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Special Issue: The Evolution of Diplomacy
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Introduction/Editorial

Charting the exponential growth in interest and research on public diplomacy in 2011, Jan Melissen argued that 'The debate on public diplomacy now dominates the research agendas in diplomatic studies':

> Diplomacy now is evolving at a much faster rate than in the second half of the twentieth century. It is no longer a stiff waltz among states alone, but a jazzy dance of colourful coalitions, and public diplomacy is at the heart of its current rebooting. (Melissen 2011: 1,2)

Central to this argument was the claim that approaching diplomatic practice from the perspective of public diplomacy, in contrast to simply adding public diplomacy to existing diplomatic processes, could point toward an 'upgrade' of diplomacy as a whole. Such an upgrade or 'rebooting is necessary largely because of the revolution in communications that has taken place in the early twenty-first century. Diplomacy needs to adapt to a radically different global environment where states no longer entirely set the agendas for interaction (Pamment 2013: 1,2; Zaharna 2014). Empowered by connectivity and innumerable news sources, public opinion was declared to be the 'second' or perhaps the 'only global superpower' (Tyler 2013; Adams 2014). Others countered that while diplomacy was inevitably adapting to this new demanding environment with expanded outreach activities, its core purpose of maintaining peaceful relations between states remained. Referring to the Iran nuclear deal of 2015, Philip Seib pointed out that the successful, old-style, behind-closed-doors negotiations by state-appointed diplomats were followed by an avalanche of tweeting by the respective parties, subsequently re-tweeted and discussed by an avid public around the world. Old and new diplomacy therefore combined as practitioners demonstrated new-found skills in both realms to secure and then promote the breakthrough (Seib 2016: 121).

It is therefore a commonplace to say that diplomacy has been evolving in response to a changing context of operation, and that public diplomacy is an intricate part of that evolution, whether as a new tool or as a 'child' outgrowing the 'parent'. Much of this debate among diplomatic studies professionals and practitioners is still conducted under the assumption that the nation-state will continue to function as the deciding factor in global relations. The emphasis lies on how the state must adapt its array of capabilities to cope in a speeded-up process of complex and sometimes contradictory agenda-setting. Publics and civil organizations may force specific issues onto the front (web)pages, but only states command the authority to settle them or let them simmer. In other words, diplomacy may be evolving, but international politics – the structure in which diplomacy functions and which it attempts to keeps oiled – at its essence,

surprisingly, does not. A 'methodological territorialism' necessarily keeps the state as the anchor for the whole disciplinary edifice of diplomatic studies, much as it continues to do so for IR (Scholte 2000: 58).

The state as the defining legal and political decision-making unit is of course not immune to pressures from above and, especially, below. As Neumann points out in his essay here, 'hybridized diplomacy' mixing state and non-state practitioners is fast becoming the new norm of diplomatic process. The reaction of cities to the challenge of climate change, in an era when states have largely failed in their responsibility to craft a coherent and consistent policy response, is because 'cities define themselves in part by their connectedness rather than their sovereignty'. This greater flexibility (despite ultimately still being hemmed in by state authority) has led to the coining of 'diplomacity' as the next wave of diplomatic evolution that alters both agency *and* structure from below (Khanna 2016: 60; Acuto 2013). City diplomacy is in many ways a continuation of what Hocking analyzed some years ago as paradiplomacy: the increasing 'localization' of international relations and resulting multilevel forms of governance involving state and sub-state units, not necessarily in harmonious coordination (Hocking 1993). As Ferguson puts it in a recent commentary on connectedness through history, 'can a networked world have order?' His answer is pessimistic (Ferguson 2017: 395).

All may not be lost. Increasing connectedness can also lead to an increased ability to combine the results of scientific progress and focus attention on global problems that are beyond the solution capabilities of the nation-state. Using the dense transatlantic network of knowledge-producing institutions as the ideal type, Paar-Jakli posits the view that these forms of intense science diplomacy act as 'generators and disseminators of knowledge that have the capacity to bridge global divides. The density of interactions and interdependence exhibited in the transatlantic region could therefore be a positive harbinger for global progress (Paar-Jakli 2014: 4).

In this vein, any talk of the evolution of diplomacy also needs to take into account its antithesis, antidiplomacy (Cornago 2013). First floated as a concept by Martin Wight in the late 1950s, it referred for him to the revolutionary drive to overcome the limitations of the nation-state to create a Kantian, republican, post-state space of peace (Wight 1991). Antidiplomacy is therefore the subvention of the need for diplomacy, the overcoming of the divisions that sustain diplomacy through the triumph of transcending, utopian identities. Der Derian, dating the first appearance of this phenomenon to the boundless ideals of the French revolution, outlined it as follows: 'the purpose of diplomacy is to *mediate* estranged relations; anti-diplomacy's aim is to transcend *all* estranged relations' (Der Derian 1987: 136). While others have used antidiplomacy to refer to practices that undermine or deliberately subvert diplomatic culture (Wiseman 2011), the line taken by Wight and especially Der Derian is more radical in its implications, pointing to it as 'creative destruction' whereby diplomacy unleashes the forces that may eventually undermine it (cf. Schumpeter 1942).

For this special issue on the evolution of diplomacy, Iver Neumann leads off with a discussion of diplomacy as 'an emergent institution shaped by its social and material environment' and which has been through a series of evolutionary 'tipping points' through history. With this providning the foundation for the rest of the issue, the subsequent essays represent two distinct outlooks. Pigman, La Cour, Pamment, and Wong and Li follow in Neumann's path by providing accounts of how the practice of diplomacy has been adapted to changing circumstances over time. Pigman charts three major transformations of trade diplomacy through history, presenting an argument of how its effectiveness can be improved. La Cour examines the changing interpretation of 'the public' in the public diplomacy positions of Woodrow Wilson, Harold Nicolson, Henry Kissinger and Joseph Nye through the twentieth century, during which the public morphs from passive recipient to active participant. Pamment and Wong and Li investigate how the public diplomacy apparatuses of Britain and China respectively went through major self-assessments in the 1990s and 2000s in order to identify what should be achieved and with what means. Pamment follows the modernizing elements in the Foreign Office who looked to use public diplomacy to achieve a greater trans-governmental interconnectedness with other departments for the sake of a more effective British diplomacy as a whole. Wong and Li identify the significant shift in Chinese public diplomacy, away from bonanza mega-events and more toward projecting 'world order with Chinese characteristics' through a more prominent international role for think tanks and foreign policy institutes. For Pigman, Pamment, Wong and Li, and to an extent La Cour, the focus is on the search for greater effectiveness in (public) diplomacy on the part of state actors. In contrast, the other two essays identify pitfalls in the diplomatic discourse. For Jezierska and Towns this refers to the nation-branding exercise of 'Progressive Sweden' as a post-feminist utopia, in doing so eliding the social struggles that took place to secure the rights that could justify such a positive image. Cornago takes a theoretical step further by highlighting the significance of 'diplomatic incidents', usually passed off as anomalies in the traditional literature, but which in fact expose the constant re-negotiation of diplomacy as a set of norms used to mediate between state sovereignties.

Collectively, these articles provide a useful discussion on the question of evolution as a relevant concept for the study of (public) diplomacy. On the one hand they cover the recognition of practitioners of the need for improvement: the message needs to be clearer, better presented, distributed, and coordinated, and the participants all need to know the relevance of their actions and behavior for reaching the identified goals. Evolving is closely related to bringing diplomacy in line with the communicative and coordination potential of public diplomacy. On the other, evolution means instead recognition of the pitfalls, lacunae, and silences that perpetuate (public) diplomacy but which are often passed over in the drive for ever-more-effective techniques. Both are valid responses to the issue of evolution, even if they lead in quite different directions, with quite different methods and goals.

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