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**The Alistair Berkley Memorial Lecture
held at the LSE on Friday 21st May 2004**

“Media, the Law and Peace-building: from Bosnia and Kosovo to Iraq”

More questions...

QUESTION 1:

Why, if there is, according to Nik Gowing, so much speed and transparency and alternative press, has it taken a whole year for the photos of torture to be put to the public and for the issue to be raised? Some of us can read between the lines, some of us go to political meetings and go to the alternative press because we know the press is indistinguishable just as political parties are and do not present an alternative view.

The second question is regarding the media silence regarding the trial in The Hague of President Milosevic. We were initially told this is the most important trial since Nuremburg and in my opinion the answer is because he's winning the argument. Finally, there is just one more point I would like to make. There has been very much talk today about 'we in Britain are so much better than the Americans'. We are not. It has still to come out how the British have behaved in these countries they've been to. The very last comment is that someone mentioned the lack of media freedom in the States. If the United States is presented as this model of democracy, so on this basis what sort of a model is it that we are trying to spread throughout the world?

QUESTION 2:

My name is Dapo Olywole. I work for the Centre for African Policy and Peace Studies and I am very glad that Nik took the debate to Africa because I think that if you are talking about the media, law and peace building then Africa is one place where we find a lot of useful examples. Perhaps it is useful to look at this from a position of whether the media are doing not *what* they need to do but *how* they are doing it and the lenses through which they look at the communities or the regions in which they are working. I would like to give a brief example of a Western trained Nigerian journalist who went to Nigeria, covered the Nigerian beauty pageant that was meant to take place in Abuja and she reported exactly as she was taught to report - no sacred cows, you deal with the issues, you present the truth. Well she did her journalistic work. By the end of the day it resulted in a massacre of over 200 people. Now the issue itself is that perhaps what the Western media needs to factor into calculus are the sensitivities, the socio-economic and cultural sensitivities that

can be found in those particular areas. I am also very glad that Laurie Nathan brought up the issue of how the media themselves can be instrumental in fermenting violence. And I think that the areas, for example the BBC just sometime last year put on the front page of their website the bodies of massacred, charred up Muslims in Northern Nigeria. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some Christians in some parts of southern Nigeria actually responded on the basis of what they saw. Now in this country we would also have arguments about how American or British soldiers should not be shown in undignified positions in the media. Well how come that same kind of universal principle that should be applicable to everyone seems to be rather short when it comes to other countries and other regions?

QUESTION 3:

Louise Perotta, I am a Governance Advisor at DFID working on the Afghanistan programme. I have a question and it really is a question and it starts with a how, and it is in a sense trying to link together the title. How can we actually develop media in a post-conflict situation that is (a) sufficiently free and independent to pursue a democracy agenda and (b) that will actually contribute to peace-building in some kind of sustainable way when (c) there is a very high risk that those two things are very contradictory? Taking into consideration, and I think several members have mentioned this, that there is a very high risk that the media will either re-inflate tensions that will take a very long time to dissipate or very simply and much more prosaically take to the broadcasting of horrendous violence and pornography to a very unsophisticated audience as I have seen very recently in Kabul.

May I be permitted just one small comment? We all recognize the power of the media. It is self-evident but I think what we do need to recognize is that it is only as powerful as the audience that watches it. And that audiences are very different, in other parts of the world. They are much less sophisticated and much less able to read through a million different kinds of information. At the other side of the audience we have an American audience, and I speak as someone who was born and grew up in America, that will switch over and watch 'Friends' and I think that is probably far more dangerous.

QUESTION 4:

(inaudible)... journalist from the Balkans, from Yugoslavia. I have a question for Mr. Simon Haselock. You mentioned the role of the media in embedding democracy in society. If you do only that and do not emphasise, as Jonathan Steele did, the role of the media to inform and information being presentation of facts really, do we risk turning journalists into part of the political process? And it comes with this self-censorship - you are part of this political process, you have to control yourself. So if we separate the role of the media and the role of facts but you transform it into part of the political process, do we risk losing freedom of expression in total?

QUESTION 5:

Thank you. Frank Webster from City University. This is a very short comment, I would like to make a long one and then a question. The comment was that, although I think Nik Gowing is really interesting, I think you really do over-dramatize your position. I know you won't agree with that but I think I could give a very long and much more historical argument against it. But my question is, could you say a bit more about rolling news, headline news? It does seem to me, and this echoes Steele's comment, that it actually leads to misunderstanding and I would want much more emphasis placed on that role of the mediation process.

QUESTION 6:

Gavin Capps from DESTIN. I have a question but first I have to start with a comment before the question and I ask it because I want to broaden the discussion out into an area that I don't think we have looked at sufficiently today and that is the whole question of the politics of humanitarian intervention itself which is obviously framing the debate we are having today. That question is obviously a very broad and difficult one - who should intervene and under what circumstances? Secondly, where does this leave the right of self-determination to nations, if at all? Now just to fill that in, I think that there is an un-stated assumption behind what is stated today that interventions by the so-called international community will more or less be for the public or international good and this rather ignores the history of the power of states and those interventions and the various institutions. The world is composed of a hierarchy of states with radically unequal power who are competing to fulfil their own objectives- it is great power competition. And I think that very much shows itself in some of the interventions we are talking about- not just in Iraq but in Bosnia and Kosovo as well. It seems to me that one of the problems of the Middle East in the past 150 years has been precisely Western intervention again and again and again. No more so than in Iraq.

QUESTION 7:

My name is Andy, I am a peacemaker. I want to ask a short question, I don't know about Iraq today but did the Iraqi people enjoy freedom of speech? And how about press freedom? The local press, did they have any press freedom? Did we have any legitimate grant to occupy Iraq for more than one year? I agree that for global security we need to rebuild Iraq but how can we do it for more than one year, two years? Thank you and I hope we have world peace.

QUESTION 8:

I was a journalist but I also worked in Kosovo for 2 years for OSE. First, when the foundations of the intervention are shaky does that undermine your ability to do your job? Looking at the Iraqi Media Network I hear it was first set up by a Defence contractor so how is that affecting the perception of independence of that station? And secondly, regarding media, do you feel

that now the extremists that want violence might be controlling the agenda and the media might be following that? Do you think that there was a point where the media could be following any positive news that was coming out of Iraq, perhaps a few months ago, that we have never really heard about? And do you think therefore that we really have a clear picture of the success of the intervention?

QUESTION 9:

I also work for (.....). Someone mentioned the power of the media. I think we also need to consider the media of power. I like turning things around a bit. This ties into 3 basic issues. The first one, when it comes to reporting events in international society in Africa, Kosovo, Iraq, is that it is important to ask who the media is reporting for, who is the audience? The majority of the reporters are reporting for a Western audience which tends to negate the sensitivity of those in the context in which they are reporting.

The second thing is that there is something I find disturbing and it is the high degree of consensus when it comes to reporting international events. This comes to the fact that when it comes to Iraq a lot of people have been saying the issue of abusing prisoners has been around but why didn't we have this outcry when the Red Cross had hinted at some of these things before?

The last question is, why is it that when a teenager or even a minor in this country commits a crime his picture is not allowed to be published, nor is his name even given? But then you go to Africa, you go to Iraq and you see most establishment media, both in the TV as well as in the print media, brandishing a picture of a child soldier on the front pages of newspapers as well as in news reports. When I went to Sierra Leone last year to do fieldwork, one of the things I discovered was that through the activities of a lot of media coming over the past couple of years, the child soldiers have been granting interviews to media outlets as a way of making money. For people who are interested in academic research it has made it much more difficult because they have a stereotyped response. So why is it that they go into these places and they create a culture of telling stories even when those children might not have been involved?

Now the panellists reply and then Nik and Simon for a final word.

MONROE PRICE:

I am going to leave the question of media development in Iraq to Simon. This is a plug - I have a newsletter at the Stanhope site (<http://www.stanhopecentre.org>) on Iraq media development and anyone is free to look at it. I'd say that the issue which I get from Nik Gowing is thinking about not the freedom of information but the way in which information is power. This really gets to the power of the media rather than the media as power. Looking at three stages of the interaction of the state and

the media: reception, distribution and production and it seems to me we can look around the world and see how modes of control are affecting each of these. Reception: the question of satellite dish control over the way in which individuals receive information. In a way the development media in Iraq is about trying to increase the capacity of receivers to receive. And also distribution: what Nik is talking about in some ways is control of distribution and production of information. It seems to me what is interesting as states have more and more difficulty controlling reception and controlling distribution they will be more and more engaged in trying to control production. These are interactive phenomenon and we think of information as flowing freely but it is very important to think of how all these institutions interact.

BAQER MOIN:

Yes, on the question of Afghanistan, I was talking to a senior official in Kabul and he was telling me that our papers, if you look at them now, they are all full of polemics and the nation needs that because they have been suffering for 25 years and they need to get that out of their system. I think what they also recognize is that they also need more content productivity in Afghanistan and that is really the way forward. I wish the British government - instead of going to fight poppy cultivation - had gone to support media development or more lower education in that country because that hasn't worked. I am afraid they have been producing more poppy this year than in previous years. But I think that is a major problem in Afghanistan. But having said that, I feel that education, patience and also involving Afghans themselves as much as possible to develop their own capacity, instead of sending NGO's to Afghanistan. Because there is the infrastructure of a government in Afghanistan and because there is the infrastructure of a government there we have to enable them to do things themselves. I think we have to reduce the NGO's and enhance capacity in the Afghan government. That is the way forward.

ALLAN THOMPSON:

As a journalist I'd like to try and tackle the question that has come up two or three times regarding journalistic standards when we operate abroad and the notion for example that you raised, why would we photograph a child when in Britain or Canada you can't photograph a child that has been accused of a crime for example? I would agree with you that there is a problem of no consistent set of standards or rules that people are obliged to follow in the international community. But that is true of the international community respect- there are rules that we have, things we can and cannot do within your country but there are in a sense no rules in the world at large, so why would you expect them of journalists when we don't expect them of anyone else?

I think there is also a very real dilemma. There is no satisfactory answer to

your question. For example, how do you avoid a situation where you end up exploiting children by taking their picture and by creating a dynamic where people begin to pose as child soldiers and grant interviews to earn money. That is probably a real side effect of media attention to that question. But look at the other side; surely you are not going to argue with me that the use of children as soldiers is a bad thing. As a journalist going out in the world to document something, if I am going to write about the abuse of children as child soldiers, how am I going to tell that story without using images- without using a picture?

As a journalist you are constantly confronted with this dilemma of the rights of the people you are interacting with. If you are responsible about it, you try and operate in such a way that you are not exploiting someone. So if someone is putting themselves in danger by allowing you to take a photograph you should have a notion of informed consent of the subjects you are dealing with. There are times when you will probably err on the side of *'what is the issue I am trying to expose? - the use of child soldiers.'* As for taking the picture of a 12 year old holding a weapon, what is the greater good? Journalistically I think you would probably err on the side of *'I have to take this picture because I have to tell this story'*. If you are exposing someone to danger by taking their picture or exposing their picture, you have to make a judgement call of whether you should do that. But I think that is a different issue of whether we should photograph children when we are reporting on a conflict zone. Are we violating the rights in a way that maybe we wouldn't do in Canada? I'd need the parents to sign a consent form before I took a picture of a 12 year old child. Obviously that doesn't happen when you go to a conflict zone in Africa, but what is my objective? It is to report on a situation that should be brought to light. How do I do that without taking pictures? You just keep going around...

MARK THOMPSON:

Thanks. Well, I just want to come back one more time to this question of the continuum- Bosnia, Kosovo and Iraq. Simon, I am sorry you resent me challenging your claim that the differences are more important than the similarities. There is no need to resent it, this is a key question I think and the questioner put it more concisely and clearly than I think I did. And the question is this: are you able to do your job, given the nature of the intervention you are part of and thanks to which you are there? Now it seems to me that an effective rebuttal of my challenge would be to explain how the principles and processes of licensing, regulation, accountable institution-building and professionalisation of the media are like each other in the Balkans on the one hand and Iraq on the other. Now if you were to do that I would gladly admit I was in error and the similarities are overpoweringly significant. I think it would have been very interesting to have heard much more about the nuts and bolts of media development in Iraq.

SIMON HASELOCK:

The immediate answer to that is that it was not what we were asked to speak about. We were asked to speak about whether there was or was not a continuum between these three areas and what the lessons learnt may have been. I can give you a long exposition about the nuts and bolts of media development in Iraq and how they have compared to other places. We don't have the time now - we are running out of it. But the fact is, yes, we have introduced a licensing system which is very similar to those licensing systems that were effective to a limited extent in both those other places. We have an institutional framework including a regulatory agency independent of government which is similar to those mechanisms we installed in other places. Yes we are hoping to encourage the development of an independent public broadcaster; how successful that ends up being remains to be seen. And there are many other parallels. My point is, yes, it is more difficult to operate in Iraq than it is in the Balkans, and I acknowledge that. But the fact that we are less able to communicate to the Iraqis doesn't mean that it cannot be done, it doesn't mean that we don't spend a lot of our time doing precisely that including doing things that Mr Steele might regard as rash and dangerous in terms of actually deciding at what stage one decides one has to go out and deal directly with the Iraqis in circumstances which may be difficult and unwise from the point of personal security. It is a very difficult circle to square.

The answers to some of the other questions - do the Iraqi press have freedom of speech? It opens this huge point about what is freedom of speech. As I said before there was this huge burst of completely unregulated press immediately after the formal part of the war ended. It is a very moot point as to how free or fair or plural that media actually is. If you read many of the reports by the International Federation of Journalists, the Arab Press Freedom Watch it isn't as free as it would seem because of problems of who controls it, what the financial basis is and what the sort of language that they are using is. Similarly there has been, contrary to the popular image, very little intervention by the coalition and this has nothing to do with me as far as closing down or acting against media outlets are concerned. There are three classic cases which everybody draws on - there were two newspapers, one very early on and one more recently which was Muqtada al-Sadr's newspaper- very controversial. My own position has been that it was a mistake and it should not have been done. But there you are, that was my opinion and there is always a full and robust debate in these situations. The other controversial issue was the ability or the attempts by certain groups to limit the work done by Al-Jazeera. That essentially has been driven much more by the Governing Council themselves than it has been by the Coalition. In fact the Coalition has been active in actually preventing the Governing Council from stamping down on Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera and I claim some small part in doing that.

The fact is that the only way to improve the coverage that these stations give to the Coalition is to improve the access they are given to information. The thing I find worrying, and it is a fact of life in Iraq, is that journalists find it extremely difficult to get access and to get the information that they need; this is essentially a bureaucratic problem not a conspiracy problem. They have not really got their bureaucratic act together in terms of the phone lines, the number of press officers they have and the ability they have to access information and that enables people to be more perhaps prescriptive than they otherwise would be. Perhaps you might argue that is a deliberate policy. The fact that it may be technically difficult for them to do that plays into the hands of those that would perhaps not wish us to be as transparent as we would like. But the fact is that if you want to influence Al-Jazeera you need to influence what is on the screen and the only way you can do that is by providing information to them and making sure you deal with them in a professional way. That is what we have advocated and that is what in fact is what has happened. And I don't think actually that direct intervention against the media has been anywhere near as bad as people here seem to think.

NIK GOWING:

On that last point Simon, it is not for you to defend this. But as someone who has campaigned on this long and hard - and we have shared one or two platforms in the past over the last ten years - I think the lack of resources, in particular by the world's most sophisticated military forces, for handling media in a real-time environment is simply unconscionable. And the same down in Tampa [Florida] where Central Command is based. Under [General] Tommy Franks it really hasn't improved. My colleagues in Baghdad can pick up the phone to the Green Zone and get someone at the other end who hasn't the first clue of what is going on. A lot of work has to be done. And I get the feeling that they don't want to do it. If they want to put in phone lines they can, and create the bandwidth, and the receivers, and have laptops. There is simply no excuse. And you must therefore think that there must be some political agenda to that.

Picking up on Allan's point and the point from the back, from the African Centre, on child soldiers. Let me make it clear I work for a global news organisation on a global channel. We have to think of the law in every country that we broadcast to. And if it was the law in Sierra Leone or Liberia that no child soldiers can be shown on television we would not show them because we would be violating that law in that national sovereign country. In the same way we have to recognise that we take legal advice when there are court cases about how far we can go because we are broadcasting essentially as a national broadcaster. When we are broadcasting from London, if it is unlawful to broadcast we wouldn't do it.

There is a tone here about only broadcasting for Western audiences. I think it is fair to say - and I have been working now for an international news channel

- we have gone from 5 million to 270 million audience in seven years. I worked for Channel 4 News here for 14 years, I think this is an evolving phenomenon and an evolving challenge where a lot more work has to be done where we have to be always sensitive to the Arab world, to the Latin Americans, not just the Muslims but the radical side of it as well.

We went through this in the war. You may judge everything by the 10 o'clock news in the evening which is obviously focused towards a British audience. But it is a real challenge. It is an exciting and a daunting challenge. I don't want you going away thinking that we do not take this seriously. It is something we anguish about by the hour and by the day. But you have got to understand that there is an interesting phenomenon out there, it is very easy for people in seminars like this or forums like this to say 'the imperial Western press'.

In America, for example, we discovered there is an incredibly audience for BBC World television. We don't actually have distribution there. So many Americans are fed up with American television. We don't have distribution because we haven't actually got a commercial channel, and actually a deal fell down last year when Viacom in a fire sale sold off one of their channels and it went to General Electric, who are NBC and they didn't want to have a deal with the BBC.

We reckon that there are millions of people who actively come to us and say 'we want you, why can't we get you'. We face this everywhere in the world. After all, like all of you I'm sure, whether you are on the website or on the radio there is a promiscuous demand for information and news wherever you are. It can be on a website. It can be on your Blackberry or anywhere where you have a form of delivery.

You may say this is self-serving. But what we are finding in places like the Gulf, people who watch al-Jazeera, al-Arabya and Abu Dhabi television and Kuwait television also go grazing, and they actually go to the BBC because they say they want to find out how it really is happening.

Now, you may think that is me saying that. But that is the anecdotal evidence we are beginning to get even though the radicals in the Middle East who are watching al-Manar television - which is Hezbollah television - who are watching al-Hayat television or the Palestinian or Egyptian television. They are getting a certain understanding of the more radical ways of interpretation of news. But then they are turning to get a different view of the news. There is a very different matrix out there so don't view it in a simplistic way.

I am intrigued by what you said about my analysis and maybe we need to have another longer discussion. The great thing about something like this is that I can try an idea out on you and see how many people come back. Clearly

you want to take issue with me. If we went into the business of rolling news and headline news we would be here for another two hours and I am happy to engage in that discussion. But it is perhaps something better to do at City University.

I went from a one hour programme, Channel 4 News, with an audience of about 1 million, where we developed it from an audience of zero in 1983, and it is now just as successful as when I left it 7 years ago and perhaps more so. But I don't feel I am making a journalistic compromise now by being on a rolling news channel. It is a different kind of journalism. The great challenge is to put the analytical skills that go into a one-hour programme into a half-hour time frame depending on how long people watch for.

And there is one final thing about DfID; about how to develop media. And I speak as someone appointed as an independent Governor for the Westminster Foundation for Democracy which gets 4.1 million of government money.

I think there is a danger of taking the wrong track here. I have to be in Jordan at the weekend at the World Economic Forum Summit. And one thing that is coming in loud and clear from the Arab world with the greater Middle East initiative going to be launched, or given more flesh, at the G8 summit in a few weeks, is that you may actually get political reform, however it is defined or worded, by economic change. Not by direct political reform or necessarily through the media. In other words, loosening up the economy and privatising more of it. That is a sense I keep getting from the Arab world, even though we are in the first months of this greater Middle East initiative whether it be the British or the American or the G8 initiative. Maybe when you ask how to develop a media it may not happen quite as easily as asking that question might suggest.

End.