Mapping Boundaries in Diplomacy’s Public Dimension

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Summary

Radical changes in diplomacy’s global environment challenge traditional categories in diplomacy’s study and practice. The “foreign” and “domestic” divide is blurred beyond easy recognition. Public diplomacy is no longer a separate instrument of diplomacy. The term marginalizes a public dimension that is now central in diplomatic practice. This article examines four boundaries that both separate and connect: (1) a distinction between diplomacy and foreign policy that benefits diplomacy studies and clarifies choices in practice; (2) a framework for diplomacy’s public dimension that connects types of diplomatic actors with process variables; (3) a separation between diplomacy and civil society that distinguishes diplomacy from other relationships between groups; and (4) characteristics of diplomacy and governance that explain how they differ from other political and social categories. Diplomatic and governance actors are categorized in trans-governmental and polylateral networks. Civil society and private sector actors are categorized in cosmopolitan and private governance networks.

Keywords
diplomacy – public diplomacy – civil society – governance – polylateralism

Introduction

‘How long is the coastline of Britain?’ ‘It depends’ is the answer. In his reflections on mapping the past, historian John Lewis Gaddis draws on this question,
which was famously asked by meteorologist Lewis Richardson. The length of Britain’s coastline varies according to whether one measures in miles, metres or microns. The smaller the unit of measurement, the greater the number of irregularities measured. There is, of course, a finite Britain that does not vary based on our observations, but there is no single correct map. Our maps reflect our purposes. They help us to distill from past and present experiences. They represent complexities that, taken literally, would overwhelm.¹ In diplomacy, boundaries, beginnings and patterns are maps that help us separate and connect our perceptions of reality.²

Boundaries map analytical distinctions and prompt interesting questions in conceptual and physical spaces. Conceptually, we create boundaries between diplomacy and other forms of communication between groups. We establish boundaries between government and civil society, and between diplomacy and other instruments of power. In diplomacy’s public dimension, we distinguish between what people say and what they do, between their ideas and actions, and we draw inferences from whether or not they are consistent. We use boundaries to map differences between public diplomacy and soft power and between public diplomacy and nation-branding. Boundaries can change. Should there be a boundary, we might ask, that distinguishes ‘public diplomacy’ from what is left when the modifier ‘public’ is removed? We also create boundaries between scholarship and practice.

Physical space, which is understood to include virtual space, is where diplomacy occurs as a concrete activity in particular places. In physical space, we create boundaries between categories of actors. We speak of state and non-state actors. We differentiate between ambassadors and international broadcasters. We distinguish between organizations, tools and methods. We can treat cultural diplomacy as a subset of public diplomacy or a separate category of diplomatic practice. Some in the United States still distinguish between

² This article focuses on boundaries. In contrast, beginnings map distinctions marked by starts and stops in historical time. Like boundaries, beginnings are not precise. Lines usually blur. History is not distributed in airtight containers. Beginnings are useful, however, because they signify sequential changes in diplomacy’s political and social contexts, communication technologies, and diplomatic tools and methods. Beginnings also map changes in the language and institutions of diplomacy. Patterns are maps that help us understand characteristics in diplomacy that occur with some regularity. They are continuities that provide a reasonable basis for generalizations about the past and modest expectations about the future. Beginnings and patterns in diplomacy’s public dimension will be addressed in subsequent research.
public diplomacy and public affairs. In writing about diplomacy and physical space, Iver Neumann finds considerable durability in diplomacy’s generic meaning and core tasks, but wide variety in the political and social contexts that surround diplomacy and in the places ‘where diplomacy is on display’. We need boundaries to delineate, connect and compare these places. ‘The boundaries may vary over time and they may occasionally be contested’, Neumann argues, ‘but the principle of delineation is of the essence’. Concepts help us to distinguish activities in physical space. Activities in physical space illuminate workable concepts.

Some may argue that a long history of scholarship and practice has made the boundary between what diplomacy is, and what it is not, abundantly clear. Current trends suggest otherwise. Analysts of digital diplomacy ask whether the different rules and methods that diplomatic actors use in digital space challenge ‘what it means to perform diplomacy’. Do they extend the bounds of diplomacy to where they ‘overlap so significantly with other foreign policy goals that they render the practices of diplomacy obsolete?’ The dominant framework of the US State Department’s 2015 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR), which makes no distinction between diplomacy and public diplomacy, rests on ‘community diplomacy’, ‘public–private partnerships’ and ‘strategic dialogues with civil society organizations’. What you get in the QDDR, Robin Brown observes, ‘is diplomacy as the construction of a civil society centered model of governance’. He adds that it creates a problem for diplomatic studies and international relations when ‘civil society is the chosen instrument of foreign policy’. What has variously been called ‘bottom–up diplomacy’ or ‘societal diplomacy’ adds to the lack of conceptual clarity. Geoffrey Wiseman describes such recent approaches as ‘diplomacy as social practice’. They risk taking diplomacy beyond a bounded concept and

4 Taylor Owen, Disruptive Power: The Crisis of the State in the Digital Age (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 153 and 166-167. Among many examples, Owen cites the disconnect between the US State Department’s support for circumvention tools by online civil-society activists and the massive surveillance programmes of US intelligence services.
instrument to a domain where ‘we’re all diplomats’ and all global interaction is diplomacy.6

Boundaries are essential in determining what is analytically and pragmatically significant. However, hard boundaries are rare. Concepts often overlap, and lines blur between categories of practice. For example, political leaders move between roles as governance and diplomatic actors, and there are plenty of grays at the edges of diplomacy and civil society. A bright line distinction between ‘foreign’ and ‘domestic’ existed at the high-water mark of the state system, but this distinction was fuzzy in the Middle Ages, and it is losing salience in today’s globalization. Nevertheless, bounded distinctions are possible and necessary. As Samuel Johnson observed, although dusk and dawn lack clarity, we have no trouble distinguishing between night and day.7

This article examines new complexities in diplomacy by looking at four boundaries: (1) a distinction between diplomacy and foreign policy; (2) a framework for diplomacy’s public dimension; (3) a separation between diplomacy and civil society; and (4) differences between diplomacy and governance.

**Diplomacy and Foreign Policy**

Diplomacy, in Paul Sharp’s classic formulation, is an essential part of human existence. People live in groups and value ‘conditions of separateness’. At the same time, they value relationships between groups, and ‘diplomacy develops to manage these relations’. This plurality of groups, Sharp argues, leads to the ‘ideas and arguments by which people make sense of their lives both

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to themselves and to others’. When groups enter into relationships, they compete, collaborate and engage in mixtures of the two. Diplomats act as agents on behalf of groups and seek to bridge gaps between them. Reduced to fundamentals, diplomacy’s core functions are communication and representation. These generic concepts are timeless.

Scholars often conflate the terms diplomacy and foreign policy. Nevertheless, there are important reasons to distinguish between them. Diplomacy is instrumental; a means to an end. Foreign policy, although open to a variety of interpretations, is best understood as a frame for ends to be achieved. Foreign policy has ‘too many different meanings’, US Ambassador George Kennan lamented, as he struggled with the concept in his lectures at the US National War College in 1947—lectures that influenced an academic curriculum for generations of soldiers and diplomats. For Kennan, foreign policy is ‘a matter of forethought and of planning, a blueprint of future action in the foreign field related to certain definite objectives, and, if it is to be healthy, related to the means at hand’. Diplomacy is a means, which he described as a ‘measure short of war’. It is not ‘in a compartment by itself’. Rather, diplomacy embraces all other measures short of war, which Kennan categorized as economic, psychological and political. To be effective, these measures must be used as instruments to achieve foreign policy objectives in accordance with a strategy or blueprint for action.

A clear boundary between diplomacy and foreign policy benefits scholars and practitioners. For scholars, as Pauline Kerr and Geoffrey Wiseman point out, ‘the distinction is, arguably, a minimum condition for the growth of


diplomatic studies as a field'. Its neglect is one reason why diplomacy studies fare poorly in many international relations departments. The number of diplomacy scholars is growing, however, and they have allies in national security studies, where diplomacy has long been treated instrumentally in courses on strategy. For practitioners, separating diplomacy from policy makes it easier to set priorities and to make cost/benefit choices among political, economic and military instruments available to achieve policy goals. Political leaders can use diplomacy, foreign aid, trade, economic sanctions, military force and other tools separately or in combination. Diplomacy is an important tool on its own; it also has unique cross-cutting applications to the other instruments of power. Foreign aid and economic sanctions, for example, require diplomacy to succeed. Successful diplomacy, in contrast, does not necessarily entail foreign aid or sanctions.

**Diplomacy’s Public Dimension**

Diplomacy has always had a public dimension. Raymond Cohen traces the evolution of diplomacy from the third millennium BCE and finds that there is nothing new about public and cultural diplomacy. Assyrian leader Rabshakeh’s appeal to the people of Jerusalem to surrender during the siege of the city in 701 BCE ‘is an early example of public diplomacy’. Richard Arndt contends similarly that cultural diplomacy has been ‘the first resort of kings’ since the Bronze Age. Exchanges ‘had political purpose’ and leaders ‘manipulated powerful cultural symbols’. Egyptians and Greeks took hostages in war, not only

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as treaty guarantees in peacetime, but also as cultural interpreters and conveyors of cross-cultural learning.

Diplomacy evolved as its geopolitical contexts changed. Technologies that transformed societies transformed diplomatic practice. Diplomatic actors and institutions adapted to new environments, as did their rules and norms. Tools and methods were invented and reinvented. Nevertheless, as the editors of the *Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy* observe, diplomacy’s ‘core ingredients’ do not vary, although the ways in which they ‘express themselves can be overshadowed by a myriad of contextual factors, both structural and situational’.

One of these core ingredients is ‘public diplomacy’, the historically popular framing term for diplomacy’s public dimension. Today, public diplomacy is no longer a separate instrument of diplomacy. As a term and concept, public diplomacy marginalizes a public dimension that is now central in diplomatic practice.

Is it possible to create a workable definition and conceptual model for diplomacy’s public dimension? Given a lack of consensus among scholars and practitioners, it is wise to be cautious. Contested issues include diplomacy’s methods, tools, institutions, and the identities and roles of diplomatic actors. A stunning variety of definitions frame public diplomacy at different levels of abstraction. If the level of abstraction is too high, definitions lack relevance and the variables needed for successful research and practice. Definitions such as ‘winning hearts and minds’ or ‘a government’s engagement with people’ are problematic for these reasons. Alternatively, low levels of abstraction can oversimplify. Definitions that limit public diplomacy to ‘building a positive image of one’s country’ or ‘explaining ourselves to the world’ do not capture other important elements in the field, however valuable these concepts may be as partial frames.

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This article’s definition of diplomacy’s public dimension seeks to be operationally useful and to establish boundaries intended to limit the field. It combines categories of diplomatic actors with critical process variables. It assumes that public diplomacy in the twentieth century was primarily a state-based instrument used by foreign ministries, embassies and government organizations to persuade and engage foreign publics for the purpose of influencing their governments. Today, diplomacy’s public dimension is about instruments used by states, associations of states, and some sub-state and non-state actors to understand cultures, attitudes, and behaviour; build and manage relationships; and influence thoughts and mobilize actions to advance their interests and values.17 In mapping this definition in a conceptual model for ‘complex diplomacy’,18 two boundaries are critical: (1) between diplomacy and civil society; and (2) between diplomacy and governance.

Diplomacy and Civil Society

The concept that groups use diplomacy to manage relations with other groups through communication and representation is not complicated. Diplomacy, however, is far from the only way in which groups interact. The context of their relations constantly changes, and groups differ greatly in their identities, characteristics, fears and desires. Diplomacy’s complexity lies in its variety of institutions, tools and methods—and their uses in different contexts over time. A key issue in this complexity is the ambiguous boundary between diplomacy and other categories of relationships between groups. Foundations, universities, media organizations, religions, transnational activists, humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs), corporations, powerful individuals, and many other civil society and private-sector actors engage in cross-border relationships. They participate in global networks that ‘embrace almost every level of organization, from the village community to global summits; and almost

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18 Pauline Kerr and Geoffrey Wiseman used ‘complex diplomacy’ as a new framing term for diplomacy’s study and practice. In their view, because of many factors, ‘including, notably, globalization and instantly available information—diplomacy has taken on a complexity never before seen‘; see Kerr and Wiseman (eds), Diplomacy in a Globalizing World, p. 343.
every level of public life, from the provision of micro-credit and the delivery of paramedical assistance, to environmental and human rights norm promotion and activism.\textsuperscript{19} Clearly, all of this activity is not diplomacy. Accordingly, two questions arise. Where does diplomacy end and civil society begin? When and how do civil-society actors engage in diplomacy?\textsuperscript{20}

To find answers, it helps to think of boundaries as maps that both separate and connect. Returning to Samuel Johnson’s metaphor, the basic goals of diplomatic actors and most civil-society actors differ like night and day. Here, boundaries serve to separate. Global corporations seek primarily to earn profits and satisfy shareholders. Universities, although increasingly entrepreneurial in practice, are committed to teaching and learning. News organizations exist to gather and report news and in some cases to entertain. Transnational activists pursue an array of relatively narrow purposes—from solving global problems, advocating global norms and fostering identity politics, to engaging in crime, corruption and political violence. Corporate and civil-society actors are accountable primarily to the private interests of their shareholders, members, supporters and funding sources.

In contrast, diplomatic actors are accountable to the public interests of groups as a whole. They represent a group’s collective interests rather than the interests of sectors or organizations within groups. Realists think of public interests in terms of power and the interests of states. Constructivists, J. Samuel Barkin argues, define public interests as socially constructed political understandings, rules, norms and goals that are arrived at collectively through ideas and discourse. Despite many differences, Barkin notes that these approaches have important similarities. Both agree that the public interest refers to what is held in common for groups as a whole. For both, public interests are historically contingent; groups and their understandings change over time. Realists and constructivists also view public interests as the collective interests of organized political groups other than states.\textsuperscript{21} Firms and most civil-society actors operate in sectoral domains—for example, markets, journalism, religion, issue-based activism, corruption and crime. These actors often influence public interests, but they represent private interests. Some

\textsuperscript{19} Cooper, Heine and Thakur (eds), \textit{The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy}, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{20} For the sake of convenience, I use the term ‘civil society’ broadly here to include firms and other private-sector economic actors. I recognize the conventional distinction between civil society and the private sector, and elsewhere I treat private firms and varieties of non-government organizations as distinguishable categories of actors.

diplomats specialize in activities relevant to these domains. They may focus on commerce and trade agreements. Others concentrate on foreign assistance, energy, or environmental issues. When they do, they are acting on behalf of their group’s public interests.

Relationships between diplomacy and civil society also demonstrate, however, that the boundary between them, like dusk and dawn, is a map that connects. For example, diplomatic actors routinely partner with civil-society actors to manage projects and activities. Consider these partnerships in US practice. Government-funded civil-society organizations manage most educational and cultural exchanges. Foreign assistance, democratization and nation-building activities are implemented through contracts with NGOs. Peace Corps volunteers are private citizens who go abroad under US government sponsorship. Corporate benefactors provide financial support for US pavilions in world expos and major cultural events. The US military has long had a collaborative relationship with Hollywood.22 Despite fundamental differences between diplomacy and civil society, the boundary between them is porous. Increasingly, there is more diplomacy in civil society and more civil society in diplomacy.

Diplomats also import norms and methods of practice from civil society. This gives rise to standards, sometimes called ‘firewalls’, for how they are treated in diplomatic practice. Educational norms, for example, are critical in academic exchanges. Fulbright scholarships are awarded through a peer review process that selects scholars on the basis of academic merit, not their policy or partisan preferences. Artistic quality is a key consideration in cultural exchanges. Many diplomats value ideal speech norms in their emphasis on listening and dialogue—norms that give priority to reasoned argument, openness and shared knowledge.23

Government broadcasters rely on journalistic norms and methods. The principles of journalism, embedded in legislation and decades of practice, shield US news broadcasts from interference by policy-makers.24 Democracy

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23 On ideal speech and discourse norms, see Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 322-328 and 359-366. For thinking that accepts the importance of deliberation but also argues that there is much in politics (and diplomacy) that is ‘pervasively non-deliberative’, see Michael Walzer’s essay ‘Deliberation, and What Else?’, in David Miller (ed.), *Thinking Politically: Essays in Political Theory—Michael Walzer* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 134-146.

24 The Voice of America’s Charter states: ‘VOA will serve as a consistently reliable and authoritative source of news. VOA news will be accurate, objective, and comprehensive’; see
promoters seek ‘appropriate caution and line-drawing’ in grants to protect their projects from undue foreign policy influence. A history of conflict between ‘public affairs’ and ‘information operations’ in the US military is about more than contested bureaucratic turf. Public affairs officers work to safeguard the credibility that is essential in successful military–media relations from being undermined by association with the deceptive information operations that are necessary in war. Diplomats and soldiers also use political campaign and corporate advertising strategies. Firewalls shape the use of civil society’s norms and methods in government. Other firewalls seek to ‘protect’ civil society from intrusions by government. Until recently, legislation barred the dissemination of public diplomacy materials within the United States to ensure that they would not compete with commercial media, be used for partisan purposes, or be used as propaganda for American citizens.

These connections between diplomacy and civil society exist on a larger canvas of strategic calculations. Political leaders base their goals and decisions on collective group interests and values, public emotions, and perceptions of threats and opportunities. Diplomats employ civil society’s norms and methods to strengthen diplomacy as a means to achieve these goals and support these decisions. Funding priorities in educational exchanges turn primarily on political and economic considerations, not the academic merit of scholars.


26 For a discussion of these and related issues, see Christopher Paul, Strategic Communication: Origins, Concepts and Current Debates (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011).


Political objectives and market share, not journalistic principles, drive audience, language and media choices in international broadcasting. Diplomacy practitioners sometimes invoke civil society’s norms and methods in designing organizational structures. They also use them occasionally to limit oversight of their administrative practices by policy-makers, lawmakers and advisory panels. These norms and methods serve pragmatic purposes in advancing strategic goals.

With the boundary between diplomacy and civil society both separating and connecting, there is no easy answer to the question of ‘where does diplomacy end and civil society begin?’ Nevertheless, it is important to maintain a category distinction between diplomatic actors and most civil-society actors. Their fundamental goals are different. It is useful also to think of the boundary as space where increasingly complex cooperative and competitive interactions occur.

These distinctions do not address whether some civil-society actors engage in diplomacy, not as partners with government practitioners, but as autonomous diplomatic actors. Some scholars say no. Diplomats must counter some civil-society actors and give voice to others, they argue, but give ‘neither a vote nor a veto to them: for that would be an abdication of responsibility to govern on behalf of all citizens’.30

Other scholars say yes. ‘Transnational diplomacy’, Bertrand Badie asserts, ‘can be defined as exclusively conducted by transnational actors—that is, as sovereignty-free actors, such as religious players, economic players, or NGOs’;31 or, as Geoffrey Pigman contends, ‘private firms’, ‘civil society diplomatic actors’, and ‘eminent person diplomats’, meaning private individuals who perform diplomatic acts, ‘engage in diplomatic representation and communication with other actors directly.’32

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29 US broadcasters have used their journalism firewall as a shield against intrusion into their management decisions. US Senator J. William Fulbright preferred to locate educational exchanges in the Department of State than in the US Information Agency, because ‘there is no room and there must not be any room, for an interpretation of these programs as propaganda’; quoted in Lois W. Roth, ‘Public Diplomacy: 1952-1977’, The Fletcher Forum, vol. 8, no. 2 (summer 1984), p. 371.

30 Cooper, Heine and Thakur (eds), The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy, p. 11.


Those who close the door to an autonomous role for civil-society actors in diplomacy draw the line too narrowly. Globalization and power diffusion from states to non-state actors mean that some civil-society actors are now global governance actors on some issues. The Internet Corporation on Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), a not-for-profit corporation chartered in California, is a multi-stakeholder public–private organization that provides global governance for significant internet functions. These include the internet’s global interoperability, technical standards, and domain names and addresses. Médecins Sans Frontières, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS provide health care and emergency services that states and international organizations are unable to provide. These civil-society actors provide global governance in important policy arenas. Governments and other stakeholders regard them as legitimate governance actors, and because they engage in core diplomatic activities of communication and representation with states, firms and other groups, they can also be viewed as diplomatic actors.

However, those who make expansive claims that any civil-society actor or private firm with large size and global reach is a diplomatic actor draw the line too broadly; nor are they diplomatic actors because they ‘do diplomat-like things’, such as negotiate with governments and NGOs, establish corporate missions in global cities and ‘engage in public diplomacy’. To see diplomacy everywhere diminishes its meaning. Analysis that logically frames Microsoft, Citigroup, Greenpeace, the National Rifle Association, the International Studies Association and the World Council of Churches as autonomous diplomatic actors is too sweeping. This view pays insufficient attention to the intentions of such actors and to whether their activities and goals serve governance and public interests rather than private interests. It fails to distinguish between diplomacy as a political activity that seeks ‘to affect what the body politic as a
whole does or does not do and the many other kinds of activity that create connections between groups.

Diplomacy and Governance

A second critical mapping criterion in diplomacy’s public dimension is governance, understood broadly as the rules, norms and institutions that shape a group’s shared activities. Governance helps us understand diplomacy’s basic characteristics and distinguish it from other categories of connections between groups. People and groups also connect in global markets. Yet markets do not address the broad range of collective human needs and wants at global or regional levels any more than they do within states. People connect globally through mediated movements of ideas and knowledge. Without structures, however, they do so in the public sphere, which Jürgen Habermas identifies as space between government and private institutions in which language and discourse dominate. Ideas and knowledge apart from institutions are, well, ideas and knowledge. They can provide utopian or dystopian visions of what might be. They can be beneficial or destructive in influencing political outcomes, but they are insufficient in themselves for an understanding of diplomacy’s public dimension.

Robert Keohane defines governance as ‘the processes and institutions, both formal and informal, that guide and restrain the collective activities of a group’. Government is the subset of governance ‘that acts with authority and creates formal obligations’. Both governance and government entail rules and norms that regulate and steer human collectivities. Governance, however, is more encompassing. State governments, sub-units of states, and intergovernmental organizations provide governance. Governance also occurs through the

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35 Barkin, *Realist Constructivism*, p. 68.
activities of some non-state actors acting independently or in partnership with governments. State governments have ‘formal’ authority and provide governance through command and control. Non-state actors achieve governance through ‘informal’ networks of interdependence that involve steering and collaboration. Governance encompasses the efforts of non-state actors to supply global public goods and address collective problems that exceed the capacity of states and state-based international organizations.

Diplomacy, in contrast to governance, refers to the communication and representation activities through which governance actors manage their relationships and achieve governance-related outcomes. Diplomacy is instrumental in the context of governance. The tools of negotiating, persuading and engaging—and an increasingly central public dimension—are as relevant in the diplomacy of non-state governance actors as in the diplomacy of states. A boundary between diplomacy and governance therefore helps to determine what diplomacy is. It differs from the boundary between diplomacy and civil society, which helps to determine what diplomacy is not.

Governance and diplomacy are similar in that they are political activities through which human beings seek to understand and master their circumstances. There is great variety, however, in their historically contingent structures and processes. At the height of the Westphalian state system, there were night and day differences in their expression at national and international levels. As Thomas G. Weiss puts it, at the national level we had ‘governance plus government’; at the international level we had ‘governance minus government’.39 Diplomacy occurred as an instrument used by sovereign governments in their interactions beyond governmental frontiers. These interactions could produce limited international governance through treaty-based rules and norms of behaviour. By and large, governance and diplomacy were separated by a hard foreign/domestic divide. Today, globalization and localization are undermining this divide. The basis for a distinction between governance and diplomacy continues, but now their historical separation is giving way to many emerging connections. As with the boundary between diplomacy and civil society, dusk and dawn describe an increasingly porous boundary between governance and diplomacy.

Polycentric Governance and Polylateral Diplomacy

Coordinated conferences at Wilton Park in the United Kingdom and the Asia–Pacific College of Diplomacy in Australia in 2006 and the publication of the

conference papers focused attention on a conceptual connection between diplomacy and global governance.\textsuperscript{40} In a key essay, Jan Aart Scholte developed the ideas of \textit{polycentric governance} and de-centred social geography. He portrayed them as ways to understand new forms of governance and their consequences for what he called a ‘new diplomacy’.

Scholte identified multi-level sources of governance in concurrent processes of globalization, regionalization and localization. These processes of ‘respacialization’ combine with the persistence of country geographic domains and associated state governments to create ‘an emergent polycentric mode of governance’. Governance entities include local, national, regional and global sites of regulation and steering, as well as ‘hybrid public–private constructions’ across ‘public and private sectors’. Because diplomacy ‘has always involved the representation of one governance actor \textit{vis-à-vis} others in world politics’, there are complex consequences when many governance actors have overlapping interrelations. The characteristics of this ‘new diplomacy’, Scholte argued, include (1) greater diversity in the actors who perform diplomatic functions; (2) increases in the volume, speed and kinds of communication; (3) engagement in public diplomacy by global, regional, sub-state and non-state actors; (4) diplomats with hybrid identities; and (5) interpenetrating negotiations within and between groups.\textsuperscript{41}

What should we call this emerging diplomacy in which new actors and diplomatic practices do not fit easily in traditional categories of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy between states? Scholte’s term ‘polycentric’ works as a descriptor for new actors in ‘respacialized’ governance. Polycentric is a less suitable modifier, however, for diplomacy as a practice that bridges separation \textit{between} these actors. Scholars have adopted alternative labels: ‘network diplomacy’;\textsuperscript{42} ‘catalytic diplomacy’;\textsuperscript{43} ‘polylateralism’;\textsuperscript{44} and ‘integrative

\textsuperscript{40} Andrew F. Cooper, Brian Hocking and William Maley (eds), \textit{Global Governance and Diplomacy: Worlds Apart?} (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

\textsuperscript{41} Jan Aart Scholte, ‘From Government to Governance: Transition to a New Diplomacy’, in Cooper, Hocking and Maley (eds), \textit{Global Governance and Diplomacy}, pp. 39-60.

\textsuperscript{42} Jorge Heine, ‘From Club to Network Diplomacy’, in Cooper, Hocking and Maley (eds), \textit{The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy}, pp. 54-69.


diplomacy’. Each has value, and the scholarship that they represent is at the cutting edge of diplomacy studies. Geoffrey Wiseman’s term ‘polylateralism’ and his definition are particularly helpful. Polylateralism, he argues, is:

The conduct of relations between official entities (such as the state, several states acting together, or a state-based international organization) and at least one unofficial, non-state entity, in which there is a reasonable expectation of systematic relationships, involving some form of reporting, communication, negotiation and representation, but not involving recognition as sovereign, equivalent entities.

Wiseman’s polylateralism is a ‘third dimension’ of diplomacy. It builds naturally from diplomacy’s bilateral and multilateral dimensions between states to one that includes non-state actors in evolving patterns of connection. Importantly, it links their participation to diplomacy’s generic characteristics of communication and representation in relationships that are systematic, not ad hoc.

Given the category distinction between governance and diplomacy, how can we know when actors are operating in one domain or the other? Answers are made difficult by the proliferation of actors and their diverse goals, capacities and constitutive arrangements. Many actors step in and out of governance and diplomacy roles, often frequently, depending on circumstances. On what basis can we claim that non-state actors are using diplomatic means to pursue their own governance agendas or acting as adjuncts to further the policy and diplomatic agendas of governments? When are civil-society actors serving public interests rather than private interests? Variations in the scope and types of issues add to the complexity. In seeking answers, it helps to distinguish between public and private networks. In so doing, we can place actors and their roles in four categories: (1) trans-governmental networks; (2) polylateral

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45 Hocking, Melissen, Riordan and Sharp, Futures for Diplomacy.
47 For an inquiry into the co-existence of governments and non-state actors in diplomacy, see John Robert Kelley, Agency Change: Diplomatic Action Beyond the State (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014). Kelley argues that a ‘diplomacy of status’ construct is giving way to a ‘diplomacy of capabilities’, or a diplomacy of problem-solving. This ‘agency change’ is reflected in the migration of diplomatic power to non-state actors who are recognized more for what they can do than for who they are. See also Teresa La Porte, ‘The Impact of “Intermestic” Non-State Actors on the Conceptual Framework of Public Diplomacy’, The Hague Journal of Diplomacy, vol. 7, no. 3 (2012), pp. 441-458.
networks; (3) cosmopolitan networks; and (4) private governance networks (see Table 1).

**Table 1 Public and private networks**

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<th>Public and Private Networks</th>
<th>Public Governance and Diplomacy Networks</th>
<th>Civil Society and Private Governance Networks</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Trans-governmental Networks—Bilateral, Multilateral</td>
<td>Cosmopolitan Networks</td>
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<td>Polylateral Networks</td>
<td>Private Governance Networks</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Actors</strong></td>
<td>States; associations of states; state-based multilateral organizations; cities; provinces</td>
<td>Transnational activists; global corporations; epistemic communities; professional, religious, media, educational communities; ethnic and racial minorities; tourists; criminal networks</td>
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<td><strong>Roles and Goals</strong></td>
<td>Governance and diplomacy</td>
<td>Corporate, financial and other non-governmental organizations</td>
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<td><strong>Examples</strong></td>
<td>US–China annual strategic dialogue, European Union, UN, Scotland, Quebec, Shanghai, London</td>
<td>Private Governance Networks</td>
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<td>G20, Interpol, World Trade Organization, Basel Committee on Banking Supervision</td>
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<td>Internet Corporation on Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), Médecins Sans Frontières, Bill &amp; Melinda Gates Foundation</td>
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Trans-governmental networks are complex connections among a variety of governmental actors. Despite their great diversity, they divide into two sub-categories: ‘governments as unitary actors’; and ‘governmental actors in public policy networks’.

Governments as unitary actors include states, associations of states, state-based multilateral organizations, and sub-state entities such as cities and provinces. Mexico, the European Union, the United Nations (UN), Shanghai and Catalonia engage in governance and diplomacy as unitary actors. Each has defining core institutions and constitutive legal frameworks. Their leaders and diplomats represent the public interests of citizens in these political entities, and they can be expected to speak with one voice on their citizens’ behalf. They seek to manage relations with other governments and achieve formal (rule-based) and informal (steering) governance outcomes. States are primary in this category. Sovereignty remains a defining characteristic, although its meaning is changing as states reinterpret their identities, degrees of interdependence,

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<td><strong>Cosmopolitan Networks</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Private Governance Networks</strong></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roles and Goals</th>
<th>Shape agendas and frame debates in global public sphere; pressure governments; satisfy shareholders; share beliefs, knowledge and memories; launder money; further professional, social and cultural objectives, etc.</th>
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<td>Governance of economic activity externalities through codes of corporate conduct, process and product standards, transparency in reporting, and private administrative law</td>
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<td>Global Reporting Initiative, Asian Corporate Governance Association, International Association of Toy Industries</td>
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and ‘its use less as a territorially defined barrier, than a bargaining resource for a politics characterized by complex transnational networks’.\textsuperscript{48}

Diplomats who represent states in trans-governmental networks are usually government officials. They communicate with officials in other governments and their citizens through private and public means. Many are members of the diplomatic services of their foreign ministries, but many are not. Increasingly these diplomats are officials from a broad range of civilian and military agencies in ‘whole of government’ diplomacy. For example, diplomatic teams that represent the United States and China in annual strategic and economic dialogues consist of cabinet secretaries, presidential staff and officials from numerous sub-cabinet government departments and agencies, in addition to career diplomats. Some move visibly and easily between governance and diplomatic roles; others are full-time diplomacy professionals.

Diplomats in trans-governmental networks also represent regional associations of states, state-based international organizations and local governments. The European Union has its European External Action Service. UN diplomats engage in multilateral diplomacy. Scotland and Catalonia engage in trans-governmental diplomacy on many issues separately from London and Madrid. City diplomacy is trending as a field of study and practice in a world where more than half of the world’s population now lives in cities.\textsuperscript{49} Cities engage in diplomacy on issues ranging from tourism and investment, to the environment and law enforcement, to hosting sporting events and cultural exhibits. These diplomatic actors seek to advance public interests. Their group identities are conspicuous, and they represent their groups as a whole. They use diplomacy to manage relationships with other governments and their citizens and to achieve bilateral and multilateral governance outcomes.

Non-state actors typically do not participate as independent actors in bilateral and multilateral trans-governmental networks. They often partner with governments through informal or contractual arrangements. Governments hire public relations firms to create and advance communication strategies. They contract with private organizations for diplomatic security services, opinion and media surveys, management of cross-cultural activities, and a broad range of other goods and services. In state-based multilateral networks, non-state actors are usually ‘observers’, or they have ‘consultative status’. Diplomacy

\textsuperscript{48} Keohane, \textit{Power and Governance in a Partially Globalized World}, p. 74 (emphasis in the original).

between states as unitary actors continues to be important, particularly on so-called 'high politics issues' relating to national security and other interests. But these networks of unitary actors now co-exist with increasingly powerful public policy networks and also with polylateral networks in which the independent governance and diplomacy roles of some non-state actors are a defining characteristic.

Public policy networks, a second trans-governmental category, consist of officials, professionals and knowledge experts within governments who address complex technical and regulatory issues. Examples include the G20, Interpol, the World Trade Organization and the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision. Actors in these public policy networks provide governance that is not controlled or closely guided by governments. Their diplomacy occurs in spaces where boundaries are not obvious. They engage in what Brian Hocking calls ‘regulatory diplomacy’.

For Anne-Marie Slaughter, these regulators are ‘the new diplomats’. They are experts in banking, law enforcement, global health, civil aviation, migration, the environment and other domains. They provide technical knowledge, negotiate regulations and monitor compliance, both domestically and internationally. They are government actors who share professional interests. They seek to solve common problems. As officials in sub-units of governments, they ‘engage in direct and autonomous interaction separate from nation-states’. They may represent state interests, but they wear their national identities lightly. It is not easy to know when they are diplomatic actors representing principals, or governance actors creating informal guidelines and formal rules. Non-state actors connect with governmental actors in public policy networks, but, as in networks of unitary actors, they do so as observers and consultants.

It is analytically useful to separate unitary actor and public policy networks, but they also have overlapping tendencies. Governments as unitary actors tend to be more hierarchical and structured. They value secrecy and other characteristics of ‘club diplomacy’. Increasingly, however, their hierarchies are flatter,


52 Robert Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, quoted in Davis Cross, Security Integration in Europe, p. 16.
and their activities are more transparent. Their institutions—presidential and prime ministerial offices, resident embassies and foreign ministries—value command and control less and public–private partnerships more. Public policy networks tend to be more horizontal, less structured, and more transparent and multidirectional. They risk becoming endless conversations among experts without decisions. Nevertheless, they also have hierarchical characteristics and a variety of constitutive arrangements that are contingent on the policy arena in which they exist. As Brian Hocking observes, public policy networks ‘are not an alternative to hierarchy, but different aspects of organizational design and contemporary diplomacy’, which, depending on context, require ‘blends of hierarchical and network forms’.53

*Polylateral networks* are public–private hybrids of state, state-based and autonomous non-state actors. At global, regional, national and local levels, polylateral networks are changing the territorial boundaries of power and reshaping governance and diplomacy. They are intensely pluralistic and less formal than trans-governmental networks. Their nodes include states, associations of states, cities and a variety of civil-society organizations. These actors communicate, cooperate and compete. They manage relationships and address common problems. In these respects, they are similar to trans-governmental networks. A critical difference between polylateral and trans-governmental networks, however, turns on the characteristics and roles of non-state actors.

Non-state actors in polylateral networks are motivated primarily by their own governance and diplomacy agendas. They interact with governments, but in contrast to non-state actors in trans-governmental networks, they are not partners hired to support government initiatives. They are autonomous. In internet governance, for example, ICANN treats actors in the public sector, the private sector and technical experts as peers. These include internet service providers, commercial and business interests, non-profit organizations and most state governments. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS funds health services through a network of governments, civil-society organizations, technical experts, corporations, faith-based organizations, scholars and international agencies. ICANN and the Global Fund are non-state governance actors. They engage in diplomatic relations with states and other non-state actors. They are not equivalent to governments. Nevertheless, they interact as independent entities in ‘systematic relationships’ with governmental actors, a key element in Wiseman’s concept of diplomacy’s third dimension.

Non-state actors in polylateral diplomacy use standard diplomatic practices such as communication, representation and negotiation. They seek to

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53 Hocking, ‘(Mis)Leading Propositions about 21st Century Diplomacy’, p. 82.
influence other actors and their citizens and constituents. Their legitimacy turns on their expertise, size, effectiveness and ability to achieve outcomes, rather than on legally codified sources of authority. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation—with activities in more than 100 countries and more than US$ 40 billion in endowed assets—achieves global governance goals in health care with a budget that exceeds the UN’s World Health Organization. *Médecins Sans Frontières* provides emergency medical care in more than 70 countries and engages in ‘speaking out’ campaigns on issues such as access to essential medicines. Its tools and methods include conferences, exhibitions and public education projects. These measures are comparable to those used in government public diplomacy.54

Examples of polylateral networks include the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, and the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission.55 Polylateral networks tend to focus on humanitarian and transnational problems whose solutions are beyond the capacity of governments. They share common ground with bilateral and multilateral trans-governmental networks in seeking outcomes that support the public interests of groups as a whole. This critical distinction separates them from cosmopolitan networks and transnational private governance networks.

Cosmopolitan networks connect civil society and private-sector actors whose core political, economic and social goals are categorically different from public governance and diplomacy. These actors contribute to the flow of ideas and knowledge in the global public sphere. They achieve outcomes in science, education, culture, religion and other domains. They create wealth and promote economic flourishing. They often influence the agendas of governments, but this does not make them governance or diplomacy actors.

Cosmopolitan networks include an array of transnational activist organizations (TANs) that seek to pressure governments, firms and other actors for or against a course of action. Typically, TANs are committed to causes and promotion of ideals and norms. During the nineteenth century, for example,

cosmopolitan networks opposed slavery. They supported women’s rights. Today, they advocate for human rights, measures to reduce global warming, and economic opportunities for women and girls.\textsuperscript{56} TANs do not seek to govern, but they often seek to influence those who do.

Cosmopolitan networks include educators, scientists and other experts who congregate in epistemic communities.\textsuperscript{57} Media organizations, sectarian religions, workers, migrants, tourists, and ethnic and racial minorities all connect in global civil-society networks. Economic networks include global firms, their supply chains and international labour organizations. Criminals, pirates and armed mercenaries have their networks. The purpose here is not to assess the roles and values of these actors. It is rather to map a boundary that places them in an analytical category beyond the domains of public governance and diplomacy. In cosmopolitan networks, private interests dominate.

Private governance networks are included here to identify a category of cross-border connections that do not fit within trans-governmental, polylateral and cosmopolitan network categories. As defined by Frederick Mayer and Gary Gereffi, private governance networks connect corporate, financial and non-governmental organizations to achieve governance in a broad range of global economic activities apart from government authority. They ‘enable and constrain’ and ‘serve functions that have historically been the tasks of governments, most notably those of regulating the negative externalities of economic activity’.\textsuperscript{58}

These networks seek to create stability in the global economy through codes of corporate conduct, process standards, product certification, reporting transparency and private administrative law. The Global Reporting Initiative, for instance, is a network that promotes economic viability and corporate social and environmental responsibility by providing firms and other organizations with reporting guidelines, metrics and methods. The International Council of Toy Industries, an association of toy manufacturers from twenty countries, promotes toy safety standards and guidelines for corporate social responsibility. The Asian Corporate Governance Association connects investors, companies and regulators to implement effective corporate governance practices


\textsuperscript{57} On the roles of epistemic communities, see Cross, \textit{Security Integration in Europe}, pp. 13-41.

throughout Asia. These actors fall outside the categories of public governance. However, because they seek to provide private governance, they also do not fit easily into the category of cosmopolitan networks.

Conclusion

Modern diplomacy is complex because its global environment is complex. Power is more diffuse. There are many more diplomacy actors. Issues of diplomatic concern are more abundant and difficult. Diplomats still seek to bridge separation, but increasingly they must navigate contested politics within the groups with which they connect at home and abroad. Diplomacy occurs in layers above, below and beyond the state. Digital technologies and social media are transforming diplomacy’s tools and methods. Foreign ministries and embassies are important components of larger diplomatic systems. Increasingly they frame what they do in terms of partnerships with civil society, citizen movements, faith leaders, entrepreneurs, innovators and city mayors. Diplomacy is more transparent; its pace has accelerated; and its public dimension, no longer marginal, is central in what all diplomatic actors think about and do.

These trends have led some to conclude that diplomacy’s public dimension is becoming a domain in which citizens, firms and most—if not all—civil-society actors are diplomacy actors. Not all political and social actors are diplomats, however, and much that happens in governance and civil society is not diplomacy. Mapping boundaries that separate and connect these complexities serves a variety of purposes. For scholars, they provide analytical distinctions in developing workable concepts and research agendas. They help diplomacy practitioners define operational choices, leverage comparative advantages, and transform roles and methods.

Bruce Gregory is an adjunct professor at George Washington University (GWU) in the United States, where he teaches courses on communication in modern diplomacy in the Global Communication MA program. He has taught public diplomacy courses in Georgetown University’s Master of Foreign Service Program, the US Naval War College and the National Defense University, and is a frequent speaker at the US Department of State’s Foreign Service Institute. Previously, his government career included positions with the US Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, the Department of State and the US Information Agency. His publications include numerous articles, book chapters and a periodic literature review, Diplomacy’s Public Dimension: Books, Articles, and Websites, which is archived online at GWU’s Institute for Public Diplomacy and Global Communication.