of American and European policy prescriptions, by regularly asserting their authority to evaluate the Macedonian political process and in broadcasting policy preferences, foreign officials nonetheless forged a political apparatus of sorts, a mass-mediated platform from which to shape political behavior in Macedonia through the serial narration of EU and US reactions to the Macedonian political scene.

What follows then is a study of transnational governance, mass-mediated publicity, and the politics of communication. In the past decade, social and cultural anthropology has witnessed a swell in scholarship on both governmentality and publicity. The former research mobilizes Michel Foucault's (1991) conceptualization of governmentality as a modern form of power that operates through the management of populations and territory. Mining Foucault's insights, anthropologists have used the governmentality concept to analyze the global decline of the social welfare state and the reciprocal if uneven rise and spread neoliberal forms of governance under the pretexts of reform and development (Li 2007; Inda 2005).

In contrast, research on publicity, inspired by the work of Jürgen Habermas (1989), Benedict Anderson (1991), and especially Michael Warner (2002), examines the social implications of the mass-mediated circulation of semiotic forms (e.g., Spitulnik 1996; Gal and Woolard 2001; Briggs 2003, 2005; Hirschkind 2006; Cody 2009, 2011; Vidali 2010; Mazzarella 2013; Gershon 2010, 2014). Research in this vein is attentive to the fact that mass publicity, the organized circulation of texts addressed to unknown others, takes variable forms dependent on the norms that govern how and whether individuals or groups can participate. The concept of a public thus limns a particular "social organization of interdiscursivity" (Gal 2007: 7) that results from the participation norms and semiotic ideologies that



mediate public address in specific settings and networks. Furthermore, scholarship on publicity tends to approach power and politics by examining the normative concepts that mediate participation in publics and the identity politics that arise to counter them (Warner 2002; Landes 1988; Fraser 1997; Gal and Woolard 2001; Briggs 2003; Cody 2009; Graan 2016). In short, studies of governmentality and publicity, for the most part, choose different objects of study, deploy different analytic tools and social theories, and generate different theories of power and politics (although see Briggs 2003, 2005; Briggs and Hallin 2007).

By analyzing the political logics and consequences of foreign officials' widespread participation in Macedonia's postconflict public sphere, I hope to bridge this gap and advance a deeper reading of communicative dimensions of governmentality as well as the governmental politics of publicity. Foreign officials' public interventions reflect a form of power that remains invisible to most analyses of governmentality, focused as they tend to be on specific *projects* of social transformation, whether in the guise of economic development, political reform, or humanitarian relief. Such reform and development programs were undertaken in postconflict Macedonia. Yet, even with such projects afoot, American and European officials engaged in public commentary, and Macedonians came to recognize the foreign presence in Macedonia through such interventions into the Macedonian public sphere. I thus found myself asking, why, despite all of the projects, all of the official mechanisms of influence, all of the political capital stored by the United States and European Union in Macedonia, and all of the backroom discussions, was public commentary so central to European and American political conduct in the postconflict period? What was such public commentary accomplishing beyond the "project logic" of neoliberal globalization? And, what might such practices of strategic publicity reveal about contemporary forms of transnational governance?

This article draws on seventeen months of fieldwork conducted in 2003 and 2004. During this period, I conducted several interviews with foreign officials in Macedonia, attended foreign organizations' press conferences and media receptions, shadowed and interviewed journalists responsible for reporting on foreign missions in Macedonia, and discussed the foreign political presence in Macedonia with a range of Macedonian residents. During this time, I also followed three news dailies in Macedonia, creating an annotated archive of major news stories and their development. This component of my research was crucial to identifying the character and scope of foreign commentary in Macedonia. As ethnography, this analysis counts as an example of "studying up." I work to critically examine a set of elite practices that had major consequences for the political reality of Macedonians in the years following the 2001 conflict. However, while I draw on foreign officials' and Macedonian observers' understandings of foreigners' public commentary on Macedonian politics, I also seek to analyze foreigners' public speech in terms of the larger communicative environment in which they manifested. This environment is irreducible to the discrete professional practices of diplomats, press representatives, journalists, and politicians. Thus, in mounting this analysis of foreigner public speech in Macedonia, I seek to mirror the dialogic, interdiscursive quality of mass publicity.

Broadcasting presence, transforming publicity

Foreign officials' public commentary on Macedonian politics was nothing short of rampant during my research in Skopje in 2003 and 2004. Across publication formats, European and American officials weighed in on political issues big and small on a near daily basis. In many ways, foreign officials' performances of commentary constituted mass-mediated examples of "international presence" as a strategy of governance and social transformation. In her brilliant study of international aid workers in postwar Bosnia, Kimberley Coles (2007) analyzed how self-described "internationals" envisioned the bare fact of their physical presence as having normative consequences for Bosnian social and political life. Such foreign elites imagined that their "being there"—their Presence with a capital "P"—was a way in which to model political and professional habits deemed "proper" and to temper social and political extremism through the implicit threat of disapproval and sanction.

In parallel, foreign officials in Macedonia envisioned their public commentary as a way to *broadcast* the imagined normative and pedagogical effects of simply being present. As a spokesperson from the OSCE explained to me in a 2004 interview, she saw statements to the press as a way to "remind [Macedonians] that representatives of the international community were still present in Macedonia." In this way, public commentary produced and reproduced the sense that the so-called international community was concerned with the conduct and outcome of the Macedonian political process and so heightened the "social visibility" (Coles 2007: 92) of North Atlantic governments and institutions in Macedonia. However, as the OSCE spokesperson continued during our interview, her statements often did more than remind. Rather, they were intended to "defuse tensions, prevent rumors, and to project IC [international community] pressure" in the Macedonian public sphere. In broadcasting Presence, then, foreign officials might leverage the power that North Atlantic governments and organizations held over the Macedonian state to pressure for very specific political goals (see also Gilbert forthcoming).⁴

Quite obviously, American and European officials occupied a distinct and privileged position in Macedonia, which affected how they participated in the country's public sphere. On one level, the political economy of the postconflict period invested both the United States and European Union with tremendous authority in Macedonia. At this time, Macedonia intensified its commitment to the EU and NATO accession processes and the conditional requirements of each

4. To be sure, foreign officials also understood that their peers, whether representatives of other governments and organizations or colleagues at the home office, formed an audience for their commentary, in addition to Macedonian audiences. In principle, the remarks of one diplomat might reveal a policy shift relative to other diplomatic missions. In practice, however, there was a significant degree of coordination between the major international interests that were active in postconflict Macedonia. For example, the EU, NATO, and the OSCE held their biweekly press conferences jointly from 2001 to 2004. In field interviews, American and European diplomats also confirmed how they worked to create a "unified front" in regard to policy on Macedonia, i.e., to harmonize their "strategic communication." Such regular coordination of diplomatic message minimized the chance that any given foreign officials' public commentary might surprise diplomatic peers with unexpected or unapproved stances.

(Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004). In addition, economic and military support from the United States, European Union, and NATO was widely viewed as essential for Macedonia's national security. One consequence of this situation was that European and American diplomats had substantial political clout and benefited from tremendous access to the Macedonian news media. Most major Macedonian news outlets had journalists assigned to cover the American and European diplomatic missions in the country and they reported on, that is, publicized, foreign officials' political commentary regularly.

On another level, as a political elite representing outside, supranational powers, foreign officials commanded distinct speech styles associated with their professional roles that distinguished them from Macedonian participants in the public sphere. As I describe in more detail below, foreign officials often spoke a register of "diplomat-ese" that privileged forms of depersonalized speech. Most European and American diplomats, regardless of national origin, also tended to use the English language when commenting publically on Macedonian politics.⁵ Furthermore, by virtue of their offices, European and American officials could claim insider knowledge over Macedonia's EU and NATO accession processes. In consequence, foreign officials could talk in ways and about things that Macedonian political actors could not, and vice versa. The status and mission of foreign officials relative to Macedonian political actors thus resulted in two different, if intermeshing, orders of authority and knowledge in the Macedonian public sphere.

When foreign officials did comment on issues under discussion by Macedonian political actors, these two orders of authority and knowledge would collide. While foreign officials' comments might challenge specific statements made by Macedonian political actors, on a deeper level, in broadcasting Presence and targeting commentary, foreign officials inserted themselves into the participant structures that anchored the Macedonian public sphere on politics. In doing so, foreign officials not only introduced a differentiated set of participation norms but in claiming and performing the authority to evaluate others, they produced a new hierarchy of participation within the Macedonian public sphere.

Grounding this argument is a theory of publics as outcomes of subjects' reflexive orientation to the circulation of discourse (Warner 2002). Participation in a

5. Given foreign officials' use of the English language, their interventions in the Macedonian public sphere depended on the labor of translators. Most journalists working at major news organizations were fluent in English and the journalists assigned to cover foreign missions would use English during interviews or Q&A periods. Macedonian news organizations also employed translators to prepare Macedonian-language translations of English-language transcripts. Furthermore, the diplomatic missions of the European Union, United States, and OSCE would also release their own "approved" Macedonian and Albanian language translations of press conference transcripts and other official public statements. As an OSCE press officer told me in an interview, this was seen as a necessary effort to minimize the perceived risk of misquotation or distortion in the Macedonian news media. Finally, the EU, US, and OSCE diplomatic missions also contracted translation firms to provide English-language translations of news stories published in selected Macedonian and Albanian language news outlets. There is much to say about this translation apparatus and the varieties of textual circulation that it enabled (see Gal 2006) but such issues fall outside the scope of this essay.

public is thus inherently intertextual and interdiscursive (see Bakhtin 1981, 1986): specific interventions take on meaning insofar as they exist in relation to past and future interventions that are addressed to a shared horizon of circulation, the imagined community of the public. As Susan Gal elaborates,

publics are created through the circulation of discourses as people hear, see or read a message and then engage it in some way: by shows of interest, including imitation, commentary, borrowing, quotation, citation, and of course translation. At each step there can be acceptance, parody, ridicule, opposition or even rejection. In this process, participants take messages out of one context and insert or recontextualise them in another space and time (Silverstein and Urban 1996). A self-aware public emerges as a mutual watching or listening. The recontextualisation of each others' commentary engenders further commentary that is repeated in turn, and thus circulates and invites yet more commentary. In short, publics can be understood as a form of "interdiscursivity," an idea derived from Bakhtin, who wrote about the "complex event of encountering and interacting with another's word" (1986: 144). Those encounters and interactions are the very means through which publics coalesce. (Gal 2006: 174)

Guiding such encounters and interactions are sets of normative participation structures. That is, participation in a public is always mediated by particular but unevenly distributed participant roles, speech forms, and media access. As Charles Briggs (2005: 282) emphasizes, "imaginings of communicative processes" that anchor mass publicity so "create categories, subjectivities, and social relations and position people hierarchically within them." In consequence, publics take on a particular social organization of interdiscursivity that links forms of speech and participation to other social arrangements (Gal 2007). Publics must thus be understood as differentiated communicative environments, where distinct and even competing forms of participation presuppose and create participation hierarchies.

How then did American and European officials sound in the Macedonian press? And, how did foreign officials' public commentary create new hierarchies of participation in the Macedonian public sphere? Before considering these questions, a brief caveat is in order. American and European officials were not a homogeneous group. They worked in the service of many governments and organizations, each of which brought different interests, capacities, and degrees of involvement to Macedonia. One is thus well advised against treating "foreigners"—the Macedonian category for this group—or the "international community" as a monolith or ascribing to it coherent intentions and actions.

Despite differences, however, American and European officials did operate within a common professional circle, often coordinated their actions, and were similarly positioned in the Macedonian political landscape, as "international" political elites. Perhaps not surprisingly, then, foreign officials deployed a virtually common set of speech styles when addressing the Macedonian press. What marked these speech styles most of all, in addition to the use of English, was the use of depersonalized and indirect forms of evaluation and criticism. Consider the following short examples of foreign officials' public commentary.

First, in an interview published in the Macedonian language news daily *Vreme*, Søren Jessen-Petersen, the EU Special Representative to Macedonia, commented

on parliamentary efforts to write and pass legislation stipulated by the OFA. He did so by narrating two possibilities for the Macedonian future, stating,

It is obvious that there is progress in passing legislation from the Framework Agreement, but at the same time, there is still a long path to traverse. . . . As long as the process of passing and implementing these laws speeds up, the process of nearing Europe will proceed more quickly; in the opposite case, the path toward Europe will be very arduous.⁶

In this statement, Jessen-Petersen poses the full implementation of the OFA as a condition for EU membership. He thus leverages the possibility and desirability of EU accession to pressure for the quick and complete passage of reform legislation.

Javier Solana, the EU Minister for Foreign Affairs, pursued a similar tactic in a 2004 op-ed piece published in the Macedonian newspaper *Dnevnik*. Commenting on the Macedonian Government's plan to officially submit its application for EU membership, Solana proclaimed,

Your country has arrived at an extremely important moment in its history. The Government's decision to submit an application for full membership in the EU will have far-reaching consequences for the country and for its inhabitants. The question is not whether it is the right timing for the application, nor is it what Brussels will think about the exact state of reforms. What will have a lasting impact on the future of Macedonia is whether people and politicians will use the opportunity provided by the application and mobilize the necessary energy for fundamental reform. . . .

The past two years have been successful. The conflict ended and the security situation has gradually improved. The implementation of the Ohrid Agreement progresses, despite some lags. But, the application demands more. Ordinary work will no longer be enough. The challenges will be harder, as will the level of observation.⁷

Solana then continued to elaborate on three key areas critical to a successful EU application: the full implementation of the OFA, including decentralization; reform and anticorruption measures across state institutions and especially the judiciary; and the building of a multiparty and multiethnic consensus for European integration. As in the Jessen-Petersen example, Solana is demanding that Macedonian political leaders speed up a European- and American-endorsed reform process should they wish to see the country's entry into the European Union.

Yet, the manner in which both Jessen-Petersen and Solana expressed this demand is, from a formal perspective, indirect. Neither official directly issued a demand; the demands were implied. Furthermore, neither Jessen-Petersen nor Solana, nor even the European Union, appears in these statements as an explicit agent. Instead, the officials employ agentless declarative sentences: "there is progress . . . there is still a long path to traverse." Or, "The implementation . . . progresses. . . ."

6. Jasmina Mironska, "Apliciranjeto e polesniot del od zadačata: Intervju so evropskiot pretstavnik Soren Jesen-Petersen," *Vreme (Skopje)*, March 13, 2004. All translations from Macedonian language sources are by the author.

7. Javier Solana, "Patot za Brisel vodi preku Ohrid," *Dnevnik (Skopje)*, February 7, 2004. <http://star.dnevnik.com.mk/?pBroj=2373&stID=28852>.

The application demands more. . . . The challenges will be harder.” The style of foreign officials’ public commentary, as these examples indicate, was a particular “voice from nowhere,” that declared “facts” before the Macedonian public as a way to motivate reform and signal policy preferences.⁸

There is much that one could say about foreign officials’ apparent preference for depersonalized and indirect evaluation. First, such pronouncements minimized signs that explicitly indexed the context of their production and the social identity of their speaker (see also Greenberg 2012). In consequence, statements were presented as facts that existed independently from their expression and so presupposed a speaker who was imagined to be neutral and objective (see Bishara 2013). Second, by presenting depersonalized evaluations of issues in Macedonian politics, foreign officials veiled their prescriptions for Macedonian political affairs in the grammar of their commentary. By avoiding outright demands or threats, foreign organizations could genuflect toward the sovereignty and integrity of the Macedonian political process while nonetheless working to steer democratic speech and practice in Macedonia toward their preferred models.⁹

On another level, however, the depersonalized yet prescriptive style of foreign officials functioned to rescale the hierarchy of participation within the Macedonian public sphere. The authoritative use of a “voice from nowhere,” when bolstered by the European Union, United States, and NATO’s decisive power over Macedonia’s Euro-Atlantic integration, served to construct foreign officials as a super-authority within the Macedonian public sphere. As Charles Briggs argues (2005: 274), communicative processes are “ideologically constructed in such a way as to make some people seem like producers of knowledge, others like translators and disseminators, others like receivers, and some simply out of the game.” Foreign officials’ depersonalized and indirect forms of evaluations not only performed a claim to superior knowledge over Macedonia’s Euro-Atlantic future,

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8. As ethnographic data, the quotations from foreign officials offered above are in some sense odd but also representative. The statements are odd insofar as they are relatively decontextualized, i.e., the background relevant to their utterance and specific meaning is minimal. However, they are representative precisely because this decontextualized, sound-bite quality of foreign commentary conforms to how Macedonians encountered the foreign presence in the Macedonian public sphere. Only rarely did complete versions or extended excerpts of officials’ reports, press releases, and interview transcripts circulate through the Macedonian public sphere. More often, quotes and sound bites, selected by journalists, came to stand for a longer evaluatory text. Due to such journalistic mediation, foreign commentary often appeared in the Macedonian public sphere in a fragmentary but nonetheless consequential fashion. After all, not only were foreign officials offering commentary, journalists were writing about this commentary, dissecting and digesting it in the process.
 9. In a forthcoming essay, Andrew Gilbert (forthcoming) analyzes a parallel and proximate case: the use of publicity by the Office of the High Representative (OHR) in postwar Bosnia. Similar to the point made here, but in greater depth, Gilbert artfully shows how publicity offered the OHR a strategy to defuse, if only occasionally, the paradoxes of “imposing democracy” and of building a state by recurrently violating its sovereignty.



they also implicitly framed the contributions of Macedonian political actors as residing on another, lesser grade of authority. In contrast to foreign officials' authoritative pronouncements, Macedonian political actors appeared not as knowledgeable but as possibly naïve or wrong, not as neutral but as interested. The performative effect of foreign officials' public commentary was thus a hierarchical organization of the Macedonian public sphere and the interdiscursivities that comprised it. Foreign officials' practice of public commentary thus resembled forms of transnational governmentality in at least one way: it functioned "to reconfigure states' abilities to spatialize their authority and to stake their claims to superior generality and universality" (Ferguson and Gupta 2002: 996) within the Macedonian public sphere.

Despite American and European officials' claims to neutrality and proceduralism, Macedonian participants nonetheless discerned the prescriptive character of foreign officials' public commentary. Comments on how Macedonia's path to Europe might become more arduous unless desired legislation was adopted, for example, would be clearly interpreted as threats: pass the legislation or face sanction. Foreign officials' participation in the Macedonian public sphere thus supported a wider public discourse in Macedonia on foreigners' propensity to "interfere" (*se meša*, literally, "to get mixed up in") in Macedonian political affairs. Importantly, however, such reactions served to reflect and ratify the hierarchy of participation brought forth by American and European officials' active engagement in public communication. As a 2004 newspaper article on foreign official's influence in Macedonia began,

Foreign diplomats interfere immensely in the Macedonia's internal politics . . . ; *foreigners scold* the judiciary for its malfunctioning, *they threaten* that foreign investment will dry up, *they agitate* for successful elections. . . . The list is long. But, what does this situation mean to the country and what kind of light does this subservient behavior toward the foreign representatives in the country reflect to domestic and world publics? [italics mine]¹⁰

This diagnosis of the foreign presence in Macedonia bespeaks the way that foreign officials' public commentary shifted participation structures within the Macedonian public sphere. In relation to foreign officials' authoritative if bullying statements, Macedonian political actors could only appear "subservient." Thus, if at an earlier period in Macedonia's political history, Macedonian political elites represented the top of a hierarchy of participation—with greatest access to and control over broadcast outlets and their cultures of circulation—this situation changed when the super-authority of foreign officials could easily and frequently reposition them not as producers of knowledge but as perpetual respondents to claims whose authority they were unlikely to match. Not surprising, political humor during the postconflict period often depicted how foreign officials infantilized Macedonia and its leaders (see Figure 1).

10. Ivana Serafimova, "Diplomatite se mešaat, našite slušaat," *Vreme (Skopje)*, May 19, 2004.



Figure 1: The cover of the June 2004 issue of *Osten*, a Macedonian humor magazine, depicting a wailing baby lying on the Macedonian flag with two adult arms respectively offering a “NATO” pacifier and an “EU” rattle. Political humor presenting Macedonia as an infantilized subject relative to European Union, United States, and NATO authorities were a commonplace of the postconflict period. Artwork by Miroslav Georgievski, reproduced with artist’s permission.



Public commentary and localized performativity

The effect of foreign officials' participation on the Macedonian public sphere on politics was thus a global one. The different orders of knowledge and authority that were available to foreign officials and Macedonian political actors brought forth new participation hierarchies that left Macedonian politicians at a potential deficit without expressed European and American endorsement. The resulting political logic, whereby foreign officials and Macedonian political actors artfully but publically negotiated the reform process and its tensions arguably came to define the postconflict political scene.

Among the large-scale effects of foreign officials' participation in the Macedonian public sphere on politics, however, was another dynamic, one that took place on a localized scale. Although foreign officials' public commentary became a regular feature of the postconflict political environment, particular performances of public commentary would often intervene within discussions of very specific political issues. Consider the following example.

In March 2004, the Republic of Macedonia readied for a special presidential election precipitated by the tragic death of President Boris Trajkovski in a plane crash earlier that year. Although the election was taking place under exceptional circumstances, the activity of electioneering proceeded in typical fashion. Most of Macedonia's many political parties announced candidates and the electoral process got underway. I recall this moment vividly. Skopje, Macedonia's capital, where I was conducting fieldwork, came alive with color as parties' campaign posters overwhelmed the spring's first flowers within the urban landscape. The election was on and the nation's myriad political parties were all jockeying for position in the contest.

This flurry of political excitement was simultaneously interrupted and intensified on March 9th, 2004, when the chief party in the parliamentary opposition, the right-nationalist Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Democratic Party of Macedonian National Unity (or the VMRO-DPMNE according to its acronym in the Macedonian language) threatened to boycott the election. They contended that the party in government, the leftist Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (or the SDSM in its Macedonian acronym), refused to consult them in the election's planning and specifically on the issue of whether candidates would have ten or fifteen days to collect the requisite signatures to appear on the ballot, which would in turn effect the length of the official campaigning period. A VMRO-DPMNE withdrawal would have massive repercussions on the vote and might undermine the legitimacy of poll's results.

As an outside observer to this political drama, my friends and neighbors assured me that this somewhat petty struggle over what seemed a technicality was typical of Macedonian electoral politics. Parties, especially those in the opposition, regularly threatened boycotts as a way to shape the political process toward the party's desired end. As one friend explained to me, the VMRO-DPMNE's threat was but a bluff, part of the party's larger electoral strategy. His interpretation was clear: this was politics as usual and not a big deal.

Nonetheless, the office of European Union Special Representative to Macedonia appeared to take the VMRO-DPMNE's boycott threat seriously. Thus, on

March 10th, EU spokesperson Sheena Thomson commented on the possibility of a VMRO-DPMNE boycott in a public statement. Thomson said, in the impersonal and indirect fashion that was typical to foreign officials in Macedonia, that the European Union, “saw neither reason nor cause in a boycott,” continuing that they “expected fair elections.”¹¹ What Macedonian spectators interpreted as typical political shenanigans triggered an effort by the EU diplomatic mission to manage this threat to the election by publically discrediting it.

In her public commentary, the EU spokesperson countered the VMRO-DPMNE’s threat with her own authoritative assessment of the pre-electoral political situation and of what kinds of actions were appropriate to it—and which were not. As Susan Gal (1989: 348) reminds, “Control of the representations of reality is not only a source of social power but therefore also a likely locus of conflict and struggle.” In this particular contest, the office of the EU representative challenged the VMRO-DPMNE representation of the pre-electoral scene, questioning the legitimacy of the proposed boycott. Apparently, the EU challenge was substantial in this case. Shortly after Sheena Thomson’s remarks, the VMRO-DPMNE announced that they would abandon the boycott strategy and participate in the election. As Ganka Samoilova Cvetanovska, the party’s vice president, announced, although the VMRO-DPMNE was “dissatisfied that none of their proposals have been adopted amendments to the Law on Presidential Elections,” nonetheless, “it will go to the polls.”¹² In this case, the public expression of the European Unions’ disapproval of the boycott served to undermine the rationale offered for the boycott. Politics as usual collided with the super-authority of foreign officials.

Such mass-mediated, interactional routines highlight the *performativity* of foreign officials’ public commentary. As Gal (1989: 347) writes, one profound insight of speech act theory was to “[locate] talk on a par with other activities, and not simply as a reflection or comment on them. Thus, the contextual surround came to be seen not only as a constraint on speaking, but also as, in part, produced by talk.” In issuing authoritative assessments of political conditions in Macedonia, foreign commentary, under the right conditions, produced new and consequential interactional contexts that reshaped the meaning, efficacy, and circulatory possibilities of others’ utterances. Indeed, the particular political economy of the postconflict period, one that invested American and European officials with heightened authority, served to render such performative commentary felicitous.

Within the interdiscursive environment of mass publicity, foreign commentary was performative in that it expressed US and EU approval or disapproval of some policy course. Such broadcasted expressions of (dis)approval thereby brought forth a new interactional reality within the Macedonian public sphere on politics, viz., one in which the United States or European Union publicly approved or disapproved of some policy course. Given the underlying political economy of the postconflict period, the political stakes of Euro-American (dis)approval were widely

11. “Nema logika za bojkot na izborite: reakcija na mugjunarodnite pretstavnici,” *Utrinski Vesnik (Skopje)*, March 10, 2004. <http://star.utrinski.com.mk/default.aspx?pbroj=1418&stID=9920&pdate=20040310>.

12. “VMRO-DPMNE se otkaža od bojkot na izborite,” *Utrinski Vesnik (Skopje)*, March 11, 2004. <http://star.utrinski.com.mk/default.aspx?pBroj=1419&stID=9991&pR=2>.



recognized by Macedonian politicians and residents alike and were therefore hard for mainstream political parties to ignore.

In this way, America and European officials' public commentary not only manifested a new hierarchical structure within the Macedonian public sphere on politics, one that positioned Macedonian actors as perpetual respondents to the officials' commentary, but this hierarchical structure was leveraged to steer political discussion and decision-making on specific issues. As I learned, American and European officials in Macedonia even viewed public commentary as part of a broader practice of strategic communication. An official working within NATO's mission to Macedonia made this quite clear to me during a 2004 interview when reflecting on NATO's use of public communication in Macedonia during and after the 2001 conflict. The official stated,

The two primary audiences [for our public statements] were the general public and the government. The opposition party included. The general public would always receive an assuaging message telling them that progress is being made, maintain composure, refrain from violence, let the systems function. . . . etc. Messages of confidence designed to inspire trust and confidence in the efforts toward reform, stability, and security.

The messages to the government were more fun! We had a blast sending messages to them and watching them literally react within minutes to them. In a sense it was a game, we were trying to convince the public of one thing, they were trying to convince them of another. I remember being in a press conference and making a clear statement in response to something the PM had said, within minutes of the end of the press conference he was being interviewed with a response to what we said! That was when I realized that they had a direct feed from our conferences to themselves in order to maximize their response capability. It also made you feel good knowing that they listened to what you were saying. . . . [I]t is a signal that we had an impact with the general public, therefore [politicians] had to pay attention to what we were saying.

With stark candor, the NATO official sets forth the interventionist strategy that motivated some occasions of public commentary. Crucially, such interventions assumed the performativity and the localized efficacy of foreign officials' public commentary, that is, the capacity of broadcasted commentary to provoke response and even adjustment by targeted Macedonian political actors. Remarkably, the NATO official also points to the technological and professional infrastructures (e.g., live news feeds) that developed around and so facilitated such performativity.

Through such performative interventions, foreign officials thus participated in the Macedonian public sphere in a manner that might be called, following Greg Urban (2001), "metacultural." In Urban's formulation, metaculture consists of cultural forms that are "about," that is, which frame, identify, or comment on other cultural forms: metaculture "focuses attention on a cultural thing, helps make it an object of interest, and, hence, facilitates its circulation" (2001: 4). Similar to the metacultural genres that Urban discusses (e.g., film criticism), foreign officials' commentary was almost always about some cultural object (e.g., a proposed boycott) and claimed to evaluate or characterize that object for some public. Insofar as these metacultural responses guide or shape future responses and the production

of new cultural objects—always a contingent achievement—they, on some scale, affect how the dynamics of circulation, that is, of entextualization and recontextualization, that animates a public.

One thus witnesses in foreign officials' public commentary discrete but numerous attempts to manage how or whether other texts circulated by recontextualizing them in relation to European and American disapproval. Such occasions of public commentary would carry a localized impact in the Macedonian public sphere, perhaps provoking a response from a Macedonian political actor and perhaps shaping and shading future public discussion of the matter. Such actions, I argue, amounted to what might be described as a form of *strategic publicity*, an metacultural approach to public communication that works to shape public behavior through authoritative commentary on and recontextualization of other and others' texts. This is not a project-oriented governmentality focused on the direct management of population and territory but something more diffuse but nonetheless consequential: serial efforts to manage public communication and the very boundaries of acceptable publicity.

The performative apparatus of strategic publicity

Acts of foreign officials' public commentary could thus have dramatic effects on how the public discussion of specific political issues developed, and perhaps, also on the decisions ultimately made on them. Yet, it is also important to reckon with the sheer frequency of foreign officials' public evaluation of Macedonian political affairs. In order to better understand the large-scale, cumulative performative efficacy of foreign commentary, it is useful to examine how occasions of commentary fit within an ongoing series of foreign evaluation.

Any specific comment by a foreign official implicitly drew authority from a large series of previous comments, reports, and agreements that articulated a preferred policy course for postconflict Macedonia. That is, any performance of public commentary indexed an interdiscursive chain composed of other moments of broadcasted commentary and evaluation. Such interdiscursive alignments worked to channel foreign officials' authority across occasions of commentary. Consider the following example.

In July 2004, a major political controversy exploded in Macedonia over a recently passed government plan to redistrict the country's municipalities. The plan was part of decentralization process that had been stipulated by the OFA. However, the details of the government plan, which created new municipalities with ethnic Albanian majorities, angered many among the country's ethnic Macedonian population. Ultimately, the opposition VMRO-DPMNE took leadership over a movement gathering signatures to repeal the legislation by referendum. By Macedonian law, the signatures of 150,000 registered voters were required to bring the referendum to an official and binding vote. A repealed plan would surely upset the delicate balance between ethnic Macedonian and ethnic Albanian political forces that had been created in the short time since the fighting concluded. Many observers thus feared that a successful referendum might provoke new violence.

Over the summer months of 2004, both supporters of the referendum (typically members or allies of the parliamentary opposition) and opponents of

the referendum (typically members or allies of the ruling coalition) traded arguments and attacks in support of their respective positions. Referendum supporters decried the new redistricting plan as a blueprint for an ethnically divided Macedonia and criticized how the plan had not been shared publically before its passage. Such arguments, however, often veiled an ethnic Macedonian chauvinism angered by the administrative autonomy that the plan granted municipalities with ethnic Albanian majorities. In turn, referendum opponents defended the redistricting plan as a mechanism to improve efficiency and accountability in government and to defuse ethnic tensions through the democratization of administration.

As Macedonian politicking on the redistricting issue intensified, foreign officials also addressed the referendum in their public statements. In effect, foreign officials began participating in the debate on the referendum. They did so with a remarkable uniformity. Across the several months that the controversy endured, officials from the United States, European Union, and NATO consistently expressed how a successful vote would jeopardize or “slow” Macedonia’s Euro-Atlantic integration. Thus, on July 21, 2004, in the early days of the referendum movement, Søren Jessen-Petersen stated in a widely reported-on public address that, “Macedonia will reduce its chances of joining the European Union if lawmakers fail to adopt a package of laws on decentralization.”¹³

Significantly, however, despite foreign officials’ public expressions of disapproval toward the referendum, the pro-referendum movement gathered steam. More and more national level politicians came out in support of the referendum and popular support was growing too. By the end of August, it was clear that supporters had met the signature requirement so that the referendum would go to an official vote, and on September 3rd, the Macedonian Parliament scheduled the vote on the referendum for November 7th. The referendum movement’s success at this stage illustrates how European and American officials’ commentary did not in fact overdetermine political decision-making in Macedonia. Although virtually impossible to ignore, foreign commentary could and did fail to result in the policy preferences that is signaled. In this case, the wellspring of popular discontent against the decentralization plan, and the “democratic” form of the referendum, constituted an authority source that withstood foreign officials’ talk on Macedonia’s Euro-Atlantic integration. Indeed, at this time, pro-referendum forces were increasingly successful in framing foreign commentary as inappropriate meddling in Macedonian democracy.

The growing momentum of the pro-referendum movement, coupled with the designation of the official vote date, however, only ratcheted up foreign officials’ commentary on the referendum. Thus, in September 2004, US Ambassador to Macedonia Lawrence Butler stated at a NATO Rose-Roth Seminar, “Fulfillment of obligations under the Framework Agreement is the most important precondition for Macedonia’s integration into Euro-Atlantic structures. *We expect* that the Framework Agreement will be fully implemented, including the decentralization

13. “Pres na pretstavnikot na EU: Zakonite za decentralizacijata vleznicna za vo Evropa,” *Dnevnik (Skopje)*, July 22, 2004. Also available as an electronic document, <http://star.dnevnik.com.mk/?pBroj=2512&stID=36853>, last accessed November 19, 2014.

process.”¹⁴ And, in the month before the referendum vote, no less than US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and President of the European Commission Romano Prodi passed through Macedonia and spoke on the referendum. Rumsfeld, in Skopje to award medals to Macedonian soldiers who had served in Iraq, commented on the referendum, stating that “The Macedonian people face a clear choice between a future in NATO and the EU, where stability and economic growth can blossom, or to return to the past.”¹⁵ Prodi, for his part, walked the fuzzy border between veiled prescription and outright demand in saying,

Decentralization doesn't mean the division and weakening of the country. I will not tell you how to vote, but the citizens of Macedonia are conscious of the consequences. This is a decisive moment and I hope that the citizens will vote for a future in the EU, for peace and for progress.¹⁶

Across such occasions of public commentary, one finds a remarkable degree of similarity. On one level, the statements by Jessen-Petersen, Butler, Rumsfeld, and Prodi all deliver a common message: that the failure of the redistricting plan would negatively affect Macedonia's aspirations to join NATO and the European Union. As performatives, such statements thus expressed EU and US disapproval of the referendum. Arguably, they also constituted threats: vote down the referendum or face the consequences. However, these officials' commentaries were also similar on a formal level. As analyzed above, they each displayed forms of depersonalized and indirect evaluation that came to characterize foreign officials' public speech: “Macedonia will reduce its chances,” “Fulfillment of obligations . . . is the most important precondition,” and so on. One can thus discern the several intertextual and interdiscursive chains that American and European officials participated in when commenting on Macedonian politics. The comments by the EU Special Representative, the US Ambassador, and the many other foreign officials stationed in or visiting Macedonia all served to echo one another, in form and in content.

Of course, each of these comments also worked to respond to Macedonian political actors' contributions to the referendum debate. And, the serial (albeit indirect) expression of the EU and US opposition to the referendum, in turn, informed how Macedonian politicians argued their case. As the referendum vote approached, opponents of the referendum increasingly aligned themselves with the foreign officials' stance, arguing that a successful referendum would irreparably damage Macedonia's European integration. Referendum supporters, in contrast, heightened their criticism of foreign officials' meddling in Macedonian democracy. However, they did so in a way that was consonant with broader ideological language of European integration: by trumpeting the referendum as a paramount example of democratic decision-making (see Graan 2010). Yet, when the referendum did go to a vote in November 2004, it failed due to insufficient voter turnout.

14. Simon Ilievski, “Batlerušteednašpredupredidaneuspeereferendumot,” *Utrinski Vesnik (Skopje)*, September 28, 2004. <http://star.utrinski.com.mk/?pBroj=1587&stID=23099&pR=2>.

15. Saško Dimevski, “Ramsfeld ja potvrdi podrškata i pobara pogolemi reformi,” *Utrinski Vesnik (Skopje)*, October 11, 2004. <http://star.utrinski.com.mk/?pBroj=1598&stID=23819&pR=2>.

16. Ivana Serafimova, “Evropa ja saka Makedonija, no so nadminati problemi: Prodi ni go brači evroprašalnikot,” *Vreme (Skopje)*, October 2, 2004.



The example of the 2004 referendum, I argue, suggests that the performativity of foreign officials' public commentary manifested not only in localized contexts, that is, within specific interactional turns, but also amounted to a larger structure constituted by the seriality and repetition of foreign officials' participation in the Macedonian public sphere. Beyond occasions of commentary, the sheer regularity of foreign officials' public commentary came to redefine the social organization of interdiscursivity within the Macedonian public sphere on politics. The likelihood and frequency of commentary meant that the public communication of foreign officials and Macedonian political actors became tightly interwoven, and even interdependent, in the postconflict period.

In effect, foreign officials' participation in the Macedonian public sphere produced what might be called, following Douglas Holmes (2014), a "performative apparatus." Holmes developed the concept of a performative apparatus in his groundbreaking book on central banks. As Holmes details, although central banks continue to use conventional techniques (e.g., bond interest rates) to set economic policy, public communications have become central to banks' efforts to manage inflation and steer economies. Through serial acts of public narration, Holmes argues, central banks construe "the economy itself as a communicative field and as an empirical fact" (2014: 5) in an elaborate process of ongoing social and economic governance.

On one level, central bankers maintain networks of contacts, in government and in industry, that participate in central banks' formation of representations of the economy. On another level, central banks' wider public communications (e.g., speeches by bank leaders, quarterly reports, published policy updates) serve to serially construct and update a "monetary policy story" in order "to shape expectations going forward such that the market and the public will adjust their behavior in anticipation of the bank's potential moves" (2014: 24). Central banks' recruitment of both government and industry elites, and the public at large, as participants in this form of economic management, Holmes contends, constitutes an apparatus, one that conditions and continues through central banker's authoritative and *ongoing* modeling and narration of the economy.

American and European officials' participation in the Macedonian public sphere also engaged in an ongoing process of governance through communication, that is, through the serial narration and evaluation of the Macedonian political process. Like central bankers, foreign officials developed a network of key interlocutors among Macedonian political actors. Foreign officials might confer with members of this group through telephone calls, meetings, and proxy conversations but these interlocutors often also figured as target addressees of public commentary. Indeed, the localized performativity of public commentary served to "recruit" Macedonian political actors to participate in this form of governance. On another level, the mass publicity of public commentary also addressed the Macedonian public and encouraged uptake of the political reform agenda set forth by the OFA. Thus, in parallel to Holmes' argument, American and European officials used broadcast commentary to shape expectations on Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic integration such that Macedonia's political elite and the Macedonian public might adjust their behavior in anticipation of American and European officials' political intervention within the integration process.

The conduct of foreign officials during the 2004 referendum controversy is a stunning example of just this. Regardless of whether the comments by Jessen-Petersen, Butler, Rumsfeld, Prodi, or any number of other officials achieved some performative effect within the local context of their utterance—and indeed early expressions of foreign disapproval did not suffice to stop the referendum movement—they each contributed to a larger, ongoing narration of the Euro-American position on the referendum issue. Although depersonalized and indirect, these serial interventions into the Macedonian public sphere appealed to Macedonian politicians and to the Macedonian public seeking to shape public expectations on the consequences of the referendum vote so as to sway and manage public speech and behavior. Remarkably, in the case of the referendum, a critical mass of Macedonian voters apparently heeded the repeated and serially constructed message of foreign officials by staying home on voting day, thereby dooming the referendum to failure.

The performativity of foreign officials' public commentary thus manifested on a local and global scale within the Macedonian public sphere on politics. Within specific interactional contexts, foreign commentary functioned as a performative, signaling approval or disapproval of Macedonian political actors' statements and actions and often influencing the conduct of Macedonian politics. When magnified across discrete interactional contexts, such practices amounted to a performative apparatus. Each act of public commentary referred back to such past occasions and foreshadowed future performances. The cumulative effect of such acts was the impression that the Macedonian public sphere constituted an experimental site in which foreign officials would serially provide stimuli (e.g., an expressed approval or disapproval) to achieve macrolevel policy goals (e.g., the full implementation of the OFA.) In this way, foreign officials use public commentary as a means to recruit both political elites and the public at large in an ongoing process of social and political reform.

Foreign commentary thus did much more than represent or even evaluate political conditions in Macedonia; it intervened within the Macedonian political process. This is not to say that foreign officials had the final word on any given political issue or that they could fiat decisions. That was definitely not the case. Any given performance of public commentary might not succeed in modulating political rhetoric or dissuading Macedonian politicians from pursuing disapproved-of political actions any more so than central banks' public communications necessarily succeed in managing economic behavior. Rather, my claim is that the performativity (if not the absolute efficacy) of foreign officials' public commentary constituted the postconflict Macedonian political process as an experimental, communicative field (cf. Holmes 2014). Foreign officials' commentary might not always succeed in reaching stated goals but it did result in a performative apparatus through which North Atlantic organizations could work to manage public expectations and so exert influence, however moderately or irregularly, over the Macedonian public sphere and the political process that it hosted.

Power and governance in an age of strategic publicity

Foreign officials' commentary on Macedonian political affairs thus practiced what can be called "strategic publicity," the use of public communication as a tool to



shape public expectations and behaviors and so, in this case, to shape the Macedonian political process writ large. As Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore (2004: 6–7) write in their analysis of international organizations and global governance, “IOs are powerful not so much because they possess material and informational resources but, more fundamentally, because they use their authority to orient action and create social reality. IOs do more than just manipulate information; they analyze and interpret it, investing information with meaning that orients and prompts action.” In the postconflict Macedonian case, we see the micropolitics of publicity by which such performative effects can be achieved.

Arguably, however, many public spheres on politics are home to equivalent sorts of political theater premised on reflexive efforts to shape the interdiscursivity of political communication (e.g., see Lempert and Silverstein 2012; Graan 2016). What makes the case of postconflict Macedonia distinct, however, is precisely that it is an example of international intervention and transnational governance that manifested primarily, if not only, through strategic participation in a public sphere on politics (see also Gilbert forthcoming). In this last section of the essay, I work to elaborate how attention to such “strategic publicity,” that is, concerted efforts to manage public expectations in ways that will produce value or accomplish desired ends, can expand current theorizations of publics and governmentality alike.

Critical scholarship on publics and publicity has proliferated during the past two decades, responding to new interest in the mass mediation of social forms and political authority. Early work on the public sphere was concerned to show how the circulation of print genres served to ground understandings of a common identity and to establish public reason as a source of political authority. A second wave of research on publics, exemplified by Michael Warner (2002), turned to examine and theorize the politics of difference organized through publicity. According to this line of argument, liberal publics, despite their pretense to egalitarianism, presupposed norms of participation that privileged some groups and marginalized or excluded others. In consequence, members of marked social groups could only participate in these liberal publics insofar as they bracketed off positive markers of their identity to conform to the unmarked public norms. Warner thus locates the origin of modern identity politics in the rise of mass publicity. The political theories and analyses that stem from research on publics thus often focus on matters of identity and belonging (Warner 2002; Landes 1988; Gal and Woolard 2001; Briggs 2003, 2005; Cody 2009).

In addition to acknowledging the importance of this historically grounded work on publicity and identity politics, I take one more general point. Specifically, the circulation of texts at the heart of mass publicity is not a neutral or unmediated phenomenon (see also Briggs 2005). Presuppositions of addressees, participation roles, normative speech styles, et cetera, drive the larger process of structuring participation and the inclusions and exclusions so implied. Acts of public address thereby model an implicit identity politics, presupposing and performing hierarchies of participation at every turn. This politics of publicity is hinged to the complex, contingent, ongoing and open-ended forms of participation that organize publics.

The analysis of foreign officials’ participation in the Macedonian public sphere offered here, I contend, sheds light on the political process that emerges through

this struggle inherent to public discourse. It is not simply that participants in a public advance different fields of argument or frames of public understanding in their address to known and always unknown others. Rather, as the material presented above demonstrates, contributors to public spheres presuppose different imaginaries of circulation with their own audience hierarchies and can also occupy wildly different participant roles, marshal different sources and magnitudes of authority, and channel unequal claims to institutional and political-economic power (see Briggs 2003, 2005; Briggs and Hallin 2007). None of these factors overdetermines struggles over publicity but they do affect how such struggles develop.

In postconflict Macedonia, at least for a while, the political economy of Euro-Atlantic integration anchored a discursive economy in which the representatives of Western governments and organizations had a disproportionate authority and impact when participating in the Macedonian public sphere on politics. Through evaluative commentary, foreign officials would recontextualize Macedonian political actors' public statements in terms of their consequences for Euro-Atlantic integration. In doing so, foreign officials broadcasted new meanings and new stakes for the issue under discussion and so affected political discourse more broadly. Not all participants in the Macedonian public sphere on politics could command such power. Instead, like the central bankers discussed by Douglas Holmes (2014), high-ranking foreign officials spoke from a place of institutional authority and under political economic conditions that made possible, and felicitous, such consequential and large-scale performativity.

This leads me to a concluding reflection on recent accounts of governmentality as a modern form of power. In the past decade of cultural anthropology, governmentality has provided the dominant analytic to interrogate the political and economic forms of neoliberalism. Broadly construed as a historical form of power that works through freedoms in addition to limits, the concept has admittedly been a powerful tool with which to analyze the varieties of deregulation and privatization associated with neoliberalization. Interestingly, however, a legacy of the Foucauldian heritage of the concept has been analytic focus on so-called *rationalities* and *technologies* of governance. In consequence, as Tania Murray Li (2007: 279) has argued, studies of governmentality often focus on specific programs or projects of governance and the rationalities that lie behind them. It is thus not coincidental that the governmentality concept has been so readily used in ethnographic accounts of development *projects*, conservation *plans*, humanitarian relief *projects*, or other sundry NGO-sponsored *programs*.

In many ways, projects—whether conducted by international organization, governments, or NGOs—do exist as a primary institutional form within neoliberal political economies and concomitant circuits of globalization. To this degree, research that critically examines the premises and consequences of projects accomplishes important work and elucidates the institutional logics of contemporary liberal expansion. However, while I value many of the excellent contributions to governmentality studies and allied ethnographic interrogations of neoliberal projects, I also worry about how the ascendance of governmentality studies and their focus on project might blind us to other modalities of power, even in cases of transnational governance.



In particular, I contend that governmentality studies, in so often focusing on projects, end up foregrounding specific temporalities and spatialities of power while ignoring others. Projects, by necessity, are goal-defined, continue only for a limited duration, and target specific territorially bound communities. Analyses of projects thus excel at locating forms of power that operate through such temporally and spatially finite scopes. For instance, Mariella Pandolfi's (2003) concept of "mobile sovereignties" and Aihwa Ong's (2006) concept of "graduated sovereignties" illuminate the governing logics of humanitarian intervention and economic development respectively, but they do so by focusing on forms of power mediated by project-bound initiative.

Given the focus on such highly condensed and delimited exercises in power (e.g., refugee camps, special economic zones), it is not surprising that analysts of projects often present power as operating in rather totalizing ways. That is, when viewed as an integrated program, the bounded power of projects is often imbued with the capacity to implement neoliberal logics and produce biopolitical subjects and socialities in an almost ineluctable fashion. However, as Michael Cepek (2011) has criticized, many such studies overstate the "totalizing" character of governmentality and rush to find self-managing subjects as the inevitable product of some project or scheme, a result untrue to his own ethnographic fieldwork on conservation projects in Ecuador. I share this skepticism over the capacity of neoliberalizing policies to utterly reconfigure sociality *within* some project-bound domain. While the rationalities and technologies of governmentality projects might be premised on a vision of total reform, the actualities of projects and modern government are always much messier (see also Ortner 2016).

Moreover, I also see operations of power that diverge from the project form but are nonetheless pervasive and consequential; to wit, foreign officials' practices of strategic publicity in Macedonia. Strategic publicity, as articulated and analyzed here, presents a very different context from which to interrogate and theorize governmental power when compared to the study of projects. In contrast to the bounded logics of the project form, strategic publicity works through the open-ended, self-organized, and reflexive publics that combine risk and uncertainty into public address. It intervenes into fields of mass publicity, at once depending on the established structures and practices that comprise a national public sphere (as in the Macedonian case) but also advancing reformed imaginaries of circulation and hierarchies of participation. The temporalities of publicity, of news cycles and commentary, served to organize this form of political intervention, the open-endedness and contingency of public circulation central to its efficacy, actual and imagined.

Thus, unlike project-based governmentality, strategic publicity in postconflict Macedonia involved very different conceptions of space and time. Foreign officials' participation in the Macedonian public sphere on politics did not implement a pre-formulated plan to reform Macedonian politics through communication (cf. Hull 2010). There was no articulated program that guided how the myriad officials stationed in or passing through Macedonia spoke to the Macedonian press. Instead, foreign officials used strategic commentary to respond to political developments in a piecemeal fashion. Foreign officials knew all too well that their commentaries might go unheeded. Such uncertainty was built into the practice itself, signaled by the very indirection with which (dis)approval was signaled. And, while some

public commentary might succeed in influencing political decision-making, such performative efficacy resulted not from specific speaker intentions but was conditioned by the serial nature of foreign officials' participation in the Macedonian public sphere and the hierarchies of participation that it produced.

The effect of this form of public discursive intervention was thus subtle and gradual, not the imposition of a total plan, but the result of a give-and-take. A serial structure of statement and commentary that altered participation norms in the Macedonian public sphere, and under the right conditions, leveraged the promise of Euro-Atlantic integration to slowly steer the Macedonian political process. This is not the "mobile sovereignty" enacted in a temporary refugee camp but a form of power that is partial, contingent, and ongoing. It is an occasional form of power that works to steer decisions, to produce and profit from marginal returns.

In strategic publicity we thus encounter a form a power deployed not to restructure a field but to subtly and incompletely shape collective behavior in a small but serial ways.¹⁷ In some sense, we live in an age of strategic publicity, where communication professionals of many different varieties strive to manage public expectations in order to steer behavior in ways that might produce marginal value or advance desired ends. Despite the notorious difficulty in substantiating the value added by marketing and PR, this language ideology that imbues crafted communication with the capacity to shape public behavior continues to thrive and even extend into new fields of institutionalized and professionalized practice (Gershon, this issue). According to this model, public spheres are ideologized not as spaces for ongoing discussion or deliberation but as forums in which to influence, however marginally, public behaviors for instrumental ends. Understanding this practice and the type of power that it manifests demands an account of the social organization of interdiscursivity within public spheres. As I have sought to show here, such an account develops not only a deeper theorization of the power and politics of publicity but also of governmentality, its communicative dimensions, and its limits.

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17. Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein's (2008) concept of "the nudge" as a regulatory device is perhaps symptomatic of this form of power, one focused less on subjects as a whole than on specific and momentary decisions.



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Publicité Stratégique: Intervention internationale et performativité des communications publiques en Macédoine après le conflit

Résumé : Cet article analyse le déploiement de la communication publique comme outil politique en République de Macédoine suite au conflit armé qui s'y est déroulé en 2001. Pendant cette période, les représentants américains et européens ont eu recours aux conférences de presse, aux interviews médiatisées, aux discours publics et aux rapports officiels pour évaluer et commenter les décisions politiques auxquelles le pays devait faire face. A travers une analyse ethnographique de la participation sur la politique des représentants étrangers dans la sphère publique macédonienne, cet article montre que les commentaires des officiels étrangers furent performatifs, puisque leurs effets pragmatiques - exprimer l'accord ou le désaccord - ont produit des contextes toujours renouvelés et conséquents pour la manière dont d'autres acteurs (comme les politiciens macédoniens par exemple) se sont engagés dans le domaine public. En soulignant l'impact significatif mais fragile des liens par lesquels l'interdiscursivité publique module la prise de décision politique en Macédoine, cet article connecte les études sur la gouvernementalité et celles sur la sphère publique pour proposer une lecture approfondie des dimensions communicatives de la gouvernementalité ainsi que des politiques gouvernementale de publicité.

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