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Nov 07, 2016 by [Craig Hayden](#)

The Lessons of Hyphenated Diplomacy ^[1]

What does it mean when the term “diplomacy” is grafted onto another word? Terms like “citizen diplomacy,” “sports diplomacy,” “entertainment diplomacy,” and “food diplomacy” appear more frequently as a way to describe how specific practices can be construed as diplomatic. For example, when the term “citizen diplomacy” is invoked, something happens to both words that make up the term. What we understand as a “citizen” is reconstituted for the purposes of “diplomacy.” Yet, “diplomacy” is also refashioned to include citizens as actors authorized as diplomats. Likewise, what citizens “do” is thus considered “diplomatic.” But what do these kinds of hyphenated terms signify?

To answer this question requires that one engage the polysemic nature of the term “diplomacy,” along with the broader context in which diplomacy is conjoined with new fields of action. In other words, we need to reframe the question into two questions: what does diplomacy mean, and how does that relate to contemporary political and social conditions that allow for terministic entrepreneurship? Distinguished diplomacy studies scholar Paul Sharp has described diplomacy as a response to “a common problem of living separately and wanting to do so, while having to conduct relations with others.”¹ Diplomacy is an institutionalized set of practices, found in the traditional roles and duties of the diplomat and ministries of foreign affairs. It also suggests the practical realm where the “work” of international relations gets done on a day-to-day basis.

Yet, there is something about Sharp's description of diplomacy that requires attention to the boundaries of diplomacy. Diplomacy is clearly not the only "institutional" response to our problems of living together. And as social theorists like Jurgen Habermas argue, we are constantly engaged in some kind of communicative process to sustain, repair, and transform the conditions that let us live together with some degree of intersubjective certainty. Diplomacy, however, draws attention to other institutions above the day-to-day practices that sustain our ties that bind, such as the nation-state, the international system, and the authority to represent such institutions.

Sharp argues that diplomacy in this view is laden with a kind of "talismanic" quality.² Once a problem or issue has been rendered into the diplomatic sphere, we expect a diplomatic process to work out through the application of specific diplomatic knowledge, wisdom, and authenticity.³ Diplomacy is a historically transcendent phenomenon, where individuals and agencies are anointed with the responsibility to resolve challenges to the current political and related moral order that underscores the nation-state system.⁴

There is something essentially interstitial about the notion of diplomacy. It is an institution of the in-between: a set of practices and beliefs that is mandated to function between other institutions. However, diplomacy is also not necessarily motivated by the principled resolution of conflict. It is also about representation and self-interest and, in the process, the practice of what we might traditionally call diplomacy has reinforced the ways in which nation-states formulate and communicate their foreign policy objectives. Diplomacy, as James Der Derian has argued, supports the status quo through its capacity to mediate – that is, to forge a link between actors and to embody the separation that necessitates diplomacy in the first place (a notion which he elaborates through how diplomacy relates to a theory of alienation and estrangement).⁵

So the "traditional" diplomacy, conceived in terms amenable to Sharp and Der Derian, is crucial to sustaining the international system in more than functional ways – it's a part of how the system is normatively reinforced. Diplomacy considered as representation is thus key to the reproduction of identity and social power in international relations. It keeps the system running and justified.

But what happens when diplomacy as a concept is enlarged beyond the traditional organizational actors that we typically ascribe to it? The definitional debate over "public diplomacy," is suggestive of the problems that crop up when diplomacy starts to signify a wider range of activities and actors. Public diplomacy, as Nicholas Cull describes, is "an international actor's attempt to manage the international environment through engagement with a foreign public."⁶ Public diplomacy has transformed from being about how governments "engage" foreign publics to the so-called "new public diplomacy," which expands the range of "international actors" to include significant roles for NGOs and transnational movements, while at the same time elevating the importance of communication technologies.⁷

Bruce Gregory's definition of public diplomacy captures this expansive definition: "...the means by which states, associates of states, and non-state actors understand culture, attitudes, and behavior; build and manage relationships, and influence opinions and actions to advance their interests and values."⁸

In Gregory's definition, public diplomacy becomes a complicated set of activities, carried out

across a web of relationships between a variety of international actors, and it is unclear what kind of system is actually sustained in this chaotic balancing act. Instead, the plurality of interests, identity positions, and issues to be resolved, coupled with the relative inability of nation-states to maintain legitimate control over these factors, necessitates a wider range of actors authenticated to speak, negotiate, and advocate.

Public diplomacy scholars such as Robin Brown and Robert Kelley have suggested the pervasive relevance of public diplomacy signals that diplomacy and public diplomacy are converging institutions.⁹ Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's statement on U.S. diplomacy strategy in the Nov/Dec 2010 issue of Foreign Affairs makes the case plainly that the boundaries between diplomacy and public diplomacy are in practice effaced.


So the conceptual evolution of diplomacy has created a semantic opening, where other actors, resources, and practices can be rendered as relevant to the purpose of diplomacy. While diplomacy may have at one time represented an elite practice of communication and negotiation between nation-state representatives, diplomacy now connotes something more inclusive and ubiquitous.

The rise of "hyphenated diplomacy," however, poses some challenges for both scholarship and practice. For scholars, hyphenated diplomacy can dilute the distinction of diplomacy from other institutions of international relations. Analytically, if it can mean anything, then it might not be very useful. For practitioners, the increasing assertions of hyphenated diplomacy reflect the more pressing reality that the stakeholders for a complex global phenomenon are often not sitting in offices in their counterpart foreign ministries.

The rise of hyphenated diplomacy is more readily attributed to the pressing context of international politics and global relations – exposing the limits of vocabularies that scholars and practitioners use to describe the world they perceive. To say that sports diplomacy, for example, can be a significant aspect of managing inter-state or sectarian conflict is to say that a broader range of stakeholders can and importantly, should act towards the goals of diplomacy. Hyphenated diplomacy implies recognition that more people share some responsibility for diplomacy. The rise of hyphenated diplomacy is language catching up with the pervasive reality of globalization.

Hyphenated diplomacy then represents a kind of redistribution of labor in international relations. This is not unproblematic. If the term diplomacy carries with it some kind of expected efficacy and ethics of practice, then what happens when the term gets linked to something like food? Are food diplomacy practitioners expected to manage international or global issues through their respective media of preference, or, is food diplomacy inextricable from other kinds of diplomacy? And does the strategic presentation of food as a kind of linkage constitute a diplomatic engagement – replete with all the authority to represent one actor before another?

The accretion of modifiers to diplomacy signals a warning to those who seek to understand the institution of diplomacy. Ulrich Beck cautioned sociologists that the rapid and sweeping transformations wrought by globalization threatened the usefulness of "normal social science concepts."¹⁰ Beck's observation is that we need to be attentive to the concepts we use to identify and theorize about the world around us – especially when categories like the "city," the "nation-state," and "society," represent qualitatively different sets of relations. I am not suggesting we throw out the term diplomacy. Rather, the linkage of diplomacy to terms like "food

, "sports," "entertainment ,

 or "citizen" suggest something profound about those additional terms. When they are conjoined with diplomacy, they are effectively recast as a site of global mediation and interaction, beyond their historical usage. The rise of hyphenated diplomacy is more than just a revolution of diplomatic practice—it is the intrusion of diplomacy's imperative into the everyday aspect of our lives.

Endnotes

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 2. Paul Sharp, *Diplomatic Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge University Press, 2009) 2.
 3. Paul Sharp, "For Diplomacy: Representation and the Study of International Relations," *International Studies Review* 1, no. 1 (April 1, 1999): 37.
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 5. James Der Derian, "Mediating Estrangement: A Theory for Diplomacy," *Critical Practices in International Theory: Selected Essays* (New York, NY: Taylor & Francis, 2009): 7-30.
 6. Nicholas J. Cull, *Public Diplomacy: Lessons from the Past in CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy* (Los Angeles: Figueroa Press, 2009).
 7. Jan Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
 8. Bruce Gregory, "Public Diplomacy: Sunrise of an Academic Field," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (March 1, 2008): 274 -290.
 9. Robin Brown, "Diplomacy, Public Diplomacy and Social Networks" (presented at the International Studies Association, New Orleans, LA, 2010); John Robert Kelley, "The New Diplomacy: Evolution of a Revolution," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 21, no. 2 (2010): 286.
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