15 YEARS DiPLO

Conference report

THE FUTURE OF DIPLOMACY: BETWEEN CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

17–18 November 2017 | Malta

IMPRESSUM

Conference report: 'The Future of Diplomacy: Between Continuity and Change' (17–18 November 2017, Malta)

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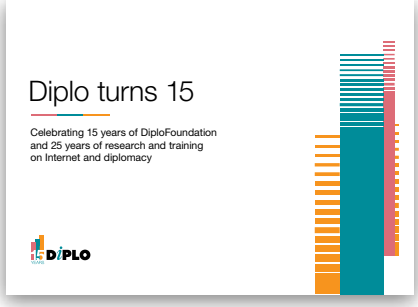
The conference programme and report are closely related to Diplo's activities. In the overview of each session, follow the links to learn more about Diplo's courses on the same subjects, and to access additional resources. Follow the on the online version of this report.

Read also the anniversary publication Diplo turns 15, and view the interactive timeline on Diplo's website.



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About the conference

Celebrating 15 years of DiploFoundation and 25 years of research and training on Internet and diplomacy

In November 2017, DiploFoundation celebrated its 15th anniversary, as well as 25 years of research and training on Internet and diplomacy. To mark these milestones, Diplo hosted a two-day conference dedicated to reflecting on the role of diplomacy in the modern era, and on the impact of technology and other areas on the core functions of diplomacy.

How?

Under the theme 'The future of diplomacy: Between continuity and change', the anniversary conference was held on 17–18 November, in Malta. But the preparations started a few months earlier. They included not only shaping the programme of the event, but also additional build-up activities, such as blog posts, communications campaigns, and messages from Diplo alumni.

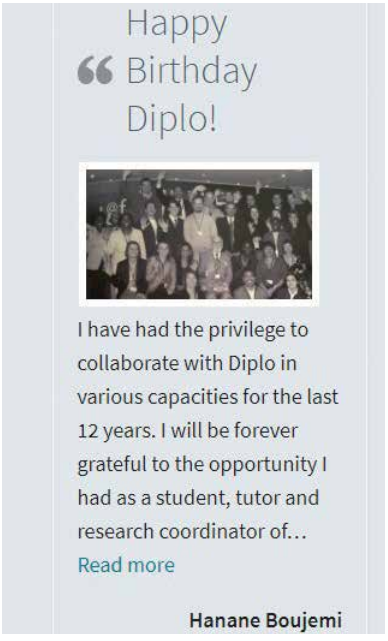
The celebrations officially started on 1 September, with a blog post in which Dr Jovan Kurbalija, Director of DiploFoundation, reflected on the evolution of Diplo, from a unit at the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, to a stand-alone not-for-profit organisation focused on research and training on Internet and diplomacy. Several other blog posts followed, on topics later tackled at the conference:

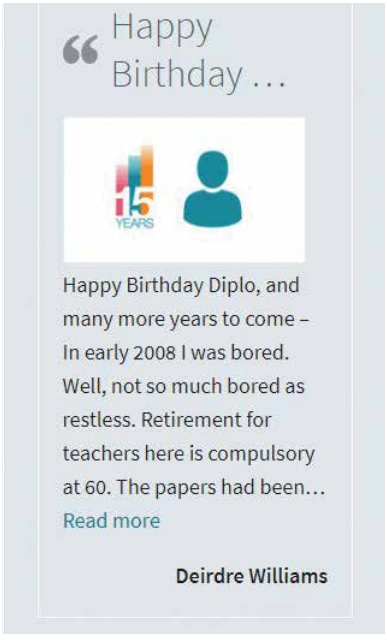
- Negotiating with robots: Future or fiction? (15 September) – Dr Jovan Kurbalija
- The VUCA world and diplomacy (23 October) – Amb. Kishan S. Rana
- GDPR: Integrating human rights into business practices (13 November) – Adriana Minović
- Online learning: A hype that changes and improves reality (14 November) – Angelic C. del Castilho

Between September and November, Diplo alumni shared messages on social media to mark Diplo's anniversary, talking about their experiences as students on Diplo courses.

In November, Diplo published its interactive timeline, which included its official birth on 20 November 2002, and other important milestones spanning 25 years of research and training on Internet and diplomacy. An anniversary publication, *Diplo turns 15*, complemented the timeline.

An innovative feature was that all conference participants were awarded blockchain certificates, created by Diplo's Technical Team and CreativeLab. Supporters of Diplo received specially designed versions, which were awarded during the anniversary reception on the evening of 18 November. The anniversary reception was hosted by the Hon. Minister Carmelo Abela and Mrs Abela at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion in Valletta.





What?

The two-day conference featured interactive debates on a wide range of topics pertaining to diplomacy, digital policy, and Internet governance. Participants discussed:

- The impact of digitalisation and emerging technologies on core diplomatic functions.
- Digital policy issues that appear more and more frequently on the international diplomatic agenda (from cybersecurity and digital commerce, to big data and blockchain technologies).
- Trends and tools in diplomatic training, from visual elements such as infographics and illustrations, to massive open online courses (MOOCs), webinars, and blended learning.
- Artificial intelligence (AI), automation, robotics, and their potential impact on the core social and ethical pillars of humanity.
- Trends on and practical insights into the use of technologies in our daily lives.

Who?

Diplo's anniversary event brought together over 150 participants from around the world, including:

- High-level officials from the governments of Malta and Switzerland.
- Diplomats and students of diplomacy.
- Practitioners and researchers in Internet governance and digital policy.
- Diplo alumni and members of DiploTeam.

The conference was held under the patronage of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion of Malta, and the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland. As such, it enjoyed the presence of H.E. Ms Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta; Hon. Mr Carmelo Abela, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion of Malta; and Amb. Valentin Zellweger, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations Office and to other international organisations in Geneva.

The opening ceremony of the conference on The Future of Diplomacy: Between Continuity and Change

For more details about the conference, including video recordings of the opening and closing sessions, visit https://15years.diplomacy.edu

Summarising the discussions

Day 1: 17 November 2017

1. High-level address and keynote speeches

The conference was opened by Hon. Mr Carmelo Abela, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion of Malta. The minister's high-level address was followed by keynote speeches delivered by Amb. Victor Camilleri, President of the Board of Administrators, DiploFoundation, and Dr Jovan Kurbalija, Director, DiploFoundation.

The role and contributions of diplomats in an ever-changing world is primordial. Here I must highlight that Diplo's vocation is to assist all countries, particularly small states, and those with limited resources, in representing and promoting their interests. [...] It is very encouraging to recognise that DiploFoundation has been a vehicle, a medium for bringing together, through the utilisation of new and emerging technologies, small states and big states, poor and rich states, less developed and developed countries, in their search for equitable and forward-looking strategies and their aspirations for a better future. [...]

We can easily slide into believing that most of our problems can be solved by new technologies. The reality is often different. Technology empowers us, but it has its limits. In addition, technology may give rise to new challenges, particularly in the security domain. Diplo was among the first to signal new developments, [...] but it was also careful when new technologies became part of a transitory flurry. [...] Malta is extremely honoured by and proud of the successful partnership with Switzerland in this joint undertaking.

Hon. Mr Carmelo Abela, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion of Malta

Diplo's achievements lie in the unique way it has combined research and involvement in the policies related to information technologies with pioneering new methods and techniques for online diplomatic training. [...] Over the last three decades, the cultural and social revolution created by information technologies has been immense. And we know it is by no means over. To date, the practice of diplomacy has been impacted by information technologies, most notably through the tools used by diplomats for their communication and reporting tasks. [...] Diplomacy is a profession which responds cautiously to innovation.

However, as we are now seeing, practices built around the new technologies are bound to increasingly have a more drastic and far-reaching impact on the nature of diplomacy itself. [...] Sometimes it is difficult to explain to others the intangibles that go into Diplo's chemistry. Diplo teaches, but is not a university. Diplo does research, but is not a think tank. Diplo publishes, but is not a publishing house. Diplo cannot fit easily into the pigeon holes of institutional thinking. Fortunately, the governments of Malta and Switzerland have recognised this uniqueness of Diplo [...] and ensured its growth and remarkable results that we are celebrating today.

Amb. Victor Camilleri, President of the Board of Administrators, DiploFoundation

Institutions matter, but institutions are ultimately individuals. Today, we increasingly delegate our intuition and readiness to risk to abstract procedures and project proposals. Outcome, outputs, and impacts cannot replace intuition and human judgement. Diplo has been fortunate to encounter unique individuals who have been ready to bring institutional support, in particular in Maltese and Swiss governments. [...] Like in 1992, when the new era was starting after the Cold War, today we are at the dawn of a new era. We know that changes will be profound, but we know very little of their nature. [...] The main challenge is that technology may affect the very basis of humanity. It may affect what defines us as humans, making this change the most profound in centuries. [...] We need to strike many balances and find a middle way between technology and humanity. While space for discussion is open, I personally would argue that diplomacy has [a] bright future. Society will need more than ever before balances. [...] In years to come, we need to remain open for innovation, yet critical. We need to be scientific, yet humanistic. We need to be ready for adventure, yet with necessary caution.

Dr Jovan Kurbalija, Director, DiploFoundation

Back in 2002, the mandate given to DiploFoundation was the dissemination of the use of information technologies in the field of diplomacy and international relations. For Diplo, one way to go about that was to prepare [a] considerable number of delegations to participate in the UN World Summit on the Information Society, which [...] set the institutional frame of what since then has become the digital era which we are experiencing today. [...] It is this expertise of being one step ahead that makes DiploFoundation, in our eyes, quite unique. For the past three years, Diplo has also engaged [in] operating the Geneva Internet Platform; the job [you] are doing in, among others, strengthening Geneva's role as a global centre for Internet governance, is truly excellent, and we congratulate you for that.

Mr Patrick Pardo, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations Office and to other international organisations in Geneva

Your founding and now honorary president would like to congratulate you for your many achievements which have made Diplo an important actor on the international scene.

I now wish you more of this kind of success and a brilliant future.

Professor Dietrich Kappeler, Honorary President of DiploFoundation

Hon. Mr Carmelo Abela, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion of Malta, opening the conference

2. How is digitalisation affecting core diplomatic functions?

Emerging technologies are transforming everyone's lives. Diplomatic practice is no exception. There are many technologies which diplomats will need in the next few years, as the Internet affects core diplomatic functions. During this session, experienced practitioners and academics made a sober but forward-looking introduction of core diplomatic functions, and participants discussed the impact of digitalisation.

2.1. Negotiations

Lead discussant

Amb. Alex Sceberras Trigona, Special Envoy to the Prime Minister of Malta, and Senior Fellow, DiploFoundation

Overview

The search for compromise and consensus has been a core diplomatic function. It remains as vital as ever in the digital era. Do more digital information and greater interaction make negotiations more effective?

Summary

The essence of diplomacy has not changed, but information and communications technologies (ICTs) have introduced changes to the conduct of diplomacy and negotiations. Diplomacy remains about 'a sovereign' and 'an agent'. As in the early days, sovereigns are not keen on meeting their counterparties too often, as they need time to plan and think through their positions and options. ICTs compress time and space, and allow for direct communications among sovereigns. The topics of negotiations, however, have become much more complex and scientific (energy, health, climate change, technology), requiring high expertise for preparing dossiers. There is an information overload. Diplomats have an opportunity to know more, but have a new task to filter and contextualise information rather than to mine it.

Looking at different phases of negotiations – pre-negotiations, negotiations, and post-negotiations – we can see the specific impact of ICTs. Before entering, as well as during the negotiations, countries always consider BATNA, the best alternative to a negotiated agreement; this used to be based merely on the estimations and 'feeling' of the sovereign, but today more alternatives can be cross-checked by using the abundance of available information. Statements presented by leaders in political forums are now broadcasted using websites of ministries, enabling extended impact and an additional level of nuances in sending a message.

In the negotiations phase, diplomats have a very complex agenda, but can run the negotiations through digital media, exchanging drafts and discussing 'brackets' more promptly. This leaves sovereigns to resolve the most important brackets during face-to-face meetings, but even then they may need to get back to their experts for consultation, due to the complexity of the topics. The diplomatic manoeuvre of requesting a recess to consult with headquarters does not take weeks anymore; it can be done in matter of minutes using ICTs. There are greater risks as well: cyber-espionage and leaks of digitally exchanged information and dossiers are real risks and can impact negotiations.

The post-negotiation phase related to compliance bargaining is taking most of the negotiations time. Digital communications have enabled greater visibility of non-compliance, and could put more stress on parties to comply. At the same time, however, this can be used as an excuse by non-compliant countries, which would try to justify their non-compliance by giving examples of other countries that have not complied either.

Amb. Alex Sceberras Trigona (centre)

Join Diplo's course: The online course on Negotiation Skills equips participants with the skills to successfully prepare, undertake, and conclude negotiations in formal and informal settings with government and non-government actors.

2.2. Representation

Lead discussant

Dr Tereza Horejsova, Project Development Director, DiploFoundation

Overview

New actors have triggered new ways of representation. Internet companies in the Bay Area in San Francisco have increased importance for countries. Users' data are stored and processed by Google, Facebook, and other companies from the area, while many of these companies are vital for national security (anti-terrorism) and economic growth (investment and innovation). How are countries interacting with these actors?

Summary

Internet companies are increasingly attracting the interest of countries, given the policy implications of their business models in areas such as commerce, human rights, and security. As many of these companies are based in the Bay Area, countries are trying to set up their presence there, to interact with these industry actors.

Interim results of an ongoing DiploFoundation study shows that there are different ways countries do this: dedicated innovation centres; traditional consulates which, in addition to their usual functions, are also in charge of interacting with the Internet industry; and dedicated consulates with an industry-focused agenda. There are also countries which rely on their missions and embassies in New York and Washington, DC, as well as countries that do not have such a focus or are clarifying their future approach.

Dr Tereza Horejsova

When it comes to interacting with the Internet industry, conventional diplomacy has some limits. While governments are often eager to engage in such interaction, the reverse is not necessarily true. Highly sensitive digital policy issues, such as security, seem not to be tackled through interactions in Silicon Valley. These issues are rather addressed at national or regional level, with governments dealing directly with the company's local branch.

Missions in the Silicon Valley do not necessarily seem to be engaged in passing on political messages in a direct way. On the contrary. Countries rather look for 'inspiration' in areas such as innovation policy, e-government, and workforce/education/training. They also try to 'dry test' possible future policies and get initial reactions from the industry.

Learn more about Diplo's research project on 'Digital Diplomacy: How countries interact with the Internet industry in the Bay Area.'

2.3. Promotion and public diplomacy

Lead discussant

Amb. Stefano Baldi, Ambassador of Italy to Bulgaria

Overview

The use of social media is considered a main example of the most recent impact of the Internet on diplomacy. In under a decade, its use has been crystallised, and has evolved into a great tool of e-diplomacy. How has social media shaped public diplomacy and the work of diplomats, and what have been the promises, successes, and failures in its use?

Summary

Digitalisation has a significant impact on the way in which diplomacy works. In the early days of diplomacy, an embassy could have worked with a top-down approach, where one designated person was in charge of public diplomacy. This practice is no longer valid. Digitalisation and digital tools have brought easier, wider outreach, allowing basically everyone at an embassy to contribute to public diplomacy processes.

Public diplomacy today goes beyond a single press conference; because of digitalisation, it is also important for


Amb. Stefano Baldi

the embassy to interact daily via the Internet, including on social media platforms. With this significant change, building the capacities of embassy staff, modifying the overall communication strategy, and changing the ways in which the embassy works in terms of its public diplomacy approach, are all important elements.

Public diplomacy conducted through digital means also poses challenges, giving the rather ubiquitous nature of the Internet. One important tip for diplomatic missions to keep in mind is limiting online interactions via personal accounts as a way to minimise potential drawbacks. Since the Internet is borderless, once a message goes viral, it is difficult to control.

It is necessary to have more than one person managing the embassy's institutional social media accounts, though the team should not be very big. The ambassador can have a personal account, though it remains important that the embassy speaks through an institutional account.

Measuring the impact of digital public diplomacy beyond the number of retweets or likes is still a challenge for an embassy, though the daily interaction the embassy has with its public is easily observed.

Diplo's Public Diplomacy online course covers the goals and methods of public diplomacy, outlining what it can and cannot do, with case studies.

2.4. Humanitarian diplomacy

Lead discussant

Amb. Christopher Lamb, former Australian Ambassador and Humanitarian Diplomacy Head, IFRC, and Senior Fellow, DiploFoundation

Overview

Digital tools have become essential in the humanitarian field and crisis management, enabling countries to engage with their nationals in crisis areas, and humanitarians to organise their assistance missions. Which technology and tools can be used by diplomats to assist in crisis? What are the most effective uses of social media?

Summary

Humanitarian diplomacy is persuading decision makers and opinion leaders to act at all times in the interests of vulnerable people, and with full respect for fundamental humanitarian principles. Humanitarian diplomacy is carried out by a wide range of people outside of ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs), and targets an equally wide range of people who are involved in decision making and implementing.

Technology has brought more people into the decision-making process. For example, primary stakeholders – the vulnerable people and communities affected by a disaster – can now better share information about their situation and needs. Social media provides a new means of reaching a variety of stakeholders with a humanitarian diplomacy message. Greater access to stakeholders increases the importance of stakeholder mapping: finding out who makes or shapes decisions relevant to a specific situation, how to best reach and persuade those people, which partners might work with you, and what are the strengths and weaknesses of each partner. Digital tools can help with all of these questions.

Digital tools are changing the environment for humanitarian action. The current Rohingya crisis, for example, may be the best-documented humanitarian crisis ever,


Amb. Christopher Lamb

with information being widely disseminated. However, fact-checking has revealed that some of the photos used to report this crisis are actually from other places and times: fake news has reached the humanitarian sphere, too. When it comes to deciding what information can be trusted, developing a network of trusted contacts on the ground and cross-checking information are important elements.

Technology challenges the ethics of humanitarian work. For example, the 2015 dissemination of the photo of a dead Syrian child on a beach in Turkey broke all the rules of appropriate use of photos of children in humanitarian work. Yet it provoked a dramatic international surge in concern over the refugee crisis. Finally, it is important to remember that governments cannot control the use of digital tools: radical elements in any society can spread their message via social media much faster than governments or other institutions can share reliable and fact-checked information.

Humanitarian diplomacy is persuading decision makers and opinion leaders to act at all times in the interests of vulnerable people, and with full respect for fundamental humanitarian principles. Join the online course on Humanitarian Diplomacy.

2.5. Diplomatic reporting

Lead discussant

Amb. Victor Camilleri, President of the Board of Administrators, DiploFoundation

Overview

Thousands of reports are written every day. They record meetings, analyse situations, and suggest actions. What value do diplomatic reports add to the already available information and analysis provided by Wikipedia and blogs, among others? What is the usability of the new generation of AI tools for summarising texts?

Summary

Reporting is one of the main functions of diplomatic practice, providing an important input into foreign policy-making. Yet, today's changing environment, with available information from many sources and actors, could affect the practice of diplomatic reporting. Do diplomatic reports still constitute a vital element of diplomatic practice?

Amb. Victor Camilleri (left)

Generally speaking, diplomatic reports continue to be relevant. Some even argue that, with the flood of available information, diplomatic reporting is more important than ever. The abundance of information means that the diplomat has an important task to filter information, reading between the lines to identify what really matters, comparing the information to the context in which they operate, and distilling general trends and developments. To be able to add value, a thorough understanding of a country's positions and priorities is needed, rather than the reporting of simple facts and figures. In addition, with the spread of misinformation, and to avoid it, reporting needs to 'get there fast', which puts additional pressure on the timeliness of the reports.

A well-established link to the capital also remains relevant. Understanding what is happening back home is sometimes more important than the connections with the country where an embassy is based, and provides the basis of an understanding of a country's position.

Yet, these changing times might call for a reorganisation of the diplomatic profession. While diplomatic reporting is rooted in military hierarchy and moving information upwards, the Internet has flattened this hierarchy, as information has become available to everyone. An additional challenge is posed by today's calls for transparency, and risks of data breaches, which could expose confidential information in reports. Although there are clear advantages to transparency, a proper level of confidentiality needs to be maintained in order to facilitate, for example, delicate political negotiations.

Read our latest articles and blog posts on diplomatic reporting.

2.6. Security and crisis management

Lead discussant

Dr Fred Tanner, Senior Adviser to the Crisis Management Centre, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, and former Director, MEDAC, Malta

Overview

The Internet is crucial for managing security crisis. Most anti-terrorism measures related to the Internet refer to its use by terrorists for the recruitment and organisation of attacks. Digital tools are used in monitoring security crises and for confidence building. What are the ways and means in which diplomatic services can deal with security crises?

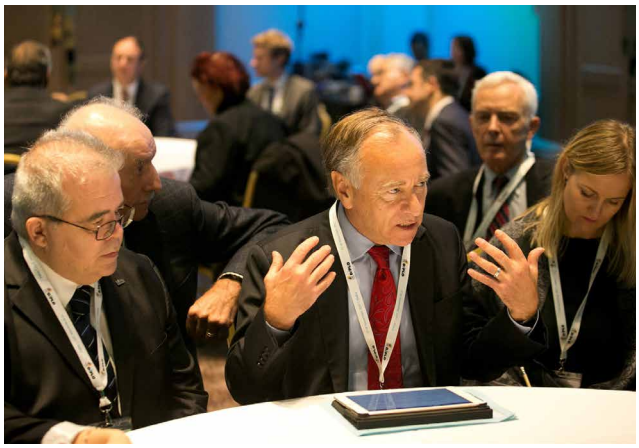
Summary

Technology has intensified the speed of globalisation in recent decades. Globalisation takes place not only from a country perspective, but touches the everyday lives of individuals. As a consequence, the downsides of globalisation are also felt on a global scale. Individuals are increasingly vulnerable to global risks.

Technology-related issues pervade the diplomatic dialogue, and the topics related to security have gained special prominence. Some emerging technologies can be used for upholding public safety and security, such as the introduction of drones in patrolling, and the use of technology to help counter crises and civil war. Nevertheless, the human rights implications of new technologies need to be carefully thought through, especially in a context of automation, which also brings about innovations of concern, such as lethal autonomous weapons.

Sometimes technology is the target of attacks. Drones can be disabled by a kinetic attack, such as shooting, or by remote malicious actions, such as signal-jamming or hijacking. Driverless cars could be remotely controlled and used in large-scale terrorist attacks, if they are targeted against people on the streets, for example.

In order to mitigate threats and maximise benefits, actors should focus on areas that require urgent collaboration: cross-jurisdiction dialogue that could help to curb trans-border crime; norms to protect the critical infrastructures that underpin the modern society, such as electric grids and the financial system; measures to enhance security standards of new technologies, such as the Internet of Things (IoT); and measures to protect the large amounts of personal data held by data controllers. It is also important to involve younger generations in policy discussions. They need to be an integral part of finding solutions to current and emerging problems.



Dr Fred Tanner (centre)

View the latest policy developments related to security - including cybercrime, cyberconflict, and the protection of critical infrastructure - on the Digital Watch observatory

2.7. Protocol and etiquette

Lead discussant

Amb. Olaph Terribile, Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations and other International Organisations in Geneva

Overview

Protocol rules are the result of a long evolution of traditions and ceremonial procedures. The Internet has changed the context in which protocol is practiced. How have the new communication tools impacted protocol, and has the informality of online communications affected the rules?

Summary

The emergence of new communication tools raises multiple questions concerning protocol and etiquette in the diplomatic environment. Is there still a place for protocol in the digital sphere? Is there a clear border between what is official and what is private when we post on Facebook or Twitter? Is social media a tool to promote government

policy? If you are using Facebook for disapproval or posting a selfie, are you only representing yourself? If you are a diplomat, is there a distinction between your professional life and your private life?

An important feature of the Internet is that it never forgets. A diplomat could be posted to a country they criticised years ago on the Internet, and refused entrance because of that particular post.

The medium of communication is changing, but the principles remain the same. Protocol is moving forward, but new forms of language are coming. Informality is common in contemporary tools for communication, but we cannot allow it to affect correct diplomatic communication. It would not be correct to reference a diplomat using an emoji, for example. On social media, we need to be careful with the messages and images we send out, in particular when it comes to strong messages.

Amb. Olaph Terribile

A general conclusion would be that it is not the communication tool itself that is having an effect on protocol, but the way we use it. Protocol in the digital era ensures the orderly and predictable conduct of international affairs, just as it has been doing for centuries.

2.8. Diplomacy in a VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) world

Lead discussant

Amb. Kishan Rana, Professor Emeritus, and Senior Fellow, DiploFoundation

Overview

Technology has not only impacted diplomatic functions, but also the skills that diplomats require to perform their functions efficiently and effectively. How can the profession of continuity survive in an era of disruption, and what skills does tomorrow's diplomat need?

Amb. Kishan Rana (centre)

Summary

The new ways of communication, which is more and more conducted via digital tools like social media – as a result of increasing demand from the wider public for 'better communication' – put pressure on the diplomatic profession. Diplomats now need to react to current changes that are happening fast. This is further complicated by the fact that social media both thrives on and accelerates polarisation. This is in direct clash with diplomacy, which traditionally looks for various shades of grey between two opposing views. All this makes it harder to keep a distance in order to better understand/reflect on what is happening, and put things in the right perspective. This also means that the room for manoeuvre is becoming very limited.

Diplomats need to acquire new skills suitable for this new reality. This can, among other ways, be achieved through a better transfer of knowledge and experience from senior to junior diplomats. At the same time, we also need to go back to basics and focus on core diplomat's tasks that have been outlined as long ago as in the third century BC by the famous Indian statesman and philosopher Kautilya.

Learn more: The online course 21st Century Diplomacy provides insight into the contemporary practice of diplomacy, and deepens one's understanding of significant issues in diplomacy management.

3. The Internet is the premier league of global politics: Ensuring countries' effective participation in global digital policy

Digital issues are omnipresent on the agendas of the UN, the G7, the G20, and other diplomatic meetings. They show no sign of retreating. Countries must keep pace or stay behind. How can national capacities for participation in global digital diplomacy be developed? What is the most effective way for countries to follow, engage, and contribute? How can a country-as-a-whole approach to foreign digital policy be developed? What is the role of security, economic, cultural, and other ministries in foreign digital policy?

3.1. Cyber-norms

Lead discussants

Dr Jovan Kurbalija, Director, DiploFoundation, and Mr Vladimir Radunović, Director of E-diplomacy and Cybersecurity Programmes, DiploFoundation

Overview

Earlier this year, Microsoft proposed new norms for the protection of cyberspace, challenging the notion that the development of norms falls solely within the ambit of governments. How are the roles and responsibilities of governments, the industry, and other stakeholders shaping?

Summary

The development of cyber norms faces, among others, the following challenges:

- Many Internet devices could be potentially used as both a useful tool in daily life and a weapon for cyber-attacks; dual use of digital technology makes it difficult to regulate and manage.
- Attribution for cyber-attacks is very difficult on a technical level because of the use of proxies, and is almost impossible on a legal level because of obstacles in gathering usable evidence. In most cases, it is done on a political level, thanks to the use of intelligence (with evidence that is often not from the cyber world).
- There is no agreement or general understanding of what constitutes an act of war when it comes to cyber-attacks.
- Trends in hybrid warfare see sabotage and espionage as the most common types of cyber-attacks, which fall under the threshold of what could be understood as armed attacks, and there are no provisions in international law that clearly apply.
- Existing international law does not provide clear indications as to the right of self-defence by countries, or counter-measures in case of various illegal cyber-activities.
- Responsibility of various actors – governments, private sector, users – for security of cyberspace is not clear and agreed upon.

Other questions are pending: How can developing countries control ICT if developed countries cannot? Will detailed cyber norms emerge after a 'cyber-Titanic' or a 'cyber-Solferino' with real casualties, in order to trigger substantial negotiations?

The response to secure cyberspace needs to be comprehensive, and include, among others:

- Increased liability of the private sector, particularly vendors, for vulnerabilities in their products.

Dr Jovan Kurbalija

- Cyber-disarmament negotiations to prevent stockpiling of vulnerabilities and incentivise their responsible disclosure to vendors by governments. A global convention will take a long time to be negotiated; some argue that negotiations can be accelerated by adding cybersecurity provisions to existing International Telecommunication Union (ITU) treaties.

- Security standards need to be implemented widely across institutions, organisations, and companies.

- User awareness, capacity building, and education should be in focus, since the majority of incidents start with human error.

- Further academic and policy research on the matter is needed.

Learn more about the latest cyber-norms proposed by the Internet industry.

3.2. Cybersecurity

Lead discussants

Dr Stefanie Frey, Managing Director at Deutor Cyber Security Solutions Switzerland GmbH, and Mr David Rüfenacht, Cybersecurity expert, DiploFoundation

Overview

Cyber-driven geopolitical tensions have dominated cybersecurity discussions since the beginning of the year. Ransomware attacks, and increasingly sophisticated attacks by cybercriminals, are a major concern. How can countries, from individual users via corporate sector to governments, react? Who should be in charge of cybersecurity?

Summary

Cybersecurity is arguably a high priority for everyone – governments, industry, and users. Among the cybersecurity-related risks, the loss of data – in some cases personal data – is a top concern. MFAs are equally concerned about the loss of data.

The CIA triad – referring to confidentiality, integrity, and availability – is a well-respected model of security principles. Cases concerning data loss often focus on the confidentiality aspect. However, integrity and availability are just as important. For example, if a hospital falls victim to a cyber-attack that is able to manipulate patient data (thereby affecting its integrity), this could lead to loss of life. An attack on data (affecting its availability) could also lead to a major slowdown in treatment since every file would potentially need to be checked, and possibly, medical exams to be performed again.

Society's increasing dependence on digitally based services and the development of the IoT brings about an (inevitable) convergence of 'cyberspace' with the 'real world'. Yet, we rarely grasp where this convergence is happening, and how it can affect our lives.

Given this convergence, we need to understand where and which norms already exist in multilateral forums, and where there is a need for additional international understanding. Diplomats should look into cyber issues just as they keep themselves informed on other issues to understand how they function.

The interests of users, the private sector, and governments should be represented as we seek to tackle the future challenges of this converged reality.

Mr David Rüfenacht (centre)

Join the online course on Cybersecurity and learn more about the latest digital policy developments and the work of the main actors in the field.

3.3. Digital commerce

Lead discussant

Amb. Alex Sceberras Trigona, Special Envoy to the Prime Minister of Malta, and Senior Fellow, DiploFoundation

Overview

Economic growth is increasingly linked to digital growth. Yet, many countries still lag behind. What can governments and businesses from developing countries do to prepare for the digitalisation of the global economy, and how can developed countries take advantage of new technologies, such as virtual currencies?

Summary

The discussion focused on the impact of digital commerce in developed and developing countries. According to the perspective of the participants, e-commerce means having the capacity to make purchases online.

Nowadays, consumers are the ones creating scarcity in the market, which allows the suppliers to determine the prices based on the consumer's profile. For example, the prices of flights change based on the consumers' buying habits. The manipulation of the market prices by suppliers should be limited by controlling the access to, and data flow of personal information.

Developed countries point out that developing countries can benefit from digital commerce, which will allow small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to connect globally and have access to global markets. This, in turn, would allow SMEs to create jobs for locals. However, African states and India are reluctant to accept (new) World Trade Organization (WTO) rules on e-commerce, as they believe that such rules would benefit more established Internet companies than SMEs from developing countries.

EU regulations concerning protection from unfair commercial practices, such as online scams and frauds in digital commerce, have allowed consumers to sue EU businesses from their home countries within the EU. The approach of EU regulation on consumer protection could be an inspiration for global regulation.

Amb. Alex Sceberras Trigona

Diplo's course on Digital Commerce helps practitioners increase their knowledge and capacity to engage in multilateral digital commerce-related negotiations and discussions. Learn more.

3.4. Data diplomacy

Lead discussants

Ms Barbara Rosen Jacobson, Project and Research Associate, DiploFoundation, and Dr Katharina Höne, Research Associate in Diplomacy and Global Governance, DiploFoundation

Overview

More and more global policy is centred on data. In fact, it is often described as the oil of modern economy. How can countries deal with security, economic, legal, and human rights aspects of data diplomacy?

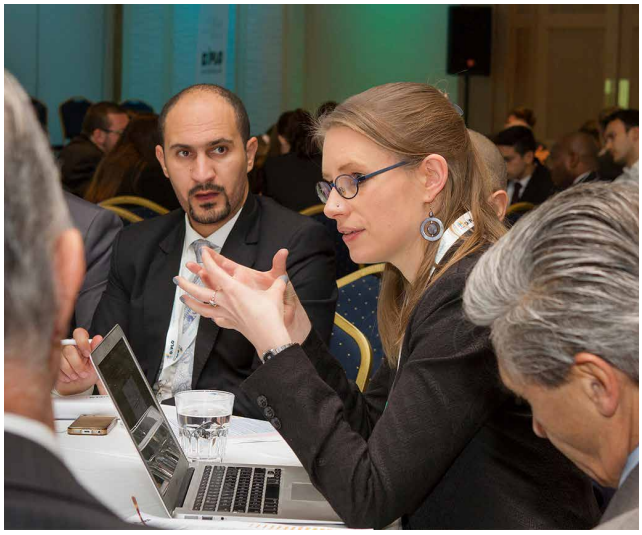
Summary

What is the role of data and big data in diplomacy and the MFA? A trend towards (big) data analysis in foreign policy-making is not only evident, but has also become inevitable. There is an abundance of data. Yet, even the data that emerges from the MFA itself is often not available in a usable form, due to data collection or storage.

Data analysis requires technical experts, and the key starting point always has to be the question: What is it that we need to know in order to conduct better diplomacy and foreign policy? Data security, privacy, and the sensitive and secret nature of some data are also aspects to be taken into account when it comes to data processing and analysis.

While a number of governments have open data policies, questions of data sharing and privacy emerge. Further, if data is a competitive advantage, diplomats need to carefully think about what can be made available publicly. Similarly, when open data or data made available by private providers is used, there are concerns over the continuity of the data, which is important for analysis and the pinpointing of trends.

Diplomats do not need to become data scientists, but there is a need for training and capacity building in order to familiarise diplomats with the opportunities and challenges of the data-driven era. One recommendation in this regard could be to form small units within ministries, consisting of both data scientists and diplomats, which are given the space to innovate (and to make mistakes) at the intersection of data analysis and diplomatic activities.



Dr Katharina Höne (centre)

Read more about data diplomacy and learn more about Diplo's Data Diplomacy research project in collaboration with the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

3.5. The rise of blockchain

Lead discussants

Mr Ljupčo Gjorgjinski, Chargé d'Affaires of the Macedonian Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, and Mr Arvin Kamberi, Remote Participation expert and head of Diplo's Webinars Team

Mr Ljupčo Gjorgjinski and Mr Arvin Kamberi (first and second from right)

Overview

Blockchain opens new policy possibilities. The UN is considering the use of blockchain for aid pledges by countries. Blockchain provides new possibilities for monitoring implementation of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and other international agreements. How can blockchain increase transparency and responsibility in international affairs? Can blockchain help restore trust in global affairs?

Summary

Given the ever-growing promises of globally distributed blockchain databases, the question of which valuable data could or should be placed in an immutable ledger comes into focus. What are the possible uses of such immutable distributed ledgers? What kind of data should be stored using such technology, particularly from the perspective of global or international organisations, and civil society organisations? Can blockchain help in building a more trusted surrounding for the exchange of information over the Internet?

Global data on land tiles, benefitting from accuracy, decentralisation, and immutability, was one of the proposed uses. State-run collection of personal data could also constitute a possible future use of this technology. Estonia offers one example in this regard, with its KSI Blockchain initiative (part of the e-Estonia programme) for placing data in blockchain databases. Trusted digital personalities (based on the concept of providing reliable information about a person's online identity by storing and verifying this data on blockchain) can significantly improve social services delivered over a network.

Global food supply chains are also as a possible area where blockchain can help. A trusted, secured supply chain system can benefit both the food industry, and small independent farmers. In addition, solutions for refugee registration data, and distributed databases of health records are also possible future fields of blockchain deployments.

As blockchain technologies have the potential of being used in more and more areas, a regulatory framework around privacy and security issues needs to be considered.

Get the latest digital policy developments on virtual currencies, and access instruments, articles, and other resources on blockchain and cryptocurrencies.

Get the latest digital policy developments on virtual currencies, and access instruments, articles, and other resources on blockchain and cryptocurrencies.

3.6. Sustainable development

Lead discussants

Ms Marilia Maciel, Digital Policy Senior Researcher, DiploFoundation, and Mr Nicolas Seidler, Senior Policy Advisor, Internet Society

Overview

Digital tools and development have been moving in step for decades. The Internet has been a great enabler, but it has also accelerated new divides between urban and rural, young and old, etc. Will the future bring more or fewer divides? How will digitalisation affect development assistance and the role of development agencies?

Summary

Will technology and the Internet provide global benefits and development for all, helping to achieve the SDGs, or will it make existing divides worse? The traditional digital divide – which corresponds to gaps in access to connectivity – is slowly but steadily closing. However, new divides could be emerging, such as the capacity to take advantage of new economic opportunities or to effectively protect from cyberattacks. Technology has already had a positive impact in developing countries and least-developed countries (LDCs). Two examples mentioned, mobile banking systems for cashless society and distribution of medicine using drones, show that developing regions can appropriate and adapt technology to their own environments in order to achieve positive outcomes.

However, the level of readiness to face the challenges introduced by technology is uneven in different countries. The collection and analysis of data could have negative impacts on privacy, especially because not all countries have robust privacy laws in place. It could also negatively affect competition, since new companies from developing countries are faced with Internet behemoths. Moreover, the introduction of new technologies also means a multiplication of points of vulnerability for cybercrime.

Some of these challenges could be overcome by enhancing development-oriented funding, on national and international levels. There should be a coordinated action among development agencies, especially in a context of shrinking of funding dedicated to ICT for development.

Ms Marilia Maciel

Get the latest updates related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by governments in September 2015.

3.7. Digitalisation and jobs

Lead discussants

Dr Roxana Radu, GIP Manager, and Internet Governance Associate, DiploFoundation, and Ms Sorina Teleanu, Digital Policy Senior Researcher, DiploFoundation

Overview

The shared economy has led to a rise in contractual work. Technological advancements and automation are making certain jobs redundant. In the face of the changing nature of employment, how can governments ensure that workers are protected?

Summary

The increasingly digitalised world, the expanding sharing economy, and the ongoing developments in automation and AI pose challenges for the job market and labour rights. There are also risks of a growing global inequality, as the uptake of technological advancements is and will most likely continue to be different in developed and developing countries.

The status of Uber drivers (whether employees or contractors), zero hours contracts, and the jobs to be made obsolete by robotics and AI are only some examples of challenges posed to the current employment, workers' rights, and social security systems. Who and how to ensure that these systems are adapted to the new realities?

Governments should be looking into adapting the regulatory frameworks, but as is often the case, regulation tends to lag behind technology. Moreover, there is uncertainty with regard to the actual impact of the new technologies on the overall labour market, and ideas such as a universal basic income or robot taxes are triggering heated debates.

But one thing is clear: Technology will continue to evolve, and the work force needs to adapt. And here the private sector can play a role as well, through, for example, reskilling current employees. Workers should also try themselves to find new ways to stand up for their rights. One potential solution may lie in some 'global virtual union', that crosses jurisdictions, and allow employees to better defend their rights.

Dr Roxana Radu and Ms Sorina Teleanu (fourth and fifth from left)

The sharing economy is experiencing rapid expansion and a rise in legal issues. View our interactive database of Uber-related court cases and other rulings.

3.8. Digital rights and the Internet

Lead discussants

Mr Lee Hibbard, Internet Governance Co-ordinator, Council of Europe, and Senior Fellow, DiploFoundation, and Ms Adriana Minović, Lawyer specialised in ICT law

Overview

Privacy and data protection rules – such as the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – are being tightened, affecting business practices worldwide. Are we GDPR-ready?

Summary

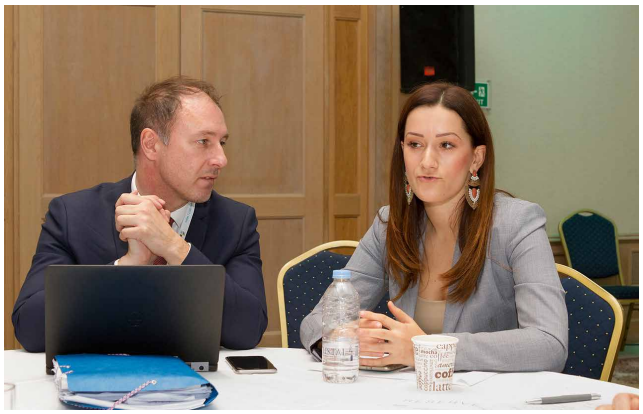
Digital rights (i.e., human rights that should be protected online as they are offline) have increasingly been recognised over the last 10 years, and data protection is a 'frontier field' for the protection of the human rights of Internet users.

The EU GDPR, with the newly created rights and obligations, is empowering individuals to take a more active role in the management of their personal data. It is also giving more responsibilities to companies and to data protection supervisory authorities to ensure compliance.

Set to enter into force in May 2018, the Regulation will lead to the integration of human rights into business practices. The GDPR is one of the first instruments that provides a concrete answer on how to practically incorporate the right to privacy and data protection as a specific human right into businesses' online operations, and will be obligatory, not just for service providers operating in the EU, but also for those from other parts of the world that offer their services on the EU market.

The privacy-by-design concept will require businesses to implement human rights standards from the very beginning of the production process, therefore becoming a paramount factor when developing new business plans and strategies.

There are also concerns about the GDPR's potential to interfere with the idea of a free market and dampen creativity due to its strict regulations. However, the GDPR's aim to protect the rights of individuals to handle their personal data is indisputable in the area of human rights, regardless of its implications in other fields. This optimistic 'glass half full' view is based on the fact that the biggest contribution the GDPR makes to the human rights area, is the strong link it creates between human rights and business practices.



Mr Lee Hibbard (left) and Ms Adriana Minović

Get the latest policy updates on privacy and data protection. Read more about the GDPR: who will it apply to? How will it introduce human rights aspects into business practices?

4. The hype and reality of online learning: Maximising the benefits

Here, there, and everywhere. The nature of a diplomat's work involves foreign postings and regular assignments abroad. Where does this leave traditional diplomatic training? In the hands of online learning. Leaders in diplomatic training described the hype and reality that surround online learning.

MOOCs, short courses, webinars, and blended learning are some of the latest trends in online learning. Infographics, comics, and illustrations are perennial tools. Looking beyond the hype, which trends and tools are most suited for diplomatic training?

4.1. Teaching diplomacy

Lead discussants

Amb. Kishan Rana, Professor Emeritus, and Senior Fellow, DiploFoundation, and Amb. John Paul Grech, Training Director, Maltese Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion

Overview

Can we teach diplomacy, and can we teach it online?

Summary

Can diplomacy be taught, and can it be taught online? To some extent, yes. Diplomatic training differs from one country to another, but it mostly involves study (in universities and diplomatic academies), training, orientation, and on-the-job learning. Some of these stages can be done online.

One of the merits of online training is that education follows the individual, and not the other way around. This is particularly useful for diplomats. Professional diplomats are abroad for most of their careers. Bringing them home for training can be both burdensome and disruptive. Here, online learning, handled part-time, is a good option.

Online learning is an effective method of teaching diplomacy, and it can help diplomats acquire the theoretical and practical knowledge required in their jobs. But effective diplomacy has a lot to do with interpersonal relations. Diplomats must master a number of skills, such as attentive listening, emotional intelligence, empathy, assertiveness, and politeness. These skills can be taught online, and refined through practice, on the job. Thus, online training in diplomacy stops where practice starts. Online environments cannot capture the specific scenarios of real-life situations, and diplomatic skills, such as those required for negotiations, can only be properly acquired through practice and face-to-face interactions.

Beyond online teaching, diplomats could also benefit from on-the-job mentoring. But here a question arises: Would mentoring lead to young diplomats following traditions instead of keeping up with our fast-paced evolving world?

Amb. Kishan Rana (left) and Amb. John Paul Grech

Diplo has been delivering online courses since its inception. Learn about the pedagogy and read articles on e-learning.

4.2. Just in time

Lead discussants

Mr Andrej Škrinjarić, Online Programmes Coordinator, DiploFoundation, and Amb. Angelic Alihusain-del Castilho, former Ambassador of Suriname

Overview

Learning while working? Flexible online courses can offer a timely solution.

Summary

We are always learning while working, especially in human-centred professions such as diplomacy. Yet the needs of working individuals are specific: flexibility, asynchronous education, topical and relevant education, fast delivery. Moreover, the tailored methodology needs to incorporate considerations for a guided approach and an international classroom. Guidance is particularly appreciated on topics where knowledge comes from practice, such as negotiation or debate. For such hands-on courses, face-to-face interactions could be better suited. The largest part of course takers in the online environment need the knowledge to complement what they do in their daily work.

On the participant side, the immediate need is first the motivation to join an online course. The benefits also include flexible timeframes, availability of the course independent of the location you are in, the possibility to interact with people from all over the world, visible improvement in overall knowledge that can be put to practice tomorrow, the development of professional networks, and the ability to empower each other via conversations. The challenges revolve around the recognition and credibility of the degree, the decrease in self-motivation over time, and the use of a language that is generally not the mother tongue of the participant. The results are visible shortly after enrolling in the course: consolidation of knowledge, experience to share on the job, immersion in complex topics, and access to a wider expert base.

Mr Andrej Škrinjarić (standing) and Amb. Angelic Alihusain-del Castilho (third from right)

The Geneva Internet Platform, operated by Diplo, regularly offers just-in-time courses to digital policy practitioners. Learn more.

4.3. Blended learning

Lead discussants

Ms Hannah Slavik, Educational Programmes Director, DiploFoundation, Mr Patrick Borg, Master in Contemporary Diplomacy Coordinator, DiploFoundation, and Dr Zemaida Mozali, Senior Lecturer, UAMD, Albania

Overview

A combined approach of face-to-face and online learning offers the best of both worlds.

Summary

Blended learning occurs when 'technologies and teachers cooperate across online and in-person spaces,' according to MIT's Online Education Policy Initiative 2016 report.

Blended learning combines traditional, face-to-face learning and online learning in smart ways, taking advantage of the strengths of each medium. Online learning cannot replace the human and personal engagement we are used to in physical classrooms, but through blended learning, it can complement traditional face-to-face learning.

But what isn't blended learning anymore? Are we moving towards a time when all learning will be blended learning, and the term might not even be needed anymore? Traditional lectures have already introduced some aspects of blended learning, from lecturers' notes online to preparing group assignments using online tools.

The benefits of face-to-face learning in a blended learning programme can have long-lasting effects. Taking Diplo's MA programme as an example, the 10-day residential

workshop at the beginning of the programme gives participants the building blocks that last throughout their 16–20-month programme. During those 10 days, participants establish lasting relationships with their colleagues and lecturers, giving them a physical, tangible, link to their university. This is something that cannot be achieved through online learning alone.

When it comes to the outcomes and the effectiveness of blended learning, some are still sceptical. However, a survey run by the Babson Survey Research Group in 2016 on the state of online education in higher learning institutions in the USA for the last 13 years seems to confirm otherwise. Over 70% of the academic leaders surveyed felt that online learning outcomes were as good or better than face-to-face learning outcomes (compared to 57% in 2003). Academic leaders were far more positive about outcomes for blended learning than online learning. Over 85% considered blended learning to be as good as, or superior to, face-to-face learning. The future therefore looks good for blended learning.

Ms Hannah Slavik (second from left) and Mr Patrick Borg

Diplo's Master/Postgraduate Diploma in Contemporary Diplomacy combines online learning with face-to-face training. Learn more.

4.4. MOOCs

Lead discussants

Dr Katharina Höne, Research Associate in Diplomacy and Global Governance, DiploFoundation, and Ms Barbara Rosen Jacobson, Project and Research Associate, DiploFoundation

Overview

MOOCs are free and unlimited. Is there a catch?

Summary

Are MOOCs an effective tool for online education? MOOCs are able to reach a large number of people simultaneously. As such, they might be able to bridge divides within and across countries, and empower groups that might lack the means to enrol in traditional universities. In addition, with changing demands in the labour market, they can be used to attain new knowledge and skills.

Yet, MOOCs are often characterised by low completion rates. It is difficult to stay engaged, not least due to the lack of communication, interaction, and empathy that is characteristic of traditional teaching methods. Motivation is difficult to retain when learning is self-paced and lacks encouragement. A more collaborative model of online learning could be more effective, as well as courses that more specifically address people's needs and enables them to advance their professional lives.

What are the incentives and business models of the institutions that create MOOCs? While these courses often appear to be free, they encourage people to ultimately enrol, or to pay to obtain a certificate for the course. The collection of participants' data could be another business incentive to develop into online learning. Ultimately, it could be argued that MOOCs fail to be effective as they are

Dr Katharina Höne (left) and Ms Barbara Rosen Jacobson

Diplo's lecturers and guest writers have explored different aspects related to MOOCs. Read the articles.

business-driven, rather than designed to enrich people's learning experience.

The MOOC hype might be over, as scepticism rises, and the market satiates. While capturing the benefits of online learning – removing the requirement to be physically present in a classroom – we can learn from MOOCs' disadvantages and move towards more collaborative and needs-driven forms of e-education.

4.5. Webinars

Lead discussants

Mr Arvin Kamberi, Remote Participation expert and head of Diplo's Webinars Team, and Mr Dejan Dinčić, Digital Transformation and Online Learning specialist

Overview

Ready, steady, learn. They are interactive, and accessible.

Summary

Webinars are a live e-learning delivery method with several advantages over other e-learning delivery methods. The use of live video for presenters is a powerful tool for transposing their presence in the classroom. Webinars also contribute to enhancing the interactivity level, contrary to MOOCs and other pre-recorded lectures. As a second hint for better webinar delivery, live Q&A interaction with the audience is also important.

A direct approach to questions raised needs to be a substantial part of every webinar delivery. Bearing in mind that time is the most valued commodity in an online era, respecting the schedule is important for participants. Consistency in time and date schedules can grow the audience significantly. Also, the use of pre-prepared materials (presentations, videos, polls, important links, etc.) is an important part of the successful delivery of a webinar. Proper and timely follow-up is essential as well, and it involves sending out the recording of the webinar, the presentations and links that were used, and other follow-up details such as assignments, tests, etc.

The recent increase in mobile use, and lower bandwidth video and audio delivery solutions, have broadened the possibility for access around the globe.

When trying to predict future possible trends in real time e-learning solutions, virtual reality could be a significant breakthrough in personalised e-learning experience. Regarding remote participation in general, developments in the field of holographic e-presence over the network can be another future development that can enhance participation. Holographic appearance of remote participants in an in situ venue, can and will bring remote participants to participate on an equal footing with in situ participants. This is evoked by the rapid rise of facial recognition and face/body scanning technologies developed by virtual reality and AI companies.

Mr Dejan Dinčić

Recognising the need for up-to-the-minute information offset by the limited time we have available, Diplo delivers regular webinars on various diplomacy and Internet governance topics.

4.6. Visuals

Lead discussants

Dr Vladimir Veljašević, Professor of Art, University of Fine Arts, Belgrade, and Illustrator, DiploFoundation, and Ms Darija Medić, Digital Art project coordinator, DiploFoundation

Overview

A picture is worth a thousand words, or?

Summary

When we discus visuals in online learning, what are we, in fact, talking about? What is the role of an image in any process of learning, or, in other words, how do we read images? In that sense, we must not forget the importance of social context in the creation of meaning. Something that was readable in one moment in history can have a completely different meaning or lack thereof, in another time. Images are powerful message carriers, realised through metaphors, symbols, and connotations, working on a similar level as folk tales in oral history.

We are living in a predominantly visually literate culture. Everything communicated today has a stronger message if accompanied by an image. There are questions, however, about the level of the potential risk of a biased visual, giving, in some cases, only one side of a story. In this sense, a text accompanying an image can be an important element of dialogue and is in some cases necessary to carry the whole story. An image does not have to have a thousand elements to be worth a thousand words; often it is the contrary. One thing is certain: Images have an overwhelming power to communicate, and we should put more effort into learning how to read, create, and implement them in the process of learning and teaching.

Dr Vladimir Veljašević and Ms Darija Medić

Explore innovative and creative interpretations of key issues within diplomacy and international relations, developed by Diplo's illustrators.

Summarising the discussions

Day 2: 18 November 2017

5. Emerging technologies: Preparing diplomats for 2030 and beyond

High-level panel with the participation of H.E. Ms Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta; Prof. Andre Liebich, Honorary Professor, Graduate Institute, Geneva; Amb. Dr Petru Dumitriu, Member of the Joint Inspection Unit, United Nations, and Senior Fellow, DiploFoundation; Dr Richard Hill, President, Association for Proper Internet Governance; Mr Michael Nelson, Public Policy at Cloudflare; and Dr Stephanie Borg Psaila, Digital Policy Director, DiploFoundation.

Overview

It is no longer science fiction. AI is behind the wheel, flying drones, and winning chess games. It is powering robots to automate tasks, and to replicate human behaviour. AI is appearing also on international agendas. For example, Elon Musk and other AI pioneers are calling for a ban on the development of lethal autonomous weapons – an area which the UN is now tackling.

H.E. Ms Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta

Will emerging technologies redefine the core social and ethical pillars of humanity? How can mankind ensure growth and the positive effect of new technologies, while addressing potential risks? And which core diplomatic functions can, and cannot, be automated? Can negotiations be programmed, and can empathy be digitalised? A high-level panel talked robots, risks, and reality-checks.

Summary

AI is around and under continuous evolution. We see it in various applications, from translation tools to self-driving cars and beyond. There are more and more discussions around AI, and the opportunities and challenges it brings or it might bring. These discussions range from fact to fiction, from dystopian views to practical interpretations.

But can AI replace humans or perform inherently human functions, like showing and interpreting emotions? The discussion included a wide range of views, from those who argue that AI can never replace the uniqueness of human beings, to those who argue that it is matter of time when

> *Artificial intelligence can and must be used to achieve positive outcomes, and positive peace – the cultural shift needed in our societies. [...] Machines and AI can never replace the uniqueness of human beings, but can provide support for and sustain peace.*
>
> H.E. Ms Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca, President of Malta

A high-level panel on emerging technologies discusses the challenges and opportunities of artificial intelligence

AI would be capable of simulating human intelligence and emotions.

In addition, even if it will be possible to automate many human activities, humanity may decide not to. So far, the extent to which we use AI is matter of choice and a matter of judgment. Will it remain so? Is the world a better place because games such as chess and Go lost their magic, once humans were beaten by automated systems? In some instances, the success of technology over humans is a 'victory without beauty'.

AI, like any other technology, does not come without risks. One risk we should be focusing on is that AI and automation can bring a new form of digital divide, as some parts of the world would benefit of the advantages of these technologies, while others would not have access to them.

AI is here to stay, and its development cannot and should not be stopped. As always in history, we should acknowledge that we have to live with both the good and the bad of technology. Thus, we should focus on risk management, and try to diminish and contain the possible negative impact of such technologies.

But, looking at the broader picture, if we focus on what we do not even know will even happen, we will stifle innovation. Governments should not impose regulations on technologies that are brand new. However, some general and flexible principles guiding the evolution of AI and setting the frame for future developments should be considered.

For example, analogous to the climate change field, the precautionary principle could be used to prevent the potential negative impact of AI on human rights and society.

Looking at the area of diplomacy, can AI handle negotiations? Some believe this is not the case, as negotiations are an area of the unexpected, and AI systems cannot deal with the specificities of identities, as they are different, unexpected, and arbitrary. AI can help diplomats, for example in data processing, but it cannot replace the human factor entirely. AI cannot reach compromise, and it is blind to perception, intuition, and risk taking. Human diplomats can detect the undetectable, see the invisible, notice the unnoticeable, and this is not something AI systems can do, at least not in the foreseeable future.

Others are of the view that negotiations can be automated, to some extent. Automated negotiations could work well in win-lose situations, but not necessarily in complex situations. On the other hand, even the emotional parts of negotiations could be automated. And there is also a middle-ground view: AI will complement diplomatic activities, and we should look at how to use it to enhance the functions of diplomats.

The field of artificial intelligence has seen significant advances over the past few years. Learn more about the policy implications, applications, and developments.

6. Riding the waves of technology: The trends and practical uses of technology

Throughout the decades, Diplo has been both researching, and using digital technology and e-tools. This experience provided a backdrop for discussions on underlying trends and for sharing practical insights on how to adopt technology for our daily practices. From e-mails and tools for promotion, to remote work and new styles of communicating, eight parallel discussions tackled very practical aspects.

6.1. Hype and trends

Lead discussant

Mr Dejan Dinčić, Digital Transformation and Online Learning specialist

Overview

The last few decades were dotted with technological hypes that fizzled away. Some were more sustainable, and turned into trends. By looking at the past, how can we distinguish the hype from the trend in the future?

Summary

What strategies can individuals and organisations use to deal with the accelerating pace of technological innovation? To invest early in trying and adopting each new trend, platform, and tool that makes the headlines requires enormous resources. To ignore them would mean to risk being left out of the new trends and ways of doing business, making policy, or otherwise participating in economic and social life. How can we spot important trends and recognise underlying fundamental shifts and concentrate our efforts on them? How can we avoid new digital divides?

Participants were keen to look at these issues from a well-informed and long-term perspective, resisting the pressure of hype cycles fuelled by the media and the industry.

When it comes to testing and evaluating new technologies, several obstacles that come to mind. Gaps still exist in access to the Internet and the services it offers. Not only are there still regions with none or only poor and costly connectivity in the world, but significant divides exist even in the industrialised countries, among different social groups. These divides threaten to further increase the economic and social gaps between different groups, and to exclude significant numbers from influencing future developments.

There are both containing and enabling factors that could help us deal with new trends and the ever-changing technical landscape. One of the perspectives that can help us both evaluate and manage a new technology or platform is the information management perspective of ensuring continuity of access to information.

Finally, the role of trusted mediators is important, as they act as a bridge between the technology world and the world of policymakers, businesses, and society at large. Mediators are needed to connect the complexity of digital technology to the existing and future economic and social flows.

Mr Dejan Dinčić (centre)

Throughout the years, Diplo has researched and explored the use of digital technology and e-tools. The publication Diplo turns 15 refers to some of the tools.

6.2. The right tool for the right purposes

Lead discussant

Mr Pierre Vacherand, Special Adviser to the President of Kontiotuote Oy, and founder and first President of Honka Europe

Overview

Selecting the most appropriate digital tools for promotion can make all the difference. What can we learn from the business community?

Summary

Practices and approaches adopted by the private sector have served as an inspiration to other actors, usually because of their efficiency and efficacy. When it comes to communication, the private sector has introduced creative ways to distil information through many different channels, including social media, in order to reach their target audience.

Some of the good practices used by the private sector for communication have entered the diplomatic realm, such as branding. Nation-branding is one of the activities usually carried out in online strategies of public diplomacy. In this session, participants discussed lessons that can be learnt from the private sector in the field of communication, taking inspiration from some concrete examples.

One of emerging challenges where the private sector is ahead of governments is AI. AI generates new types of tools that will affect future production and marketing activities.

Mr Pierre Vacherand

Foreign ministries worldwide use a range of e-tools. Read blog posts and articles that describe the use of e-tools.

6.3. Working remotely

Lead discussant

Ms Hannah Slavik, Educational Programmes Director, DiploFoundation

Overview

The joys of working remotely can be quickly overshadowed by working in isolation. Where is the balance?

Summary

The World Economic Forum (WEF) 2016 Future of Jobs report found that flexible and remote work are transcending the physical boundaries of the office, and challenging the boundaries between the job and private life. Discussions during this session supported the report's conclusion that individuals, employers, and governments need to find ways to make the changing nature of work benefit all.

Remote work comes in different forms, including working from home (telecommuting) sometimes or all of the time; working from co-working spaces; and working in virtual teams. Some of the benefits of remote work include:

- Reduced need for employees to commute (environmentally friendly, and saves time and money).
- Lower costs for employers (less office space needed).
- Comfort and flexibility for employees, which may increase productivity and efficiency.
- Flexibility to better combine family life and work responsibilities.

On the other hand, there are many challenges.

- The employee may feel isolated and miss the stimulation provided by spontaneous socialisation in the office.
- It may be hard for the employee to maintain motivation and avoid distractions at home.
- Conversely, the employees may find themselves working longer hours and have difficulty separating free time and work time.
- There may be trust-related issues, as the employer cannot see what the employee is doing at all times during the day.

There are several ways to overcome the challenges of remote work. For example, the employee may set up personal routines, deadlines, and to-do lists. They should take regular breaks and may designate a specific location to work at home. Most importantly, it is crucial to smartly combine different types of work, using the right tools and the right modes of work for each activity.

The lead discussants of the session on Riding the waves of technology: The trends and practical uses of technology

Diplo's staff and faculty are located around the globe. The first global gathering of Diplo staff took place on 16 November 2017, a day before the conference.

6.4. Between the lines

Lead discussant

Dr Biljana Scott, Associate of the Chinese Institute at Oxford University, and Senior Fellow at DiploFoundation

Overview

Diplomatic language is changing. Simplicity is in, subtlety is out. Does implicit communication still have a role?

Summary

We live in an age governed by a KISS (Keep It Short (and) Simple/Stupid) dictum which results in simplicity being in and subtlety being out. Does implicit communication, which is often associated with diplomacy, still have a role in this changing world?

The advantage of implicit communication is the fact that it allows you to both convey more messages/meanings at the same time, and to allow you room for manoeuvre and deniability if needed. Loaded questions (questions that contain a controversial or unjustified assumption) are some of the most effective ways to present a particular view that will hold even after you negate it, thanks to the presupposition around which it is based. However, to master such a complex way of communication that is often influenced by different cultural backgrounds and specifics, we need a lot of training. Given the ongoing advancements in the field of AI and other emerging technologies, we could use technology to improve our skills and creativity.

Based on that suggestion, an idea emerged to develop an interactive course using technology-assisted methodology that will train participants to respond to loaded questions, ranking the successfulness of their replies in terms of both dodging the bullet and turning the flow of the discussion to their advantage. DiploFoundation, as always when faced with a challenge, committed to looking into practical ways how to put this into practice.

Dr Biljana Scott

Take Diplo's course on Language and Diplomacy and learn more about activities related to the so-called 'essence of diplomacy'

6.5. Constructive contrarianism

Lead discussants

Mr Aldo Matteucci, former Deputy Secretary General of EFTA and Senior Fellow, DiploFoundation, and Dr Jovan Kurbalija, Director, DiploFoundation

Overview

How do we move beyond the binary logic in policy debates? Two different views for the digital future (decentralised/enabling vs control/monopoly), lead to an in vivo cognitive experiment to show the limitations of the either/or framing of policy issues and the need for more analogue insights.

Summary

Moving away from binary either-or and right-or-wrong debates, this roundtable took as a starting point the approach to see two opposite sides of an argument and see what emerged in the dynamics of their juxtaposition.

Is the traditional nation-state coming to an end, or do states remain as relevant as ever? According to one view, the nation-state should not be taken for granted. With an abundance of trans-border developments and a growing inability to read and collect surplus, the state as we know it is crumbling.

This development is further affected by the power of corporations like Google. While these companies are able to quickly respond to changing environments, official institutions have difficulty keeping up because of their bureaucratic structures. Changes in political organisations could also be affected by a changing role of human beings. Labour derived from the human body and mind could be outsourced through robotisation and AI, which might require new responsibilities for the nation-state.

However, the state as a form of social organisation is not likely to disappear; it might merely change in form. Social groupings will always exist, as will the boundaries between them, whether they are perceived as fixed borders or spheres of influence.

Yet, nation-states could also be reinforced, rather than made obsolete. There will always be a need to mediate and govern, and states could benefit from the growing amount of information that they are able to control and exploit.

Companies, although economically powerful, could expect strong pushback from governments, which will increasingly impose their rules, taking control over the data in their territories. Ultimately, the question might well be whether the state is still able to protect its citizens and live up to their social contract with the population.

Mr Aldo Matteucci

Visit the blog roll for articles by Mr Aldo Matteucci, Diplo's 'resident contrarian'

6.6. Knowledge of the few, wisdom of the many

Lead discussant

Amb. Petru Dumitriu, Member of the Joint Inspection Unit, United Nations, and Senior Fellow, DiploFoundation

Overview

Knowledge of the few, wisdom of many: Knowledge management has new means to store data and information in the digital era. Do digital tools make us wiser?

Summary

This roundtable focused on knowledge management at a personal level and in organisations. While technology can help at the basis of the knowledge pyramid, it does not turn us into wiser people. A few distinctive features of the digital world stand out: information overload, the need to check the source rather than rely on the first search result, the relevance of information at a specific point in time, lower ability for data retention, and the need for critical thinking.

The *GIP Digital Watch* observatory is an in vivo experiment of curation and analysis of digital policy, carried by a 50+ strong team of experts. Learn more.

Using the 'junk food' analogy, we tend to consume quickly what is available, without knowing the source of the information or thinking through the consequences.

The agglomeration of available information tends to make an in-depth analysis more difficult, whereas access via search engines to specific information faces the risk of bias due to ranking based on personalisation and popularity. In institutional set-ups, we need a change of mentality to start valuing knowledge sharing as opposed to knowledge monopoly, which was previously a competitive advantage. Moreover, such a stance should be taken also as a criterion for performance evaluation, where more value should be placed on the ability and availability to share information.

Amb. Petru Dumitriu

6.7. Offline is the new luxury

Lead discussant

Dr Stephanie Borg Psaila, Digital Policy Director, DiploFoundation

Overview

In today's 'always online, everywhere' craze, being constantly online comes at a cost. Can we afford to be offline and for how long?

Summary

Most of us are online most of the time: we check our e-mails within a few minutes of waking up, and shortly before wrapping up our day. As a consequence, switching off has become difficult. The issue revolves around two key questions: whether this craze is hurting us, and at the same time, whether we can afford to be offline.

The 'always online, everywhere' craze is triggered by the immediacy of communications. As a result, we have become addicted to e-mails, social media streams, online notifications, and other 'distractions'. For many, the addiction has a name: fear of missing out. For others, it comes with work-related pressures. There is nothing healthy about an obsession, but we do realise that downtime is just as important.

For many, switching off requires skill. We are often unable to simply turn off notifications and the sync capabilities on mobile devices. To allow ourselves some offline time, we may also need to change our environment.

At the same time, we realise that we cannot afford to be offline for more than a short while. The length of our offline time depends largely on our work: deadlines and other work-related needs are the main reason.

While most of us cannot be offline for long periods, managing our time – and other people's expectations – goes a long way. Automatic e-mail responders can inform our counterparts as to when to expect certain responses. Out-of-office replies can also help us take well-deserved breaks. Giving ourselves time to react can make a healthy difference.

Dr Stephanie Borg Psaila (centre)

6.8. Disruptive communications

Lead discussant

Amb. Stefano Baldi, Ambassador of Italy to Bulgaria

Overview

Social media and online communications challenge traditional hierarchies within an institution. How do we adapt?

Summary

Disruptive communication will always be a challenge that diplomats will have to meet. There are no easy solutions. In a world of communication tools that allow for instant communication and also demand immediate responses, diplomats cannot afford to be offline.

E-mail and social media are a game-changer in the sense that they subvert hierarchies of communication and enable a horizontal communication playing field. However, the MFA is a hierarchical organisation and new communication tools can therefore lead to tensions because information and instructions can be sent in a way that circumvents traditional hierarchies of communication within the MFA. Yet, this also means that diplomats need to be alert to various media channels. Diplomats sometimes first learn about the position of the ministry on an issue on social media before receiving official instructions.

In some cases, the minister communicates with the world but also with diplomats through social media before sending formal instructions. This can be helpful if quick reactions are needed, but this also increases the burden on the individual diplomat to stay informed on the latest developments across time zones and communication channels. There is an increasing expectation to react immediately, but also to stay informed continuously.

Trust and credibility are key issues in relation to social media. Online communication needs to be handled by trained staff, who can craft and analyse messages. Further, embassies and local staff become more important to verify information and to foster understanding across language and cultural barriers.

Amb. Stefano Baldi (right)

Explore e-diplomacy (or digital diplomacy), which explores new methods and modes of conducting diplomacy with the help of the Internet, ICTs, and e-tools.

7. Drum-roll: Concluding the conference

Before offering his closing remarks, Amb. Valentin Zellweger invited conference participants to share their main takeaways from the conference. These are some of those messages:

- Diplomacy is relational, and it is an aspect that we forget. It is this aspect that is still very relevant and will remain so for the coming years, as technology becomes ever more pervasive. Diplomats and diplomacy will have a key role to play; they keep the glue of international society together.
- We clearly have challenges arising from digitalisation and globalisation when it comes to what the role of the states is with respect to their own citizens and to other states. We need new ways to tackle new issues, and we should continue to look at how Diplo could help to address these issues.
- There have been many hints of exciting opportunities that technologies could help us achieve. We talked about 'Westphalia 2.0', about not using robot negotiators, but about using big data and machine learning to inform negotiations. We talked about how we could use social media and big data to build communities. But we know very little about how to do any of that.
- Looking at 'continuity' and 'change', it is the elements of continuity that are the most dominant, but somehow we tend to get seduced by the 'change'-related jargon of the day. Relations between countries are still about building trust, bridges, and understanding, and it also relates to credibility. The task of diplomats remains one of continuity of actions.
- We have to learn to trust each other, but we also need to learn to trust ourselves and our own skills and abilities. Diplo comes into that with its training. Diplo should continue looking at new trends such as AI and how they may be brought into the service of enhancing our own skills in order to trust ourselves to learn how to deal with others better.
- During the discussions, there were more questions than answers. There is quite a clear awareness of technologies and what they mean, and how they might affect diplomacy. While there seems to be optimism among those who are familar with the technology, there is also some level of discomfort and concern among non-technologists.
- We have seen how different communities come together and it seems there is a shared understanding with regard to vulnerabilities – of individuals, states, and the international community – when it comes to technological developments. Diplo has to help us understand what happens in this changing world, and continue to be a platform that brings people together and facilitates exchanges.
- The entry point for social media is low, but the rate of success in using social media is very high. This new type of communication requires good organisation, resources, and well-trained diplomats.
- Future discussions will be a mix of a zoomed-out focus on major geopolitical, philosophical, and economic issues, and a zoomed-in focus on the impact of technology on the way diplomacy operates.

Amb. Valentin Zellweger inviting participants to share their takeaways from the conference

Concluding remarks

One of the take-aways [...] is perhaps rather a feeling. A feeling first of gratitude, but also a confirmation of something we knew before this conference. We knew that Diplo is doing a fantastic work, and it has been confirmed during these two days. [...] This has certainly been one of the most inspiring, lively, and thought-provoking conferences that I have participated in, in the past year. [...] And we could attribute this to this unique mixture that you all have, which is a mixture between savviness and humanity. Because it is not only a matter of seeing trends and what will be coming in the future, but it is also about organising a conference that is more like a family gathering than it is of a technical nature. [...] This is a unique gift, and we all hope that Diplo will have another 15 years and that you will be able to develop all your skills and that we will be able to benefit from you.

Amb. Valentin Zellweger, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations Office and to other international organisations in Geneva

Dr Jovan Kurbalija closed the conference, thanking each individual member of the DiploTeam, and noting that 'Diplo is really about teamwork, and one of the main aim of this conference was to show all of these people at their best.'

About DiploFoundation

DiploFoundation emerged from a project to introduce ICT tools to the practice of diplomacy. In 1992, with the help of the governments of Malta and Switzerland, the Unit for Computer Applications in Diplomacy was established at the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies.

In November 2002, this Unit evolved into DiploFoundation, established by Malta and Switzerland, as a not-for-profit organisation. Since then, Diplo has worked to increase the role of small and developing states in global diplomacy, and to improve global governance and international policy development. We also seek to assist actors in dealing with the fast-emerging policy field of Internet governance and digital policy.

Nowadays, Diplo works in a number of areas and runs many programmes and activities:

Capacity development programmes in areas such as Internet governance, e-diplomacy, and public diplomacy. Our approach includes online training, policy research, policy immersion, and the development of communities of practice.

Events. To deal with pressing issues in global governance, our events bring together people from different areas, including diplomats, business professionals, and members of civil society. We work to make our events more accessible through online participation.

Courses. Diplo offers a Master's programme in Contemporary Diplomacy in collaboration with the University of Malta, and many postgraduate-level academic courses and training workshops on a variety of diplomacy-related topics. Courses are delivered online, face-to-face, and in a blended format.

Research and publications Research and publications on topics such as e-diplomacy, online learning, e-participation, Internet governance, and digital policy. We build on traditional policy research methods through Internet-based techniques, including crowd-sourcing, trend analysis, and collaborative research.

Diplo also operates the Geneva Internet Platform and the *GIP Digital Watch* observatory.

For more information about Diplo, visit **www.diplomacy.edu**

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