

Public Diplomacy in Peace Missions: The Case of the UN and NATO in Kosovo

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ABSTRACT	Peacekeeping missions remain a contentious subject capable of tarnishing the reputation of international organisations (IOs). In response, IOs engage citizens and enhance their understanding of the missions through public diplomacy. The article connects two fields of research – public diplomacy in missions and the debate about the decline of liberal peacekeeping in favour of a specific approach. The aim is to analyse whether UNMIK and KFOR promote general norms while conducting public diplomacy or rather pay attention to the specific context. It concludes with two assumptions. Firstly, the comparison shows that one-way advocacy continues to dominate public diplomacy, which limits the potential of public diplomacy to function as a partnership-oriented engagement tool. Moreover, the empirical evidence demonstrates that KFOR promotes neutral topics primarily through listening, whereas UNMIK engages the audience with both specific and general topics. Secondly, the research indicates that the turn towards specific topics is not linear and varies across missions.
KEYWORDS	public diplomacy, international organisations, peacekeeping, general norms, specific norms, X, KFOR, UNMIK
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INTRODUCTION

Peace missions increasingly operate under public scrutiny, and their legitimacy is shaped not only by what they do on the ground but also by how they communicate their presence. Public diplomacy has therefore become a useful strategic tool for international organisations (IOs) seeking to gain support, counter criticism, and shape local perceptions of their missions. If public diplomacy is successful, it can help the situation in a place of conflict (BABST, 2009, P. 125). Yet despite its growing relevance, scholarship has paid limited attention to the substance of these public diplomacy efforts: Do the missions promote a standardised set of global norms with their public diplomacy, or do they adjust public diplomacy's messages to the social, political, and cultural context of the country where they are deployed? This tension produces a puzzle at the intersection of two debates.

The first area is public diplomacy in peacekeeping. It is assumed that public diplomacy practices matter for legitimacy (ECKER-EHRHARDT, 2023B; SHERMAN & TRITHART, 2021; SUMMA, 2020; ULYBINA ET AL., 2023), but it is rarely specified what norms or messages are promoted. The second one is the shift from liberal peace to locally grounded approaches (DA COSTA & KARLSRUD, 2012; MAC GINTY & RICHMOND, 2013). It suggests the missions should increasingly adapt to specific contexts and engage locals (GILDER, 2020). But there is only minor empirical evidence for whether this adaptation is reflected in their public diplomacy strategies. This raises the research puzzle. If the missions use public diplomacy, do they differ in whether they promote universal norms or tailor their messages to specific local expectations?

Kosovo, with its two long-standing ongoing international missions, KFOR and UNMIK, offers a perfect example for examining this issue. Both missions face similar legitimacy pressures, but they differ in mandate and authority. At the beginning of the missions, scholars highlighted a massive promotion of general norms in Kosovo, and these missions are assumed to be the first generation of missions that did that (ERFANI, 2021; MOE & STEPPUTAT, 2018; PARIS, 2004). However, current literature stresses the turn from liberal peacekeeping to a local-oriented approach (COLEMAN & JOB, 2021; DA COSTA & KARLSRUD, 2012; GROB, 2015; LEVORATO & SGUAZZINI, 2024). Thus, there is a question whether this shift has been reflected in public diplomacy strategies. I consider them to be the key cases for testing the localisation turn within public diplomacy of peace missions.

Unlike previous studies (BJÖRKDAHL & GUSIC, 2015; GROB, 2015), I will not analyse the meaning of norms and institutions. Rather, I will focus on public diplomacy, which I consider to be an essential component of localisation. I therefore ask whether peace missions focus public diplomacy on the promotion of global norms or adjust them to specific contexts. Although I want to capture the transition from a global to a locally based specific approach, my methodology cannot do that. Therefore, the research explores whether a preference for a local approach is happening in the area of public diplomacy and what narrative IOs use concerning the public diplomacy of the missions. I assume that one of the preconditions for the local turn is the need to deal with specific topics, or more specifically, topics specific to a particular area. But it does not represent the whole essence of the local turn. The first main aim of the article is to analyse whether the practice of public diplomacy of the missions follows this trend and focuses on specific norms and the engagement of citizens.

Public diplomacy creates a supportive environment for its actions by informing and influencing public opinions (TOMESCU-HATTO, 2014, P. 89). Moreover, public diplomacy aims to build trust between the mission and the public. By doing that, public diplomacy spreads the norms and helps the public to accept them based on trust. Therefore, the second main aim of the article is to study whether peace missions of IOs focus their public diplomacy on the promotion of global norms or adjust them to the locally based specific context. As it is an underresearched topic, the contribution of the article is in providing empirical evidence about promoting global or specific norms via public diplomacy of missions.

There are two key dimensions of public diplomacy – activities and topics. It is not possible to connect these two concepts on a conceptual basis. But I aim to connect them on an empirical basis. IOs utilise four main activities of public diplomacy: listening, which refers to collecting data from the public; advocacy, which means delivering monologues towards the public; engagement, which covers cooperation with partners; and evaluation, which rates the effectiveness of public diplomacy. Within these activities, IOs cover a wide range of topics that can be divided into various groups. For the research, sets of specific, general, and neutral topics were chosen.

Social media offer a channel to improve engagement with local populations for peacekeeping operations, especially when viewed as a tool of discussion rather than just information. They provide invaluable ways to communicate mission objectives, receive feedback on performance, and address misinformation (KARLSRUD, 2015, P. 103). Thus, an analysis of social media, especially X, was chosen as a method for the research. The posts on X from the accounts of both missions (@UNMIKOSOVO, 2024; @NATO_KFOR, 2024) will serve as a source of data.

The article is divided into four parts: the first part presents the current state of knowledge concerning public diplomacy in peacekeeping and liberal peacekeeping, which is challenged by the local turn. In the second part, public diplomacy is conceptualised as an approach that can include all aspects of the links between the mission and the public. Additionally, a conceptual framework is formulated in this part. The third part describes the methodology of the research. The fourth, empirical part provides a comparison of the public diplomacies of KFOR and UNMIK, focusing on topics and activities and answering the question of whether KFOR and UNMIK adapt their activities to the specific context or rather promote general norms.

Analysing the X communication of both missions in the period 2017-2022, I argue that KFOR promotes neutral topics primarily through listening, whereas UNMIK engages the audience with both specific and general themes and does so with equal intensity in both cases. However, the comparison of KFOR and UNMIK shows that one-way advocacy continues to dominate in this area, which limits the potential of public diplomacy to function as a genuinely relational or partnership-oriented engagement tool. The research offers empirical evidence for the claim that the turn towards specific topics is not linear and varies across KFOR and UNMIK.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public diplomacy is a key tool that peacekeepers can use to influence the public. There are plenty of articles that investigate parts of public diplomacy in peacekeeping missions, such as strategic communications, cooperation with local residents and NGOs, or the impact of representatives of IOs. It is, however, essential to analyse them together. The concept

of public diplomacy integrates all such aspects and provides a comprehensive perspective of the relationship challenges between a peacekeeping mission and the public. When scholars investigate public diplomacy of missions, they analyse the comprehensive approach of IOs toward peacekeeping (BIRNBACK, 2019; SHERMAN & TRITHART, 2021) or focus on particular missions. ISAF is one of the most analysed missions in this respect (BABST, 2009; NEAG, 2014; TOMESCU-HATTO, 2014). But other missions, such as EULEX (PETERS, 2010) or UNTAC (CAIN, 2012), are studied too. One scholar provides a comparison of the strategic communications of missions (PETERS, 2010) and another did research on the feminist framework for public diplomacy while studying the movie published by the given mission (WRIGHT, 2019). Razak et al. (2018) examine the language, communication, and intercultural understanding of Malaysian peacekeepers deployed in Congo and Somalia. They highlight the importance of using appropriate communication methods when interacting with local residents. Oksamytna adds that information plays a vital role in volatile post-conflict environments and can both advance and endanger the peace process (OKSAMYTNA, 2018, PP. 79–80). These studies emphasise the ways of communication and the desire for information. Meanwhile, Neufeldt et al. (2020) focus on local peacebuilding activities undertaken in Nigeria. They conclude that the types of activities discovered provide a narrow view of what peacebuilding looked like to local actors, both in terms of types and in terms of the number of activities carried out (IBID., P. 1117). This suggests that the data should reflect the everyday activities of the mission more closely and more empirically. One of the issues that it is possible to study in this regard is whether peacekeeping missions focus on general or specific topics in their narrative of public diplomacy.

In the academic sphere, there is a long-term debate about whether peacekeeping missions apply global liberal models or rather try to adapt their activities to the specific context and focus on the local turn. There is plenty of research that focuses on both approaches. Liberal peacekeeping is frequently discussed in it (FRANKS & RICHMOND, 2008; GHECIU, 2005; RICHMOND, 2014). Richmond (IBID., P. 105) claims that peacebuilding is strongly influenced by the “dominant ideology” of the West. Alleyne adds that IOs’ public communication is an important tool for promoting cosmopolitan ideas (ALLEYNE, 2003). If IOs choose to advocate, as Ecker-Ehrhardt claims, for cosmopolitan issues such as human rights, climate change, or sustainable development in their communication, it can garner resonance on social media, which

would make IOs the most central voices of this debate (ECKER-EHRHARDT, 2023A). Proponents of liberal order suggest that under a democratic government and with a market economy, post-conflict states can reach a sustainable peace (GILDER, 2020, P. 4). De Coning argues that local norms and practices are part of the problem, and because of that, IOs work on the de-legitimation of local institutions and defend their replacement with new central government-controlled liberal peace model institutions (DE CONING ET AL., 2015, P. 3). Additionally, some scholars claim that in societies emerging from conflict, local capacity is deficient, leading to uncertainty regarding their needs and desires. Thus, liberal peacekeeping is needed.

On the other hand, recent literature emphasises the need to involve local actors in decision-making activities, which has been one of the most significant turns in the peace-building literature. The local turn stemmed from criticism of the liberal peace project and emphasised the role of local communities and local actors in peacebuilding and democratisation (MAC GINTY & RICHMOND, 2013). Coleman and Job claim that external challenges to liberal international order institutions may target the liberal content of these institutions and the dominant role Western countries play within them (COLEMAN & JOB, 2021, PP. 1451–1454). This means that such external challenges aim at deliberalisation and dewesternisation (GILDER, 2020, PP. 1–2). Richmond (2009) stresses the failure of liberal international institutions to deliver liberal peace for all. Although the institutions have been created, their liberal policy has little impact on the everyday life of a population. Moe and Geis suggest a shift from a pattern of contested norm proliferation regarding human rights and democratisation norms towards an emerging pattern of pragmatic consensus on norm downsizing (MOE & GEIS, 2020). Levorato and Sguazzini (2024) examine how the local turn approach has been integrated into EU and UN peacebuilding mandates. Gilder shows where the UN sought to engage the local residents and reported the activity in Côte d'Ivoire (GILDER, 2020, P. 1). Da Costa–Karlsrud (2012) presents a case study of the UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan, where important efforts were made to contextualise peacebuilding activities for local circumstances. Razak et al. show that peacekeeping operations with cultural identity factors positively contributed to durable peace and stability under certain conditions (RAZAK ET AL., 2018, P. 85). Moreover, Ljungkvist and Jarstad examine the local turn in peacebuilding through an urban approach, which they see as another essential aspect of successful peacebuilding (LJUNGKVIST &

JARSTAD, 2021). De Coning introduces his version of pragmatism that he calls “adaptive” peacebuilding, where international actors recognise that there is no external privileged knowledge or predetermined model of peace and that the design of a solution for peace should emerge from the process itself through experimentation, feedback, and collective learning (DE CONING, 2021, P. 261). In the narrative that is presented on social networks, it is possible to examine whether the mission promotes general topics or adjusts its public diplomacy to a specific local context. This is a part of the puzzle that indicates a local turn of the practice of peace missions.

To conclude, the literature concerning public diplomacy of peacekeeping is rather general. While engaging in public diplomacy, peacekeeping missions focus on different topics and work with them via various activities. In the cases of these topics and activities, it is possible to study the application of general norms and the adaptation to the specific context. Therefore, the main contribution of the article is the connection between these two areas of research, from which both can benefit. It will tell us more about the everyday practice of public diplomacy, and there will be empirical evidence of the process that supports the local turn.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

It is believed that 1989 marks the year of the birth of public information in UN peacekeeping. A new perspective on public diplomacy emerged after the end of the Cold War, coinciding with the expansion of the Internet, during which people gained considerable access to information. Nowadays, we are discussing the “new” public diplomacy as defined by Jan Melissen. His approach stresses dialogue, feedback from unfamiliar people, and the building of long-term relations (MELISSEN, 2005).

The main aim of public diplomacy is to create a supportive environment for its actions by informing and influencing public opinions and the external audience (TOMESCU-HATTO, 2014, P. 89). Public diplomacy during peacekeeping contributes to strengthening the position and improving the image of the IO. Assertive information operations are becoming more necessary for gaining public support within peacekeeping operations (CAIN, 2012, P. 175). Effective public diplomacy helps to dispel rumours and to secure the co-operation of the local population (BIRNBACK, 2019). The main task of public

diplomacy is to help soft power by spreading culture and values, carefully explaining policies, and providing credible messages (NYE, 2010).

Public diplomacy of peacekeeping missions focuses on the publics of their member states and the public of the state where the mission is deployed. The domestic public is to be convinced that the operations are worth pursuing, and the publics in the countries where the missions are deployed must be persuaded to support the missions' objectives (PETERS, 2010, P. 3). Moreover, in cases of increasing casualties, public diplomacy is a critical instrument for sustaining public and parliamentary support for the operation (IBID., PP. 6-7). Seib claims that social networks progressed from being a novelty to becoming a vital instrument for states and non-state actors involved in a conflict (SEIB, 2021, P. 114). Therefore, public diplomacy is vital for peacekeeping.

Public diplomacy can be investigated in various ways, such as by examining goals, targeted audiences, timeframes, etc. The two vital aspects in this case are the activities that public diplomacy utilises and the topics it deals with. The activities of public diplomacy were defined by Cull (2008). For IOs, they were redefined by Pagovski (2015). These activities are listening, advocacy, engagement, and evaluation.

- Listening – Listening is the “attempt to manage the international environment by collecting and collating data about publics and their opinions overseas and using that data to redirect its policy or wider public diplomacy approach accordingly” (CULL, 2008, P. 18). Effective listening can be performed through opinion polls, face-to-face tours of officials, surveying and analysing public trends, reading blogs, forums, commentaries, and other sources of public diplomacy expression (PAGOVSKI, 2015, P. 19). Some listening activities are performed internally (IBID., P. 19).
- Advocacy – Advocacy refers to communication with the audience through press relations and informational work (IBID., P. 22). The primary advocacy tool is a monologue (COWAN & ARSENAULT, 2008, P. 13), which means one-way communication or a situation where the mission actively acts or sends messages and the public passively receives the messages. Advocacy covers broad-

casting, social networks, websites, radio, newsletters, and other publications, and its primary feature is the presence of a press/communication department (CULL, 2009, P. 24).

- Engagement – Engagement refers to bringing relevant actors and the public into the debates and affairs of the IOs (PAGOVSKI, 2015, P. 26). The main goal is to create a relationship with influencers and target audiences that could lead to a better understanding of the policies of the IOs (IBID., PP. 11–12). An engagement represents a “two-way” communication channel. Engagement activities introduce the IO to the target group through the latter’s direct experience and involvement.
- Evaluation – This term refers to evaluating public diplomacy’s effectiveness (IBID., P. 31).

The topics involved, or more specifically, the norms involved, can be divided into several groups, but for the research, they are divided into three: general, specific, and neutral. Norms are standards of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity (KATZENSTEIN, 1996). From the point of view of general norms, scholars distinguish between different types of norms. The most common distinction, however, is between regulative norms, which order and constrain behavior, and constitutive norms, which create new actors, interests, or categories of action (BARNETT & FINNEMORE, 1999, P. 891). According to Barnett and Finnemore, universal norms are created by bureaucrats who make rules and create social knowledge (IBID., P. 699). This argument is supported by Oksamytna (2018, P. 79), who claims that UN officials have been the driving force behind the development of public information campaigns by peacekeeping missions aimed at local populations. By coordinating numerous specific contexts at once, bureaucrats decrease diversity and generate universal norms and categories. Rather than designing the most appropriate rules and procedures for accomplishing their missions, bureaucracies often tailor their missions to fit the existing rulebook. These universally accepted norms justify the establishment of a government that serves the interests of global order (ERFANI, 2021, P. 21).

Peace operations can be conceptualised as promoters of particular norms (BARNETT & FINNEMORE, 2004), which they became after the end of the

Cold War (BARNETT, 1997). We can call them general. Peacebuilding reflects an attempt to represent the “people” of the UN Charter. It claims to represent the people of the world and their rights and needs (RICHMOND, 2014, p. 105). Peacebuilding provides a liberal normative framework in which the individual is positioned as a citizen with a range of rights and protections (IBID., p. 104).

General topics can be formulated based on the general norms mentioned in the relevant literature. De Coning et al. (2015) mention multi-party democracy, individual human rights, and the free-market economic system in this regard. Da Costa and Karlsrud (2012: 63) stress the rule of law, gender, human rights, and security. Richmond mentions that liberal peacebuilding includes human rights, development, reconstruction, gender, humanitarian assistance, IOs, agencies, NGOs, and non-state actors (RICHMOND, 2014, p. 106). Gheciu defines general norms as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law (2005, p. 128). Groß adds a free market to that list (2015, p. 311). To conclude, general topics are discussed by the international community.

Specific topics deal with issues that are specific to the country where the mission is deployed. They relate to specific problems that the country must face, and signals indicating that the mission engages in the problems of the local community and reflects the situation there. Local people must communicate what they see as crucially important for their security, building sustainable peace, and supporting post-conflict reconstruction (GILDER 2020: 11). Involving the community not only ensures that the mission’s work is relevant to the society it serves, but can also help the peace operation to adapt to its environment (DE CONING ET AL., 2015, p. 6).

In the present paper, the specific topics are issues specific to Kosovo. They were formulated based on posts on X. The first topic is Serbia and Kosovo. Posts with this topic describe or comment on a situation between these countries, such as a conflict or dialogue. The relation between Serbia and Kosovo must be explicitly mentioned in the post for this topic to be coded as present. The other issue is minorities as the population of Kosovo is made up of Albanians (92.9%), Bosnians (1.6%), Serbs (1.5%), Turks (1.1%), Ashkali (0.9%), Egyptians (0.7%), Gorani (0.6%), Romani (0.5%), and other ethnicities (THE WORLD FACTBOOK, 2024).¹ The presence of this topic signals that the mission pays attention to all the citizens of Kosovo. The same applies

to the topic of religion. According to the 2011 census, 95.6% of Kosovars are Muslim, 2.2% Roman Catholic, and 1.4% Serbian Orthodox (OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, 2022). Another specific topic is refugees and missing people. During the Kosovo conflict, people from all Kosovar communities were forcibly disappeared. Until January 2023, 1,621 people had remained missing according to the International Committee of the Red Cross (KAUFMANN, 2023). The last specific topic is child marriage, as 1 in 25 Kosovar women and 1 in 50 Kosovar men are married before 18 years of age. This figure increases significantly for children from Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities, where 1 in 3 women and 1 out of 10 men are married before 18 years of age (UNICEF, 2024).

Activities and topics represent two frames that connect in the empirical part, as it is not possible to connect them on a conceptual basis. The article aims to connect missions conducting activities of public diplomacy with their dealing with topics. Based on the previous part, it is possible to formulate some assumptions. As a form of advocacy in one-way communication tools, it can be assumed that the posts will cover general topics. On the other hand, listening and engagement are cooperative activities; therefore, it can be assumed that they will cover specific topics more.

Although I want to capture the differences between liberal and local approaches, my methodology cannot do that. The process of transformation from a liberal approach to a local turn is happening. The research explores whether this process is happening in the area of public diplomacy and investigates an issue that is connected to the question of the local turn in peacekeeping. I assume that one of the preconditions for the local turn is the need to deal with specific topics and reduce the use of internationally accepted general topics. But it does not represent the whole essence of the local turn. It is possible to say that the research studies local involvement, which is a dimension of the local turn.

CASE SELECTION: KOSOVO

At the beginning of the 1990s, Kosovo, which was ethnically different from the rest of former Yugoslavia, wanted to separate from the remaining Yugoslavia and become an independent state. In the area, Serbian forces under the President Slobodan Milosevic were conducting systematic

campaigns of violence, forced displacement, and ethnic cleansing against the Albanian population (GHECIU, 2005, P. 125). These actions were linked to Milosevic's efforts to prevent Kosovo's secession from Serbia. After the disagreement between Russia and China and the rest of the members of the UN Security Council regarding international intervention in the conflict, the Western countries, led by NATO, decided to take unilateral action against Milosevic. As a result, NATO's bombing campaign Operation Allied Force occurred. Then, UN Resolution No. 1244 was accepted on 10 June 1999 (UNITED NATIONS, 1999). In the Resolution, the Security Council established a civil² and security³ presence in Kosovo (IBID.). The related security tasks were fulfilled by NATO's KFOR, and civil tasks were dedicated to UNMIK. In this case, UNMIK had to have full executive authority over all governmental functions (BABST, 2009, P. 130; SCHEYE, 2008, P. 174). Both missions are still continuing.

In the beginning, KFOR was composed of 50,000 soldiers. KFOR was initially called Operation Joint Guardian. In 2004, it was renamed Operation Joint Enterprise. KFOR troops have remained in Kosovo even after the unilateral declaration of Kosovo's independence from Serbia on 17 February 2008. KFOR has been transferring its responsibilities to the Kosovo Police and other local authorities. In 2022, KFOR consisted of 3,770 soldiers from 28 nations (KFOR, 2024).

UNMIK was initially entrusted with some unprecedented tasks: UNMIK had authority over the territory and people of Kosovo, an authority that included legislative and executive powers, as well as administration of the judiciary (UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING, 2024). Since the declaration of Kosovo's independence in 2008, however, UNMIK has reduced its involvement in direct governance (LEMAY-HÉBERT, 2009, P. 65). Currently, the function of UNMIK is minor compared to the times before Kosovo's independence. It no longer administers Kosovo but supports the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade and facilitates stability and reconciliation. In 2021, UNMIK counted 355 personnel (UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING, 2024).

From the perspective of public diplomacy, Kosovo was an important milestone. Babst (2009, P. 130) claims that the NATO-led air operation in Kosovo in 1999 attracted global media interests that NATO struggled to satisfy. KFOR also contributed to the political awareness that was slowly

growing within the Alliance, namely the awareness of the necessity of effective communication structures during a crisis.

Scholars who published their articles about the topic shortly after the beginning of the presence of the international community in Kosovo largely concur with the idea that the international community has applied general norms there. It is widely believed that KFOR and UNMIK have been significantly more proactive in managing the liberalisation process than earlier peace-building missions (MOE & STEPPUTAT, 2018; PARIS, 2004, P. 123). Erfani refers to Kosovo as a case of disaster colonialism, which is a “top-down method of building a state following a crisis that undemocratically implements techniques of governance imported by a colonising power, bypassing the will or the consent of the population” (ERFANI, 2021, P. 20). She claims that in this case the population no longer has the call to decide the future of their government (IBID.). There has been a focus on constructing liberal institutions that reflect orthodox liberal peacebuilding in Kosovo rather than on dealing with the issues of everyday life faced by Kosovar communities (FRANKS & RICHMOND, 2008, P. 98). Blumi claims that UNMIK decided to delegitimise all elements of Kosovar society (2000, P. 19). The promotion of general norms was a significant part of the peacebuilding in Kosovo (GROB, 2015, P. 314). In the beginning, there was a massive promotion of general norms, but the current literature stresses that in this area, emphasis may be put on specific topics. The practice of public diplomacy can present us with a piece of evidence of the occurrence of a local turn. This suggests that the narrative of public diplomacy of UNMIK and KFOR should follow this trend.

Before the analysis, it is possible to form assumptions about the practice of public diplomacy of UNMIK and KFOR. From the point of view of the nature of the IOs, the UN is a global IO that is characterised as a promoter of general norms, which should create a high percentage of general topics. On the other hand, NATO is a regional IO. Therefore, it can be assumed that it will rather deal with specific topics.

THE METHODOLOGICAL PART

The main subject of the research is a narrative of public diplomacy concerning peacekeeping missions. The method used in the research is

a comparative case study examining two cases – those of KFOR and UNMIK. Content analysis is used here. The data were collected from the official X accounts of UNMIK ([@UNMIKOSOVO, 2024](#)) and KFOR ([@NATO_KFOR, 2024](#)). IOs increasingly use social media such as X for disseminating a variety of information about recent speeches of organisational leaders, symposia of affiliated experts, meetings and decisions of intergovernmental bodies, and launches of major policy programmes, among other topics ([ECKER-EHRHARDT, 2021, P. 21](#)). Therefore, social networks are not only a means of communication, but they present how IOs carry out their public diplomacy. However, to use an analysis of social media as the only analysis of communication is to omit a huge amount of data, as social media provides information about activities and approaches towards specific topics. It is nevertheless possible to analyse the narrative of public diplomacy by looking at social media. Social networks have made information provided by IOs available to most people in the world. Nowadays, these communication channels are among the most widely used avenues of public diplomacy in most IOs. Moreover, X serves as a primary news source for many users ([MITCHELL ET AL., 2012](#)) and allows for the networked curation and negotiation of political meanings ([ECKER-EHRHARDT, 2023A](#)). “Diplomacy is about to enter a new phase of digital transformation – hybrid diplomacy, in which physical and virtual engagements are expected to integrate, complement, and empower each other” ([BJOLA & MANOR, 2022, P. 471](#)). X was selected for the study due to the accessibility of its data and the similarity of its content to that of other social networks, such as Facebook and Instagram. The posts were downloaded by the software Vicinitas. The analysed units were posts because in this case, they represent the ideas that the mission wants to present and do not forward someone else’s ideas as reposts.

The public diplomacy was examined in two dimensions – activities and topics. The activities are listening, advocacy, engagement, and evaluation. They were formulated by Pagovski ([2015](#)). The last-mentioned activity, evaluation, is almost impossible to observe, so it is excluded from the research.

- Listening – A post was coded as “listening” when it included visits of officials at some institutions, surveys on general trends, consultations, meetings with locals, etc.

@UNMIK: *“SRSG Ziadeh also met with religious community representatives in Prizren: Sinan Pasha Mosque Imam Ali Berisha, Prizren–Pristina Diocese Vicar General Don Shan Zeff, St. George Cathedral Parish Priest Father Jovan & the Head of the Jewish Community in Kosovo Votim Demiri.”*

- Advocacy – A post with advocacy contains a declaration, a statement from the representatives of the mission, podcasts, information about aid, comments on current events, etc. The existence of the social network account of the mission itself signifies the use of advocacy.

@KFOR: *“On the occasion of the 31st Anniversary of the Independence Day of #Ukraine UA, we thank our Ukrainian friends for their important contribution to the #NATO-led #KFOR mission over many years.”*

- Engagement – A post in this category includes information about discussions, conferences, joint projects, joint training, student competitions, and/or cooperation with universities, NGOs, think tanks, or civil society organisations.

@UNMIK: *“In times of crisis, you can count on the ingenuity of women. Working with NGOs across Kosovo, UNMIK has supported almost 200 women to sew thousands of masks for families in need.”*

The topics were formulated inductively according to the content of the posts. The research was done in three steps. In the first step, I read all the posts, and I formulated the topics from the content of the posts. I aimed to include all the relevant topics that I found in the dataset. In the second step, I searched for the keywords for the topics. I checked whether the content of each post with the given keywords was suitable for the topic. In the third step, I read all the posts and coded them. Then I double-checked the coding. The topics were divided into three groups: general, specific, and neutral topics. What emerges from the analysis is that the general topics are women, domestic violence, human rights, rule of law, environment, and LGBT. Meanwhile, the specific topics are issues specific to Kosovo – Serbia and Kosovo, minorities, religion, refugees and missing people, and child marriage. Neutral topics are those that do not belong to either of the two mentioned categories.

Each post was coded as one unit. When a selected aspect (activity, topic) was present in the post, the post received a score of 1; if no aspect was present in the post, it did not receive any score. The dimension of activities was the same for both cases – it included listening, advocacy, and engagement. The topics in the two cases, however, were different. One post may include several topics, but only one activity. It is possible to differentiate between the activities, but choosing only one topic from a post that actually includes several topics would lead to the omission of a huge amount of data and distort the results. Moreover, it would be difficult to choose the most important topic; therefore, more than one topic can be identified within one post. The frequencies of the presented topics were calculated based on the proportions of posts with certain topics that were published in a particular year. Moreover, the text is synthesised. This means that there are no references to particular posts in it. For the research, 905 KFOR posts and 599 UNMIK posts were analysed.

The time frame for the research is the six-year period of 2017–2022. The X account of KFOR was created in November 2016; therefore, the year 2017 was selected as the first comparable year for both missions. The time-frame provides a sufficiently long period for analysing long-term trends in public diplomacy within the peacekeeping missions.

TABLE 1: THE X ACCOUNTS OF KFOR AND UNMIK (22 NOVEMBER 2023)

	Followers on X	Year of creation of the account	Number of posts in the years 2017-2022
KFOR (@NATO_KFOR)	35,143	2016	905
UNMIK (@UNMIKosovo)	8,445	2009	599

Source: Author

THE EMPIRICAL PART

Both of the missions, KFOR and UNMIK, are active on the social network X. On average, KFOR publishes one post per two days, and UNMIK publishes one post per four days. Although UNMIK has been on X longer, KFOR has four times as many followers and has been more active in terms of the number of its posts during the selected period. This trend relates to the minor role of UNMIK after the declaration of independence by Kosovo and the fact that KFOR is the bigger mission in terms of personnel. After an active first year (2017), KFOR reduced its activity in the subsequent

years of 2018 and 2019. The same applies to UNMIK. Both missions have been increasing their activity on X since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Therefore, it is possible to say that the pandemic had a significant impact on the activity of both missions on X.

ACTIVITIES

Both missions have advocacy as their main activity. The percentages of its use by the two missions are almost the same (KFOR – 83%; UNMIK – 74%). As advocacy refers to one-way communication, it is the easiest form of public diplomacy and does not require active cooperation. But there is the possibility to comment on posts and chat directly with the mission. UNMIK increased its use of advocacy in the year 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred, and it was almost impossible to meet people directly and organise events. Therefore, advocacy was the only possible form of public diplomacy at the time. Then the use of advocacy dropped, and UNMIK focused on more participatory activities. On the other hand, the peak year for advocacy for KFOR was 2019, and surprisingly, 2020 was the second lowest year for it.

KFOR provides advocacy in the form of statements from the representatives of the mission, comments about the activities of the mission, such as donations and exercises, and news about the mission. The other forms inform about the national days of states that are contributing to the mission and other ceremonies. KFOR also publishes a magazine titled KFOR Chronicle.

Both UNMIK and KFOR present statements by representatives of the mission, mainly by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Kosovo (SRDG) and, to a lesser extent, by the Secretary-General António Guterres; inform about donations and important anniversaries such as the 70 years of peacekeeping, and provide news. Both UNMIK and KFOR also dedicated a massive number of posts to the activities of the leader of the respective mission. UNMIK pays close attention to significant days such as International Volunteer Day, International Women's Day, Human Rights Day, and the International Day of UN Peacekeepers. Moreover, it is possible to find stories of ordinary people, such as young people and people who have experienced sexual violence. These emotional posts should

catch readers' attention and provide an authentic experience for them. A particularly interesting part of the advocacy is a briefing by the SRSG at the Security Council on Kosovo, where the SRSG introduces current developments in Kosovo. This briefing usually leads to a dozen posts that describe the course of the council in detail. UNMIK also regularly informs its followers about its activities. Lastly, both missions use X as a hiring platform where they publish job advertisements – for example, for the positions of International UN Volunteer and National Consultant.

The results for engagement differ, as KFOR and UNMIK use it in 8% and 21% of their posts, respectively. For KFOR, the use of engagement has differed over the years. Although in most years, engagement was present in 4–12% of the posts, the percentage was the highest in 2018 (19%). The result for 2020 is surprising. Despite the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic in that year, it is the second-highest percentage for this activity within the timeframe. The engagement conducted at the time was connected to the pandemic in most cases. The results were the opposite in the case of UNMIK. Although its use of engagement was increasing within the selected period, the only exception was the pandemic year 2020, when the use of engagement dropped to 7%. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic was continuing throughout 2021 and 2022, in those years, the percentage of the use of engagement grew to 32% and 25%, respectively. The data shows that UNMIK tries to engage and cooperate with the public more than KFOR.

KFOR uses engagement by providing information on conferences such as the International Conference on Women, Peace, and Security, debates, or celebrations of holidays such as International Women's Day. However, the key component of engagement is joint military or police exercises where troops from various states and local Kosovar troops cooperate and exercise together. KFOR also engages the youth and receives students from other countries (e.g. Great Britain, Hungary, Italy). KFOR further actively cooperates with the Kosovo Security Force on some specific tasks, such as destroying bombs.

UNMIK conducts several activities involving local populations, NGOs, and institutions. Its scope and variety are broader than those of KFOR. UNMIK organises discussions with film screenings, workshops,

photo competitions, conferences, art festivals, etc. UNMIK also focuses on education by providing IT courses, media internships, grants, and lectures. Additionally, it promotes the Balkanist study programme at the University of Pristina and organises a multiethnic camp. It also organises the UN Youth Assembly in Kosovo, panel discussions, workshops, joint projects, and a variety of events, such as Global Open Days on Women, Peace and Security, and Digital Trust Building Week. UNMIK also established some regional centres for green management and inter-municipal centres for the management of natural disasters.

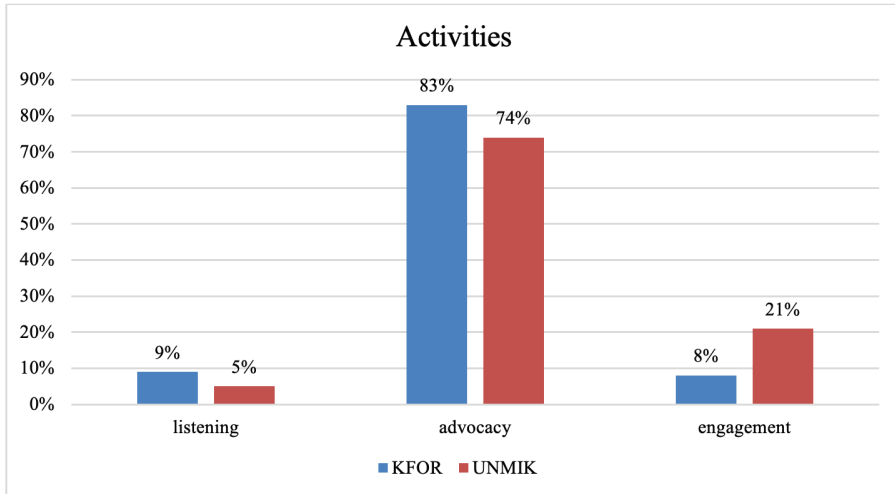
The last activity is listening. KFOR mentions listening in 9% of its posts. The use of listening increased from 4% to 14% between 2017 and 2021. This indicates that KFOR, rather than engaging the local population in some activities, listens to their opinions and monitors their activities. But the use of this activity dropped in 2022. For UNMIK, listening is the third place activity (5%). In the last two years of the studied period, namely 2021 and 2022, listening was used ten or five times more than in the previous years.

However, it is essential to mention that most of the listening activities of KFOR involve the high-level meetings of the KFOR commander and a local representative, such as a bishop. KFOR does not want to publish the content of such meetings, however. It is merely the topics of the meetings, such as the “current situation,” that are presented in the posts. However, some posts mention the Liaison and Monitoring Teams that conduct daily monitoring activities to gain current information about the economic, social, and political situation. Their main task is to contribute to KFOR’s situational awareness through liaison activities involving the local population, IOs, and institutions (KFOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE, 2021). Then the Liaison and Monitoring Teams regularly inform the KFOR Command. Another form of listening in this case is related to the visits of KFOR representatives to monasteries, ceremonies, and workplaces, and their meetings with children.

Activity of UNMIK involving listening is the meetings of the high representatives of the mission and officials from Kosovo, such as leaders of parties, the president of the Islamic community in Kosovo, and the president of Serbia. The SRSG also holds regular consultations with the Kosovo Prime Minister. But unlike KFOR, UNMIK describes the specific agenda

of each meeting in the respective post. It also puts a bigger emphasis on transparency. Representatives of UNMIK further visit local institutions such as homes for the elderly, where they can hear the voices of the older generation, and on the other hand, they organise the UN Youth Assembly, where they can hear the voices of the youth.

CHART 1: ACTIVITIES OF KFOR AND UNMIK



Source: Author.

TOPICS

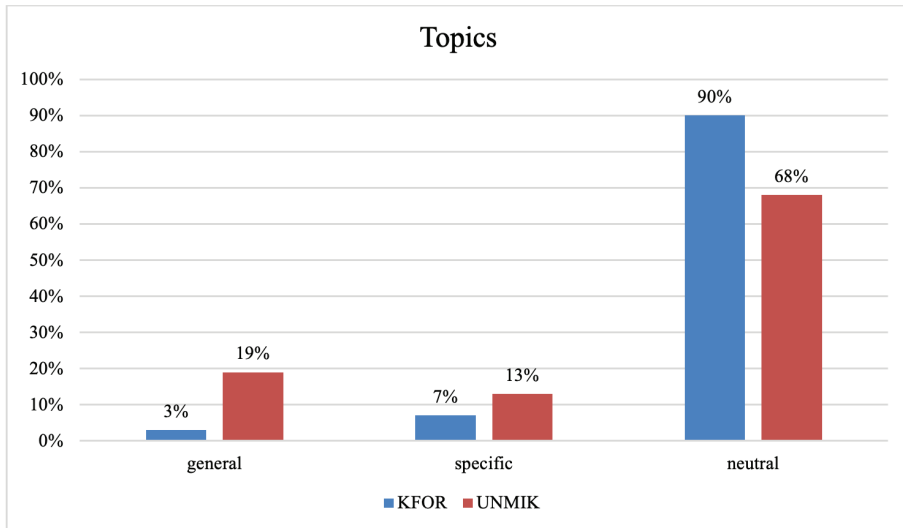
Both missions raise a wide variety of topics. For the research, their distribution within three groups – general, specific, and neutral topics – is vital. The first is the general topics that represent internationally accepted norms. KFOR promotes general topics in 3% of its posts. The highest number of mentions of general topics was in 2020 (6%), but there is no visible trend in this case. Among the general topics, women (2%) were mentioned the most often. KFOR emphasises gender equality, empowerment of women, and the key role of women in conflict prevention. This is done through events such as the conference Women in Leadership or the platform Kosovo Women’s Network. Then the connected topic of domestic violence (1%) is the second most represented one, as KFOR supports the event of 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, and then in the third place is the environment (0.2%). In regard to this topic, KFOR

reminds its followers of World Environment Day. But compared to the other categories, general topics make up only a negligible number of its posts.

UNMIK mentions general topics in 19% of its posts. UNMIK promotes general norms with almost the same frequency during each year of the selected timeframe (15–23%). The most common general topic in its posts is women (7%). UNMIK, like KFOR, promotes the empowerment of women and gender equality. On the other hand, UNMIK also focuses on issues connected with women, such as violence against women. The following topic is the strengthening of the rule of law (3%), in relation to which UNMIK promotes the hashtag #JusticeforAll. Hashtags are employed as an important soft structure of storytelling (PAPACHARISSI, 2016) and an activity for framing content (MERAZ & PAPACHARISSI, 2013). Hashtag activism, such as #MeToo or #ClimateAction, is used as a “primary channel to raise awareness of an issue and encourage debate via social media” (TOMBLESON & WOLF, 2017). The other general topic is human rights (3%). UNMIK promotes the protection of human rights by celebrating Human Rights Day and supporting for publication of a report on human rights titled “Civil Society Report on the Human Rights in Kosovo”.

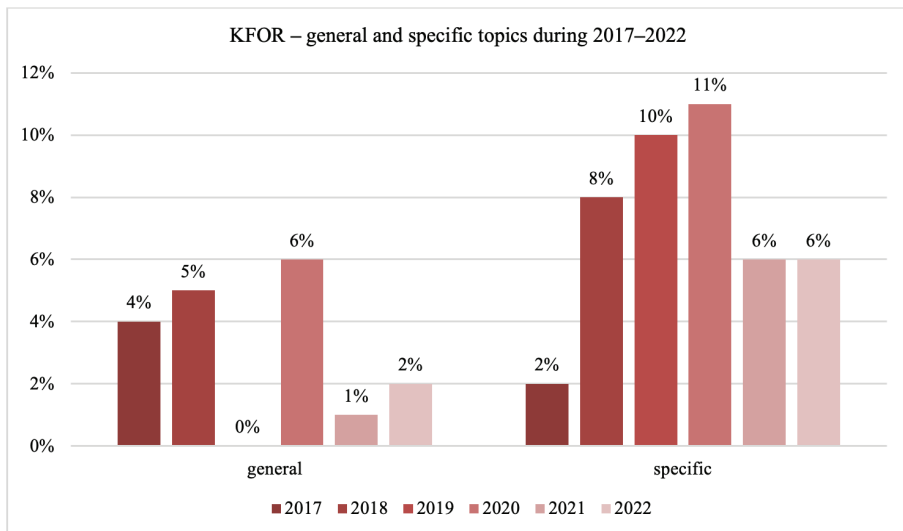
For both missions, the most used general topic is women (KFOR – 2%; UNMIK – 7%). The other topics, such as human rights and the environment, have received minimal attention from KFOR. Moreover, UNMIK covers topics that KFOR pays no attention to – for example, the rule of law and LGBT issues.

CHART 2: TOPICS OF KFOR AND UNMIK



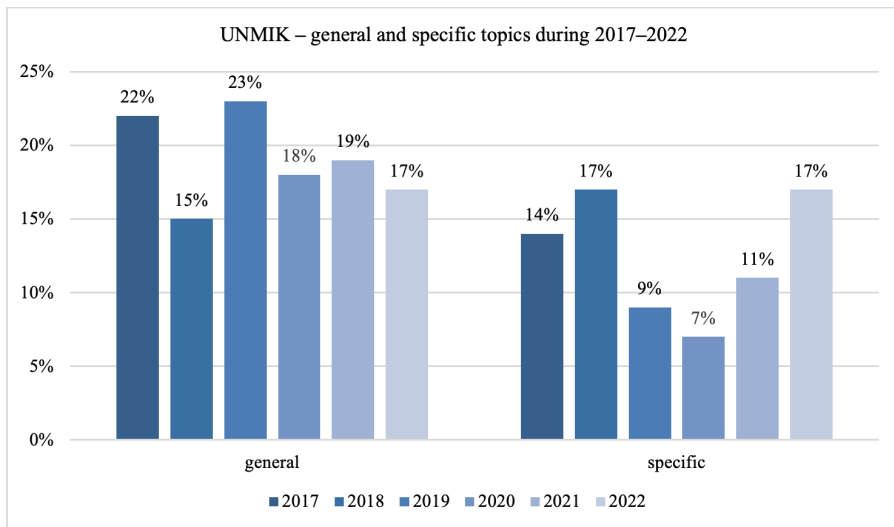
Source: Author.

CHART 3: KFOR – GENERAL AND SPECIFIC TOPICS DURING 2017–2022



Source: Author.

CHART 4: UNMIK – GENERAL AND SPECIFIC TOPICS DURING 2017–2022



Source: Author.

Specific topics have different levels of presence in the posts of the two missions. KFOR posts about specific topics in 7% of the cases. The highest percentage of specific topics was in 2020 (11%), when they were at their peak, and then the percentage of specific topics started to decrease. The most mentioned specific topic is minorities (5%), as KFOR highlights that it serves all communities. KFOR also conducts multi-ethnic activities such as schools, soccer teams, and concerts. The second most used specific topic is religion (2%). It was used mainly when referring to meetings of representatives of KFOR with the highest authorities of religious communities in Kosovo, such as the bishop and the highest authority of the Islamic community. This indicates that KFOR aims to listen to a diverse range of religious communities.

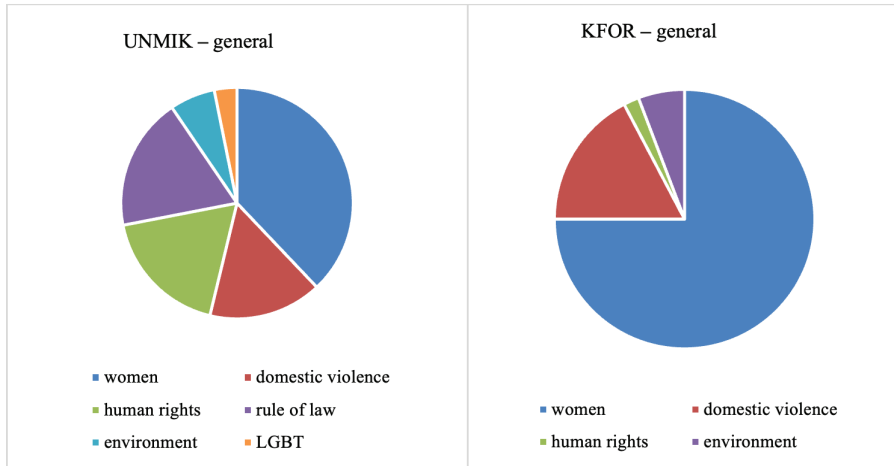
On the other hand, UNMIK focuses on specific topics in 13 % of its posts. UNMIK had exactly the opposite trend to that of KFOR concerning the frequency of the use of specific topics. The frequency decreased since the beginning of the timeframe, and it was the lowest in 2020 (7%), but then it started to increase. The most attention was paid to minorities (5%). In posts with this topic, UNMIK focuses on an intercommunity trust that can be supported via round tables, workshops, and competitions. The main goal of these activities is to bring people from different groups together.

Then there is the topic of Serbia and Kosovo (4%), in relation to which UNMIK emphasises the EU-led dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, and cooperation. More specifically, UNMIK tries to reconcile the dispute between Kosovo and Serbia.

In the posts of both missions, a lot of attention is paid to topics pertaining to minorities (KFOR – 5%; UNMIK – 5%). This indicates that both missions are dedicated to the creation of a peaceful coexistence among all of Kosovo’s minority groups. The other topics, such as refugees and Serbia and Kosovo, have received only minimal attention from KFOR.

CHART 5: UNMIK – GENERAL TOPICS

CHART 6: KFOR – GENERAL TOPICS

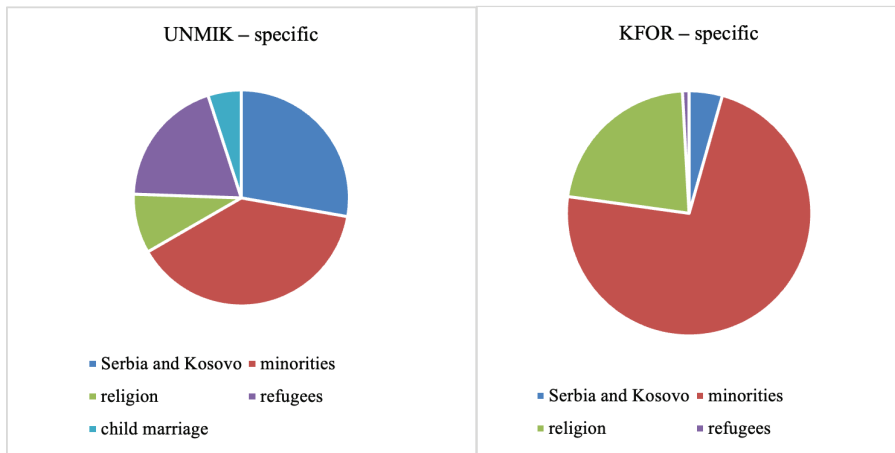


Source: Author.

Source: Author.

CHART 7: UNMIK – SPECIFIC TOPICS

CHART 8: KFOR – SPECIFIC TOPICS



Source: Author.

Source: Author.

The last category is neutral topics. KFOR mentions them in 90% of its posts, and their distribution over the years is fairly constant (84%–94%). The most common topic was visit (17%). It covers visits to KFOR from foreign politicians, such as an admiral, a minister of defence, a general, and a mayor. Most of the foreign visitors were high-ranking military officials. The second type of visit consists of mission representatives’ visits to local organisations such as schools, monasteries, municipalities, or local institutions. The commander of the mission also often meets with liaison officers and sub-units. By posting about such meetings, KFOR tries to present how often the representatives of KFOR meet with local residents, and mainly how representatives of other states and IOs care about Kosovo. Then there is the topic of security (11%), which is presented as a goal of KFOR, and that of ceremony (7%), which refers to official events such as the medal ceremonies, transfers of authority, changes of command, or anniversaries. Unlike UNMIK, KFOR also mentions equipment (1%) such as the Counter Unmanned Aerial System or the Black Hawk helicopter. This reflects its characteristics as the mission of a military IO.

UNMIK discusses neutral topics in 68% of its posts, which is significantly less than the corresponding figure for KFOR. UNMIK mentioned neutral topics the most in 2020 (76%). Otherwise, the distribution of

neutral topics in its posts throughout the years remained similar (63%–69%). The most mentioned topics were mission (7%), which is mainly connected to quotes from the SRSG, youth (6%), current events (6%), and cooperation (6%) with various actors like NGOs, international partners, local partners, institutions in Kosovo, other missions, and stakeholders.

Apart from that, the comments on current events within the public diplomacy of both missions can be compared, and the results are interesting. KFOR mentions current events in 2% of its posts; it focuses mainly on the situation in North Kosovo and events like the incident of the unknown armed people in the Zubin Potok area, elections, firefighting, earthquakes, and rumours about the blockage of the Gazivoda Dam. In these cases, KFOR tries to calm its readers down. UNMIK comments on current events more often, in 6% of its posts. UNMIK comments on the same topics as KFOR, but UNMIK also emphasises political events such as the adoption of the Pristina–Belgrade roadmap, the Kosovo Assembly’s vote to incorporate the Istanbul Convention, and crimes such as attacks on Serbian pilgrims, attacks against the Kosovo police, a shooting at a school bus, and the assassination of a Serbian politician. It is possible to focus on posts concerning the situation in Northern Kosovo in UNMIK’s dataset. Most such posts highlight expressions of the SRSG, such as that the SRSG “welcomes measures taken”, “expresses concern”, “expresses condolences”, and “calls for calm”. The SRSG has one of the main roles when dealing with such an issue. On the other hand, KFOR informs about the issues and describes its actions, such as “monitoring the situation” and “increasing patrols”. KFOR adds its statements to the posts as well, but they are presented as statements of the whole mission without any focus on its leader. This is the main difference between UNMIK and KFOR in this area.

ACTIVITIES AND TOPICS

In discussions of all the activities, neutral topics are used the most (KFOR – 83–91%; UNMIK – 67–69%). But there are differences in the uses of specific and general topics. KFOR uses listening in regard to specific topics more than in regard to general ones, and the difference is significant (general – 2%; specific – 1%). The most frequent general topic is women, which is often connected to speeches about the participation of women in society. Among the specific topics is religion the most mentioned

one, which means meeting with representatives of the church, such as the Bishop, and the highest authority of the Islamic Community, as well as a visit to a monastery. Visit is the most mentioned neutral topic. It refers to meeting with various people, which is one of the main listening activities.

As in the case of KFOR, UNMIK's listening applies more to specific topics (18%) than to general ones (14%), but the difference between the frequencies of these activities is much smaller. The most frequent general topic used in connection with listening is the rule of law, which was used in connection with meetings with court officials, and a survey of 58 judges and prosecutors. The most frequent specific topic used together with listening is minorities, which is the theme of meetings with local and religious representatives. Like in the case of KFOR, the neutral topic that is the most mentioned in UNMIK's posts is visit.

Then there is advocacy. General and specific topics used in connection with advocacy are almost equally represented in the case of KFOR (general – 3%; specific – 6%). The most frequent general topic associated with advocacy is women. It appeared in posts on gender equality, women in leadership positions, the crucial role in conflict prevention, women's protection, and a tribute to women soldiers. On the other hand, the specific topic connected with advocacy with the highest occurrence is minorities, which appeared in posts where the mission highlighted its mandate to secure "all communities", "all ethnicities", and "all citizens", and in posts on KFOR events to foster a multi-ethnic coexistence. Visit is an often used tool in the case of advocacy too. It differs from visit in connection with listening because in the case of advocacy, visits pertain to meetings of representatives of KFOR with representatives of other NATO countries.

In the case of UNMIK's advocacy, general topics are more common (19%) than specific ones (13%), which is different from the situation in KFOR. The most common general topic in this case is women, as the programme Women, Peace and Security is highlighted, and women also appears in connection with problems such as early marriage, violence against women, and the importance of school attendance. The most common specific topic in this regard is Serbia and Kosovo, which is a topic of the meetings and speeches of the SRSG. Mission is the most used neutral

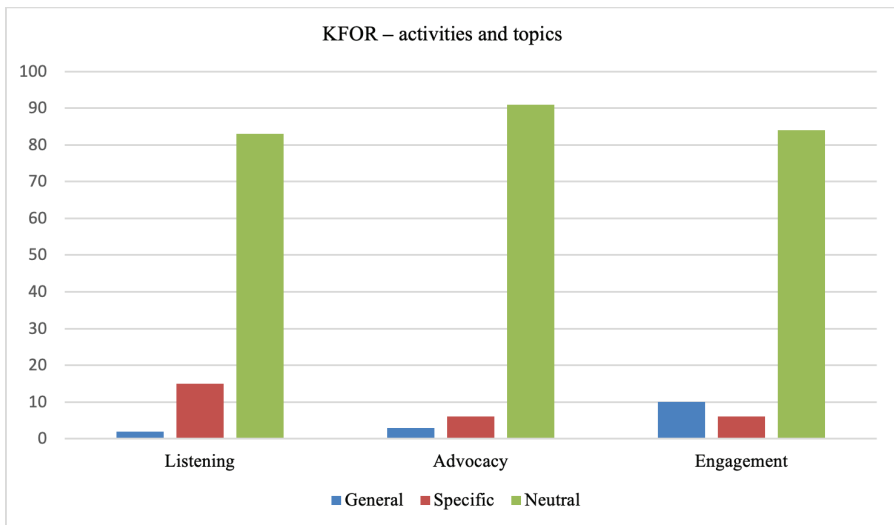
topic in UNMIK's advocacy posts. It is present in statements of the SRSG about news concerning UNMIK.

Both missions cover general topics more than specific ones in the case of engagement (KFOR – 10%; UNMIK – 20%). KFOR's most frequently used general topic in this regard is women, as KFOR organises various events pertaining to women, such as International Women's Day events, and conferences on Women, Peace and Security. The only specific topic in the case of engagement is minorities. It relates to events such as the Tour of Kosovo and the KFOR International Day. In the case of cooperation, which is the most common neutral topic in connection with engagement, KFOR presents a civil-military cooperation project, its cooperation with local security organisations, etc.

In the case of UNMIK, the general topic women is the most frequent. It relates to screening of movies about gender-based violence and early marriage, providing grants for young women, and organising girls' football tournaments, and to how during the COVID-19 pandemic, women worked together on the mass production of masks. The most frequent specific topic that UNMIK tries to engage people on is minorities. It provides grants for youth, organises round tables, workshops, and tournaments for people from all communities, and supported the cooperation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Youth is the top neutral topic when UNMIK presents various activities that youth are involved in, such as internships, competitions, or the UN Youth Assembly in Kosovo.

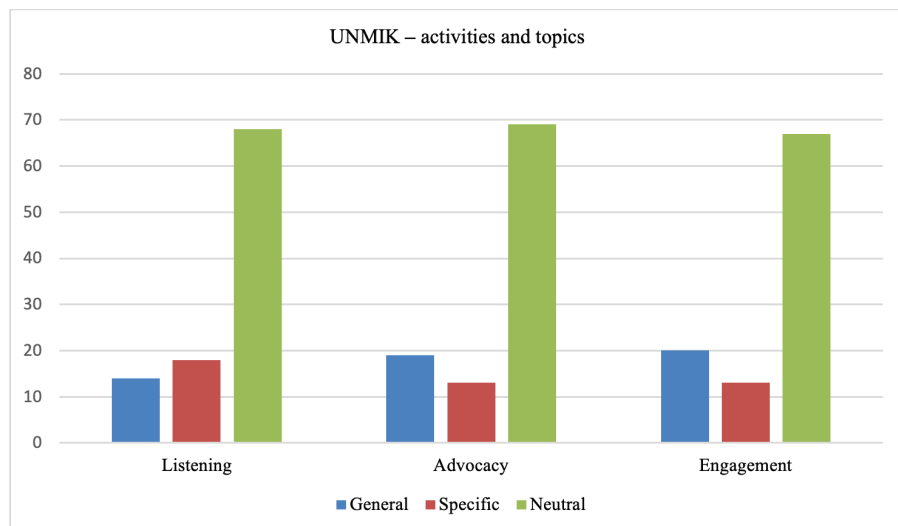
Significantly, KFOR tries to promote selected topics such as women, minorities, and cooperation in all kinds of public diplomacy activities, but in contrast to that, some of the topics are used in the context of only one activity: e.g. environment in engagement, religion in advocacy and listening, and trust, stability, exercise, support, peace, and ceremonies in advocacy. Some topics are connected to only one activity by their very nature. For example, it is easy to inform about exercise in the form of advocacy and cooperate with locals via engagement, but it is hard to listen to locals in this case. Finally, in the case of UNMIK, some topics are significantly represented in one dominant activity. For example, women are promoted by advocacy and engagement but are almost omitted in listening, and Serbia and Kosovo are promoted mainly by advocacy.

CHART 9: KFOR – ACTIVITIES AND TOPICS



Source: Author.

CHART 10: UNMIK – ACTIVITIES AND TOPICS



Source: Author

DISCUSSION

The article connected the literature concerning public diplomacy with the literature dealing with liberal peacebuilding, which is currently contested by the local turn. The article brings forth empirical findings of how KFOR and UNMIK deal with public diplomacy on X, where they present their narratives of public diplomacy. From the analysis, it is possible to assume that KFOR focuses mainly on neutral topics and pays insignificant attention to general and specific topics. On the other hand, UNMIK actively promotes both general and less specific topics. The analysis further indicated that general norms remain in many parts of the UN system (DUNTON ET AL., 2023, P. 222), but in the case of KFOR, the era of liberal idealism and interventionism is closing (MOE & STEPPUTAT, 2018).

The article shows that the public diplomacy of KFOR and UNMIK focuses on a wide variety of topics and uses all kinds of activities to work with them, but there are some vital differences between them. KFOR presents a high level of advocacy with a similar level of listening and engagement. Based on the analysis, it is possible to assume that KFOR sends out one-way messages about neutral topics. On the other hand, UNMIK actively focuses on general and specific norms. It must be stressed that neutral topics are not as present in the case of UNMIK as in the case of KFOR. The COVID-19 pandemic represents a key milestone in the use of public diplomacy by KFOR and UNMIK. Both missions differ in their use of activities during the pandemic. It appears that KFOR is focused on the mission itself and thus comments on the activities of the mission, which involve donations, equipment, and members of the mission. On the other hand, UNMIK pays attention to the situation and problems of Kosovo more frequently. Additionally, the posts of both missions often cite their respective leaders – KFOR’s commander and UNMIK’s SRSG. It proves how important a leader is as a public representative of the mission. Lastly, both missions emphasise cooperation with other missions in Kosovo, local partners and institutions, NGOs, global partners, etc.

Additionally, there is a key issue that relates to the advocacy of general norms. Ecker-Ehrhardt claims that advocacy that promotes cosmopolitan issues over transparency-focused public information undermines the credibility of IOs as a source of trustworthy information (ECKER-EHRHARDT,

2023A); therefore, the legitimacy of the missions can be challenged on these grounds. Moreover, relying heavily on advocacy may lead to concern. For example, public diplomacy will spread its message by advocacy (the one-way approach), but it is not certain whether the message will be correctly understood by the public without hearing the public's opinion of it.

The research has several limitations. The research analyses activities that are presented on X. Although both missions use social networks actively, they may omit some of their activities from their posts. Therefore, other sources of data can be used when studying the missions. Moreover, the content of posts can be targeted at people who use X and speak English; therefore, there is a possibility that the missions present only selected parts of their public diplomacy in their posts. Moreover, a mission can successfully reach only like-minded people and turn away the sceptics (IBID.). The present research thus focuses only on two dimensions of public diplomacy – activities and topics.

CONCLUSION

The article aims to contribute to the debate on public diplomacy of peacekeeping missions while studying the adoption of global and specific norms in their posts on X. The findings indicate that public diplomacy of peacekeeping missions should be understood not only as a communicative practice but as a part of a broader debate about the direction of contemporary peacekeeping.

The research shows that the concept of public diplomacy can be used to analyse the complexity of the relations between a peacekeeping mission and the public. Public diplomacy can offer a complex picture of the preferences of IOs when working with the public. Nowadays, missions should not only communicate with residents and people in their member states, but they should also engage them in activities and listen to their feedback. By involving people, the mission can be better received by “both” publics.

Although there is a prevailing assumption that there is a shift from a universal liberal approach to a specific local context, the research brings forth evidence that it is not an issue in all cases. The turn towards specific topics is not linear and differs in the cases of KFOR and UNMIK. Therefore,

the often-stated commitment to local ownership is not always reflected in public diplomacy of missions. Moreover, the comparison of KFOR and UNMIK shows that one-way advocacy continues to dominate public diplomacy, which limits the potential of public diplomacy to function as a genuinely relational or partnership-oriented engagement tool.

Additionally, the topic of public diplomacy and peacekeeping missions is highly interesting and unexplored. Future research should examine how different modes of public diplomacy shape local perceptions of mission legitimacy and under what conditions public diplomacy can evolve into a more reciprocal form of engagement. Additionally, it would be possible to provide a comparative study across missions and regions that could clarify whether the patterns that were observed in Kosovo reflect broader tendencies or are tied to the specific context of Kosovo. Further research can explore the organisational structures of missions and international organisations that shape strategies and practices of public diplomacy. On top of that, field research involving locals would offer their personal perceptions and, by doing so, provide a broader understanding of this phenomenon. It would be beneficial to study the impact of public diplomacy activities on local legitimacy or trust. Lastly, it is also possible to study different dimensions of public diplomacy, such as timeframes, targeted audiences, or goals.

ENDNOTES

- 1 The percentages for Serbs, Romani, and some other ethnic minorities may be underestimated because the results are based on the 2011 Kosovo national census, which excluded northern Kosovo (a largely Serb-inhabited region) and was partially boycotted by Serb and Romani communities in southern Kosovo.
- 2 The international civil presence is to focus on “promoting the establishment [of], [...] or substantial autonomy and self-government in Kosovo”, “performing civil basic [tasks]”, “civilian administrative functions”, “facilitating a political progress”, “overseeing the transfer of authority from Kosovo’s provisional institutions to institutions established under a political settlement”, “support[ing] [...] humanitarian and disaster relief aid”, “maintaining civil law and order”, “protecting and promoting human rights”, and “ensuring the safe and unimpeded return of all refugees” (United Nations, 1999).
- 3 The international security presence is to focus on “detering renewed hostilities”, “maintaining a ceasefire”, “demilitarizing the Kosovo Liberation Army”, “establishing a secure environment”, “ensuring public safety and order”, “supervising demining”, “supporting [...] and coordinat[ing] closely with the work of the international civil presence”, “conducting border monitoring duties”, and “ensuring the protection and freedom of movement...” (United Nations, 1999).
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