DiploCircle

M A G A Z I N E

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Introduction

Welcome to DiploCircle Magazine #2!

This edition of DiploFoundation's newsletter is dedicated to showcasing some of the best publications by Diplo-related people during 2020. These publications have appeared in various outlets that range from DiploFoundation's blog or Wisdom Circle initiative to external journals such as *The Wire* or *Horizons*. The selection of texts demonstrates the wide range of issue areas in which Diplo-related people develop their activity and thought. Hence, DiploCircle Magazine #2 has pieces on topics so diverse such as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on governance, public diplomacy, small island developing states, cyberspace and internet governance, cybersecurity, diplomatic immunity, race and technology, nature and technology or artificial intelligence.

DiploCircle Magazine #2 is organized in four sections. The first section, *Long-reads*, showcases two publications by Ambassadors Kishan Rana and Asoke Mukerji, respectively entitled 'The corona virus pandemic will leave its imprint on governance and polity' and 'The need for an international convention on cyberspace'. This is followed by the section *Blog posts* dedicated to reproducing a sample of some of the pieces published in DiploFoundation's blog during 2020. The third section, *Master's dissertation abstracts* presents summaries of the Master's dissertations that were concluded in 2020 in the context of the Master/Postgraduate Diploma on Contemporary Diplomacy offered by DiploFoundation in cooperation with the Department of International Relations of the University of Malta. Finally, section four, *Book Reviews*, offers a review of James Mayall and Sunjay Pulipaka's edited volume *Values in Foreign Policy: Investigating ideas and interests*, published by Rowan & Littlefield in 2019.

We hope you enjoy DiploCircle Magazine #2 and that these pieces are both informative and engaging. In case you wish to contribute to DiploCircle, or have any related queries, please do not hesitate to contact us at andres@diplomacy.edu.

Happy readings!

1. Long-reads

Kishan Rana

Former diplomat with the Indian Foreign Service, Professor Emeritus at DiploFoundation, and Emeritus Fellow Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi and Faculty Member of DiploFoundation

The Coronavirus Pandemic Will Leave Its Imprint on Governance and Polity

First published on *The Wire*, 23 April

We may yet be neck deep in the coronavirus crisis but it is still worth thinking about what the possible outcome of these extraordinary times might be. There is no need to claim or offer accuracy in trying to anticipate the future – especially when so much that we took for granted is transformed – so here are four predictions I'd like to make, in no particular order of importance.

1. Authoritarian models will seem more attractive.

First, the authoritarian state model may gain salience, and new followers, perhaps not out of choice, but a kind of forced adaptation. Authentic facts of what happened in China, and its ongoing virus prevention and related actions are unclear and disputed on many points. For some, distrust for all things Chinese has deepened. But consider that besides China, many countries now use meta-data from phone locators to track infected persons and those that they may have infected. Yet, only one country in the world has a linked network of over 200 million surveillance cameras deployed across cities, towns and villages, equipped with the world's finest face recognition and artificial intelligence algorithms; every individual inhabitant is identified and assigned case file numbers, tied with matching financial data and social media histories. Thus, virus infection tracking in China reaches an altogether different level of enforcement and continual scrutiny. No country has anything remotely comparable. For disaster management, this becomes an extraordinary tool. Let us put aside for
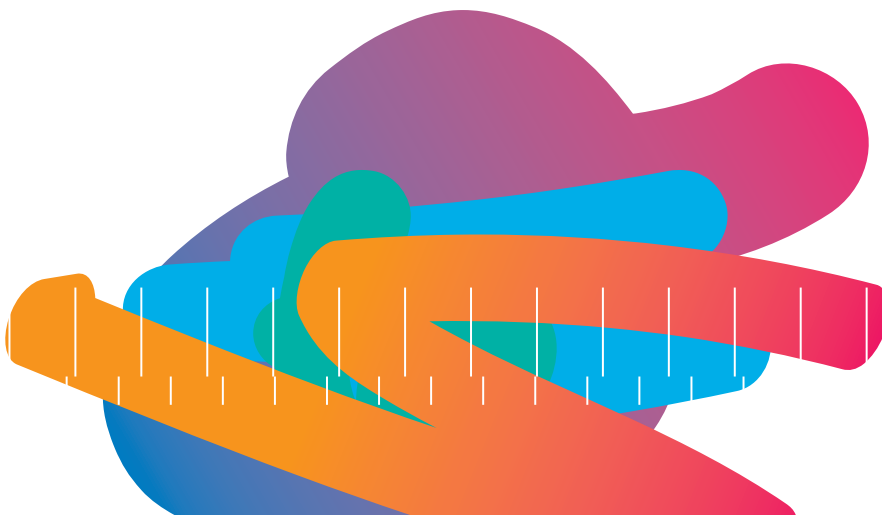
our purpose its Kafkaesque dimension and note that this will play a role in dealing with this crisis, and the medium-term outcome for that country.

Beyond China, the existential threat posed by the current virus, has meant that extraordinary measures for isolation, tracking, and infection prevention being put in place necessarily involve harsh, decisive and instant actions. There is virtually no room for consultations, much less parliamentary debate. Those countries that react fast, learn quickly from mistakes, and are continually quick on the ball, will reduce mortality and benefit their own people. True, for the administrator, the instinct to regulate, even dictate, comes naturally. But more important, people in each country may then utility in authoritarian decisiveness. Will that not affect the wider narrative on governance methods?
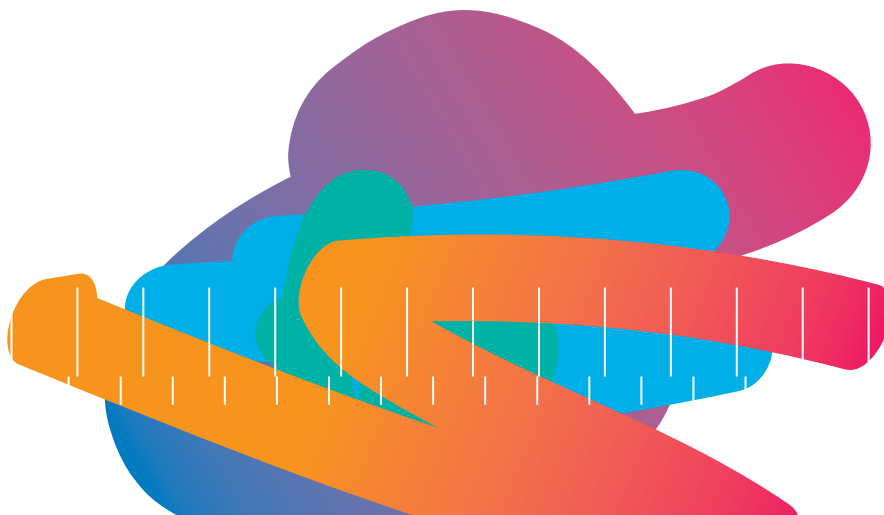
2. Electoral politics may still spring surprises

Second, domestic politics models are likely to undergo transformation, though none can predict if some change now visible in different countries will endure. In India, the opposition response is in flux. Some states ruled by the opposition supported an extension of the lockdown mooted and imposed by the Centre, thus avoiding typical knee-jerk responses that have been the norm for parties out of power. Elsewhere, opposition political parties have come forward to work with their governments, to effectively suggesting a virtual united front. Publics everywhere will surely remember, in their own way, how their ruling and opposition parties, and the entire body politic, acted in safeguarding their nation and community. But that is no guarantee to what will come later. Remember what happened in the UK in the elections of early 1945, when the end of World War II was in sight, but not fully accomplished. In early 1940, a confused Britain turned to that leader in the wilderness, Winston Churchill who had climbed a political limb (over what became the 1935 India Act), self-destructed and had then gone into political self-exile. In crisis, the ruling Conservatives saw him as their only real choice. And did he not deliver? His wartime defiance of Hitler, those ringing, tightly rehearsed 'extempore' speeches, epitomise leadership for all time, despite the flaws that were also part of Churchill's personality. And then, the very man who led the nation to victory was summarily rejected in the July 1945 election, even before Germany's final collapse, and the Labour party was voted to power.

3. A new compact between nation states and multilateralism?

Third, the COVID-19 pandemic will ensure that the nation state is back as a vigorous, indispensable sine qua non of the international system. Forget Suzanne Strange and her ilk. We might leave it to international rela-

tions theory specialists to work out the wider consequences, through elegant analysis. Some have speculated that international cooperation will become stronger across the board. Might the UN gain new traction? That seems optimistic. It may go against the reinforced reality of a strong nation state system.

4. The focus will have to be economic

Finally, and perhaps most important of all, if a horrendous economic collapse comes to pass, it will produce the greatest suffering on the poor and the deprived. Even in the wealthiest states, the lowest income groups will become the victims. For countries of the Global South, especially those with large numbers of poor people, we may not be able to imagine the magnitude of suffering. Future generations will also wonder how rulers fiddled across the world with their 'business as usual' narrow-minded political tunes, when they could have crafted better economic policy. India might be among the countries where that regret over lost opportunities might be the deepest. Remember, after Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao's mid-1991, 'noalternative' launch of economic liberalisation, our succeeding rulers lost the plot around the end of 1994, including that very Prime minister. The list of those responsible includes the key economic policy makers and advisers of the succeeding years, right up to present times. This is not to rake over old coals, but simply to say that in the period 1995–2019 we could have done so much more, if only national economic growth and the prosperity of the people – and not a political calculus – had been the central driver of our governance actions. The Modi government did a great deal after 2014 on social governance (power connections, toilets, cooking gas, finance for the poor), but could have delivered more on economic reform. A major plus right now for India is the strong will shown by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, even if much of our national governance system is more dystopian than efficacious. We will need drive, balanced and agile response actions, across the country's 730 districts. That is where the battle against the virus will be waged, not in our chattering, self-indulgent capital or the other cities where, as always, both good leaders and satraps reign. Let's prepare for hard times.

Asoke Mukerji

India's former Permanent Representative to the United Nations and Faculty Member of DiploFoundation

The Need for an International Convention on Cyberspace

Over the past three decades, a convergence of information and communication technologies (ICTs), together with various governance policies, have created what we now call "cyberspace." Today cyberspace is a living reality, influencing all aspects of human behavior. The need to create a universal and transparent global framework to ensure the effective security and utilization of cyberspace "for the economic and social advancement of all peoples" has become paramount. How can this be achieved?

Governments addressed this issue more than two decades ago, when the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted its first resolution on ICTs in December 1998. Other stakeholders including businesses, academia, and civil society have become more articulate in seeking a supportive international framework for their activities in cyberspace. As the United Nations marks its Seventy-fifth anniversary this year, and notwithstanding the truly unpredictable effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, I believe the time has come to launch a broad-based multi-stakeholder process that can culminate in the adoption of an international convention on cyberspace.

1. Cyberspace and Its Stakeholders

Emerging concepts related to the application of cyber technologies are propelling the world into the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), and robotics are expected to dominate cyberspace and redefine the role of human beings in this domain within just a few short years. While these phenomena are currently being tested and applied within a few countries, their impact will be felt globally due to the complex interlinkages of cyberspace. These interlinkages revolve around cyber technologies and infrastructure. A broad understanding of the internet incorporates cyber technologies such as wireless and fixed broadband, smartphones, the mobile internet, and cloud computing. Critical national infrastructures as well as social media platforms enable the flow of data across cyberspace, using a global network of fiber-optic cables and 13 primary root-servers that direct this data to its destination. The potential of cyberspace
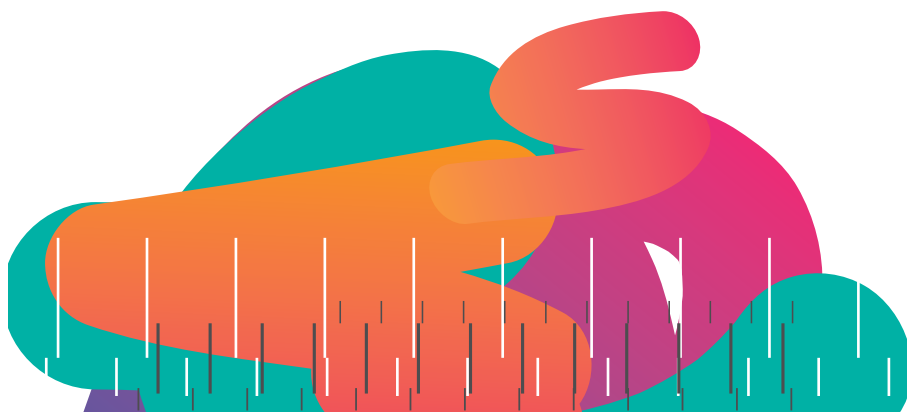
for the progress of mankind is immeasurable when it functions in a holistic manner. On the other hand, any fragmentation of this domain could have unfathomable ramifications.

The four main stakeholders in cyberspace acknowledged by the UNGA are governments, businesses, academia, and civil society. These stakeholders are active in varying degrees within most UN member states. Of these four, governments have the primary responsibility for cyberspace policies, including cyber-security, and the application of cyber technologies for national governance objectives. Thus, governments have an obligation to ensure effective international cooperation in cyberspace to meet these objectives. Two broad areas where governments have taken the lead are in discussing and agreeing on norms for securing cyberspace, and in using ICTs for socio-economic development.

Businesses have a major impact on how governments formulate cyber policies nationally, and how they approach cooperation on cyber issues globally. Due to their focus on innovation, and the application of cyber technologies that they have patented or copyrighted, businesses see cyberspace as a new frontier for growth and profit. The emergence of a global trade framework for regulating e-commerce adds urgency to the interest of businesses for a predictable and effective international framework for cyberspace.

Academia plays a key role in research and development, innovation, and the conceptualization of theories regarding cyberspace to give them global relevance. Many of these theories are brought into the wider world through governments or businesses. As cyber activities increase across the world, the role of academia in creating essential building blocks of awareness about cyberspace, including imparting cyber skills and values through education, has become more significant.

Civil society focuses on the impact of the activities of governments, businesses, and academia in cyberspace with a special focus on the human dimension. Issues such as ease of access to new cyber platforms and technologies and the use of these for empowering the individual and society, bridging digital divides, and upholding fundamental human rights and freedoms in cyberspace are priorities for civil societies across the world.

All four stakeholders – governments, businesses, academia, and civil society play a critical role in identifying the strengths and vulnerabilities of cyberspace. In varying degrees around the world, all four have expressed interest in creating the building blocks for a multi-stakeholder international framework for cyberspace.

2. The Global Conferences on Cyberspace

At the global level, issues in cyber space that require effective international cooperation have been raised by the five multi-stakeholder Global Conferences on Cyber Space held so far, beginning with the London Conference in 2011. The London Conference identified five broad themes for international cooperation in cyberspace. These were economic growth and development, social benefits, international security, tackling cybercrime and ensuring safe and reliable access to cyberspace.
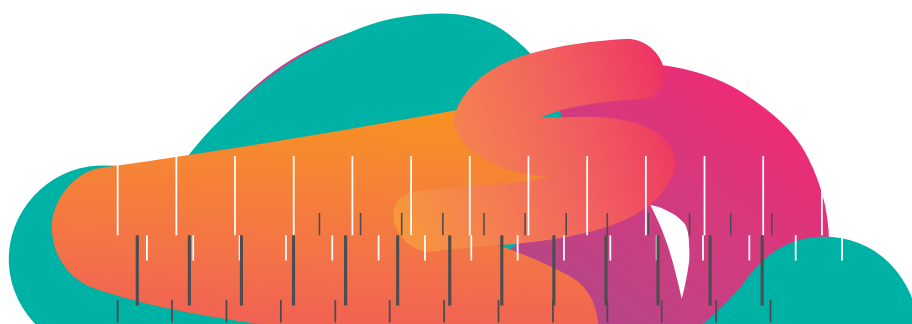
Subsequently, similar global conferences have taken place Budapest in 2012, which highlighted the importance of capacity building in cyberspace, the linkage between internet security and internet rights, as well as the role of civil society in cyberspace policies; Seoul in 2013, which highlighted the need for universal access to cyberspace to accelerate development; and The Hague in 2015, which established a Global Forum on Cyber Expertise (GFCE) to promote capacity-building.

The Fifth Global Conference on Cyber Space was hosted by India in 2017, with a focus on "a secure and inclusive cyberspace for sustainable development." The intent of the conference was to promote the importance of inclusiveness and human rights in global cyber policy, to defend the status quo of an open, interoperable and unregimented cyberspace, to create political commitment for capacity building initiatives to address the digital divide and assist countries, and to develop security solutions in a balanced fashion that duly acknowledge the importance of the private sector and technical community.

3. Securing Cyberspace

Within the United Nations, governments have taken the initiative to address the potential and also the dangers of cyberspace. In 1998, they adopted a resolution in the UNGA that noted the use of ICTs for both civilian and military purposes and prioritized "civilian applications." The resolution mandated the definition of "basic notions related to information security," while "developing international principles" to enhance cyber-security. The three broad areas that governments have taken up since 1998 to develop international cooperation in cyberspace relate to norms for cyber-security, measures to counter cybercrime, and agreeing on cyber policies for accelerating effective governance.

In 2002 the UNGA adopted a resolution to create a regulatory framework for securing cyberspace. Dealing with the "global culture of cyber-security," this resolution highlighted nine elements that could contribute to such a global culture. These elements included awareness, responsibility, response, ethics, democracy, risk assessment, security design and implementation, security management, and reassessment. Subsequently, in a resolution adopted by the UNGA in 2003, the UN Secretary-General was given the responsibility to seek the assistance of a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) to develop norms for securing cyberspace. The GGE's mandate was very specific. It was asked to formulate recommendations in the context of "disarmament, global challenges and threats to peace that affect the international community...and challenges to the international security regime."

On the ground, the work of the GGE since its inception in 2004 has been deeply influenced by the way the UN Secretary-General has nominated governmental experts. In the absence of a roster of such experts in the United Nations, the Secretary-General has appointed individuals on the "basis of equitable geographical distribution and with the help of Member States in a position to render such assistance." Despite this apparent concession to equitable representation, however, the Secretary-General has consistently nominated governmental representatives of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (China, France, Russia, the
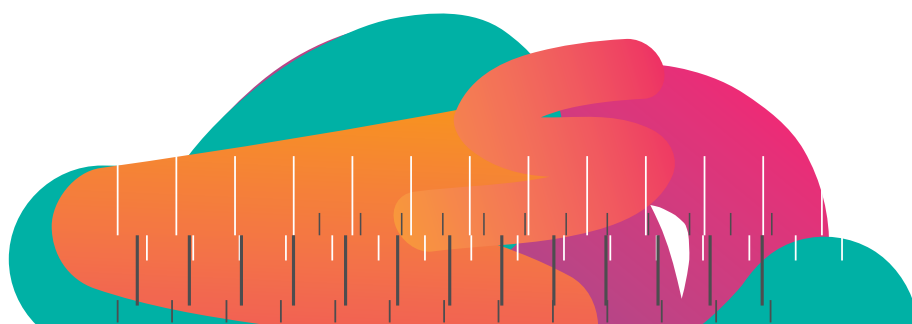
United Kingdom, and the United States) to the various GGEs. In contrast, the Secretary-General has applied the principle of rotation for selecting experts from other member states.

The Secretary-General's approach has played into the growing polarization among the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, which is now reflected in the GGE process as well. One outcome has been to make the GGE dependent on the emerging interests and priorities (often not directly linked to cyberspace) of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. In 2015, the GGE agreed to recommend norms for securing cyberspace, which were endorsed by the UNGA. An issue on which the five permanent members have confronted each other in the GGE is that of attributing attacks in cyberspace, and consequent counter measures. This has delayed implementing the agreed norms through transparent voluntary measures or a more robust legal framework.

To overcome the deadlock, the UNGA adopted a resolution in December 2018 to enhance "broad international cooperation." It decided to convene another GGE to focus on how international law applies to cyberspace and mandated the GGE to engage in multi-stakeholder consultations to generate greater acceptability for its eventual recommendations. The reconvened 25-member GGE mandated by the aforementioned resolution held its first meeting a full year later, in December 2019.

In the meetings of the current GGE held so far, new areas of discussion have included the emergence of new cyber technologies and platforms (like social media) for the application of such technologies. Apart from its core mandate for recommending norms for cyber-security, the GGE discussions encouraged the identification of voluntary confidence-building measures and capacity-building to enhance cybersecurity. The outcome of this GGE is to be reported to the UNGA in 2021, which in the UN context translates into a demonstration of the increasing urgency being felt by governments for effective international cooperation in securing cyberspace. In response to growing criticism that a majority of UN member states and other stakeholders in cyberspace were being excluded from contributing their perspectives to a global dialogue on cyber-security, the UNGA also adopted a resolution in December 2018 establishing an Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) to make the discussions "more democratic, inclusive, and transparent." The OEWG established by the UNGA has met from June 2019 onwards. The OEWG is scheduled to hold its final substantive session in July 2020 in New York, although this may have to be pushed back due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Besides governments, the OEWG discussions on cyber-security have brought in businesses, nongovernmental organizations, and academia. The multi-stakeholder discussions held so far have revealed important gaps in securing cyberspace on the ground. These include "lack of data sharing and informed awareness of cyber threats" as well as "lack of will at the highest political levels." The discussions have noted that the GGE process had not fully considered the impact of new technological developments in cyberspace, which significantly enhanced cyber threats. Advocating a "holistic" approach to enhance cyber-security, participants have drawn attention to the linkages between economic security and cybersecurity. Most significantly, discussions on cyber security have emphasized, "a human-centric, rights-based approach" that also emphasizes shared responsibility and accountability.

This is the broader context for the popular debates over new ICT technology like 5G, issues of ethics in applying AI to cyber activities, and assertions of sovereignty over the flow of data derived from traditional national
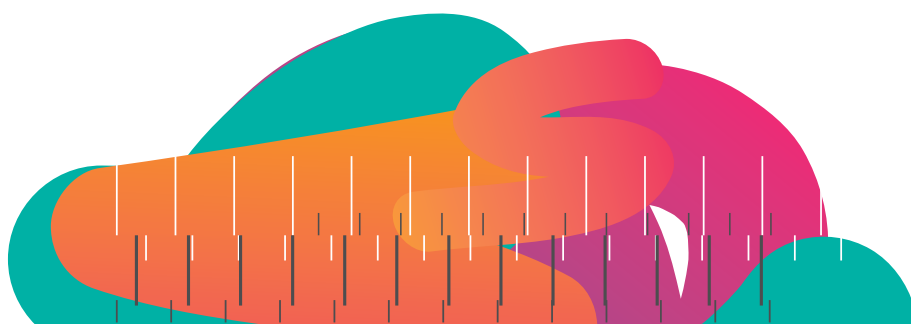
jurisdictions ("data localization"). It is important to recognize the explicit incorporation by the UNGA of a "multi-stakeholder" approach. Such a multistakeholder approach can potentially integrate such issues into ongoing UNGA discussions on international cooperation in cyberspace—a point recently highlighted by the Chair of the OEWG.

4. Countering Cybercrime

The first major legal impetus for seeking inter-governmental cooperation in countering cybercrime came in November 2001 from the Council of Europe, which is comprised of 47 states and includes Russia but not the United States, China, and other non-European countries. The Council of Europe adopted the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime, emphasizing that an "effective fight against cybercrime requires increased, rapid, and well-functioning international cooperation in criminal matters." Attempts to make the Budapest Convention universal in scope have been unsuccessful, so far. While the Council of Europe regulations provide for the accession of non-member states to the Budapest Convention, the procedures for enabling this include a requirement for a non-member state to make a written request for accession, and a scrutiny by Council experts on the "compatibility of the domestic law of the State concerned with the standards of the Council of Europe." In addition, non-member states would have to finance their participation in the Convention. These provisions act as a deterrent for sovereign states outside the Council of Europe, especially developing countries, from participating in the Convention on an equal basis.

The Budapest Convention has sued guidance notes on countering 11 specific threats. These included threats to computer systems, botnets, trans-border access, identity theft, DDOS attacks, critical infrastructure attacks, malware, spam, subscriber information, terrorism, and election interference. The relevance of these issues for broadening universal international cooperation on countering cybercrime through the UNGA is obvious. In December 2019, the UNGA adopted a resolution moved by Russia on countering "the use of information and communication technologies for criminal purposes." According to the Russian delegation, the next step would be for the UNGA to hold an "organizational session in New York in 2020," with negotiations on the text of "a comprehensive international convention on countering cybercrime" starting in 2021. The aforementioned resolution sets the stage for the first inter-governmental negotiation in the UNGA on creating a legal framework to counter cybercrime. With its narrow focus on cybercrime, the proposed legal framework would be potentially falling short of the "holistic" approach towards securing cyberspace that is emerging as a template in international multi-stakeholder discussions.

5. Cyberspace and Sustainable Development

A holistic approach has characterized, so far, the UNGA's discussions on harnessing the impact of cyber technologies and platforms for sustainable development. The evolution of a supportive cyber environment for sustainable development, emphasizing a "people-centric" approach, has been cyclical. The first cycle was launched by the UNGA in December 2001, when it adopted a resolution to hold a World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in two phases. In the first phase, which concluded in Geneva in 2003, agreement was reached on identifying principles and a plan of action to respond to the emergence of ICTs in socio-economic
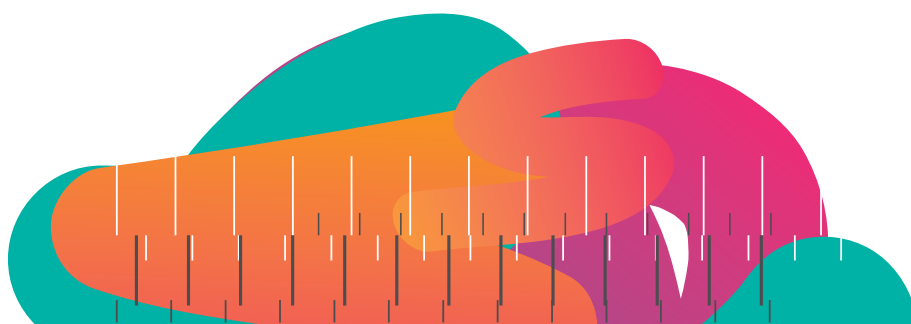
activities. In the second stage, which concluded in Tunis in 2005, UN member states committed their political support for these principles and activities. Implementing the outcome of the Tunis meeting between 2005-2015 marked the second cycle of international attempts to support civilian priorities in cyberspace. An important dimension of the Tunis Agenda has been its focus on upholding the "respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all" mentioned in the UN Charter. In its review of the Tunis Agenda in December 2015, the UNGA affirmed that "the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online".

The "Tunis Agenda" created an Internet Governance Forum (IGF)-platform to enable multi-stakeholder discussions on how society should respond to the potential of cyberspace. The IGF witnessed a spirited debate between advocates of a business-driven model, whose policies would conform to the market-driven priorities set by the growing number of cyber technology corporations (often referred to as the "multi-stakeholder" model), and votaries of a more assertive role for government policies—i.e., both for law enforcement as well as for empowerment of societies, in order to bridge "digital divides" (referred to as the "multilateral" model). The fact that both approaches were convergent was finally acknowledged when the UNGA conducted its High-level Review of the implementation of the Tunis Agenda in December 2015. The Review emphasized the importance of the need for effective international cooperation in cyberspace to achieve globally agreed goals of sustainable development. The review emphasized using cyber technologies to bridge the digital divides; equitable access to cyberspace; the creation of an enabling cyberspace environment for development; public-private partnerships in financing the growth of cyberspace; the online protection of human rights including the freedom of expression and privacy; and the management of the internet as a "multilateral, transparent, democratic, and multi-stakeholder" process. It extended the IGF by another 10 years.

Drawing upon extensive multistakeholder participation, the UNGA Review acknowledged that "the management of the internet as a global facility includes multilateral, transparent, democratic and multi-stakeholder processes, with the full involvement of Governments, the private sector, civil society, international organizations, technical and academic communities, and all other relevant stakeholders in accordance with their respective roles and responsibilities."

The third (and current) cycle of international multi-stakeholder activities attempting to regulate the use of ICTs for civilian activities began in September 2015, when the UNGA adopted the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda focuses on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the ambition is for all UN member states to fully achieve them all by 2030. In other words, the scope of the 2030 Agenda is ambitiously universal, applicable to both industrialized and developing countries. As the Preamble to the 2030 Agenda founding document asserts, there "can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development."

The targets for achieving each SDG have been set through multi-stakeholder negotiations in a ground-up approach. In the negotiations, it was agreed that technology would be prioritized to access the implementation of the SDGs under a Technology Facilitation Mechanism. The SDGs include poverty eradication; no hunger; good health and well-being; quality education; gender equality; clean water and sanitation; decent work
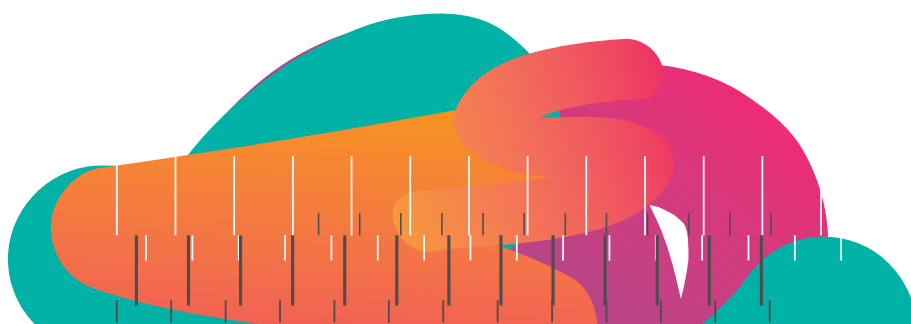
and economic growth; industry, innovation, and infrastructure; reduced inequalities; sustainable cities and communities; responsible consumption and production; climate action; life below water; life on land; peace, justice, and strong institutions; and partnerships. The outcome of this work in the UNGA has emphasized a "people-centered, inclusive, and development oriented" cyberspace, including for the application of cyber technologies to accelerate sustainable development.

6. Business and Cyberspace

While governments have identified the key components for building a resilient international framework for cyberspace, major businesses have also realized the importance of such an international framework for their activities in cyberspace. Two such initiatives stand out. Microsoft took the lead in February 2017 in proposing a framework for international cooperation in cyberspace through a "Digital Geneva Convention" to be adopted by governments. This idea was suggested by Microsoft to bring governments together to protect cyberspace, which it asserted "is owned and operated by the private sector." The objective of a "Digital Geneva Convention" would be for "the world's governments to pledge that they will not engage in cyberattacks on the private sector, that they will not target civilian infrastructure, whether it's of the electrical or the economic or the political variety." Microsoft has given the responsibility of creating such an international framework to governments.

At the Munich Security Conference in 2018, Siemens took the initiative to launch a Charter of Trust for enhancing cyber-security. Other major businesses associated with this initiative include AES, Airbus, Allianz, Atos, Cisco, Daimler, Dell Technologies, Deutsche Telekom, IBM, NXP, SGS, Total, TÜV Süd, and Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industries. The objective of the Charter is for the creation of "binding rules and standards to build trust in cyber-security and further advance digitalization," including for "the protection of data of individuals and businesses."

Such rules and standards would need to be integrated into an international framework applicable to businesses in cyberspace. Since 1995, the World Trade Organization (WTO) has been incrementally involved in cyber issues, from the negotiation of the Information Technology Agreement in 1996 and negotiations for ICTs' market access during its Telecoms Negotiations in 1997, to the adoption of a standstill agreement on not imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions in 1998 and the decisions of the WTO Dispute Settlement Body on many issues related to cyber products and processes involving businesses and governments.

Converging the WTO process with ongoing work in the UNGA will contribute to the resilience of efforts to create an international framework on cyberspace on the basis of international law. The opportunity to focus on such a convergence will be the next Ministerial Conference of the WTO, scheduled to be held in Kazakhstan in June 2020 (a delay is possible, again due to the COVID-19 pandemic).
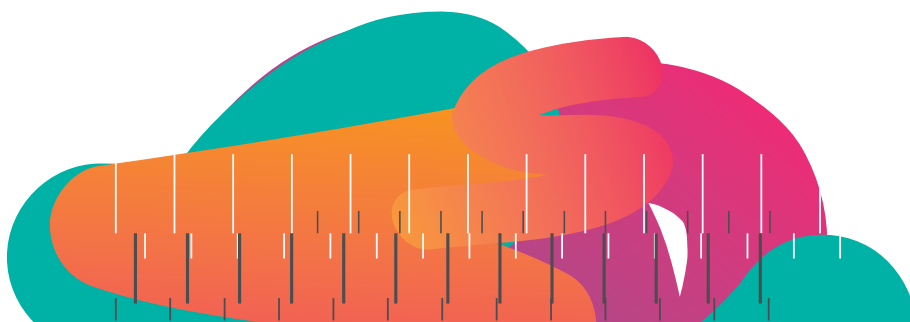
7. High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation

As cyber technology transitions from the ICTs of the early twenty-first century to the digital world, the UN Secretary General's initiative to convene a multi-stakeholder High-level Panel for identifying areas for Digital Cooperation provides a launching pad for the UNGA to create an appropriate international framework for cyberspace. The report of the Panel was presented to the UN Secretary-General in June 2019. It will form the basis for the process to coordinate multi-stakeholder discussions on cyberspace at the commemoration of the Seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations in September 2020.

Led by Melinda Gates of the Gates Foundation and Jack Ma of Alibaba, the Panel held nine months of consultations with governments, the private sector, civil society, international organizations, academia, and technical communities across the world. It made five specific recommendations for shaping a common future: building an inclusive digital economy and society; developing human and institutional capacity; protecting human rights and human agency; promoting digital trust, security, and stability; and fostering global digital cooperation. The key conclusion of the GatesMa UN panel was to complement "multilateralism with multi-stakeholderism" in order to provide a strong foundation for international cooperation in cyberspace.

8. Towards an International Convention on Cyberspace

In November 1967, the UNGA responded to a call for "an effective international regime over the seabed and the ocean floor beyond a clearly defined national jurisdiction." The outcome of that response was the discussion of "the freedom-of-the-seas doctrine with technological changes that had altered man's relationship with the ocean." This led to the Third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea in 1973, with the objective to negotiate a comprehensive treaty for the maritime domain. The outcome was achieved nine years later (in 1982) with the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). At its Seventy-fifth anniversary summit in September 2020, the UNGA will be faced with a similar choice. Taking into account the progress made in crystallizing international cooperation to secure cyberspace, counter cybercrime, maximize the use of cyber technologies for accelerating the objectives of sustainable development, and put people at the center of cyberspace, the UNGA must respond by convening a Conference on Cyberspace to negotiate and adopt an international multi-stakeholder framework for this unique domain.

2. Blog posts

Liz Galvez

Former Senior Diplomat with the UK and Commonwealth Office and Faculty Member of DiploFoundation

Public Diplomacy in the Time of Corona

First published on *DiploFoundation Blog*, 6 April

If ever there was a time for governments to get their communications right, it is now. Governments everywhere are under scrutiny for what they say, how accurately they report facts, and what actions they are proposing. COVID-19 is spreading faster than press offices can get their messages out. Thanks to the Internet, the media and members of the public are posting stories which may not show governments in their best light. People need to know will they get sick, will they receive the treatments they need, and will they lose their jobs, their homes, their lives. What they are getting instead are mixed messages. Governments are taking different approaches – serious lockdowns in Italy vs. business as usual in Sweden; all borders closed in Peru vs. an economy-ahead-of-quarantine approach in Brazil; wholescale testing in South Korea vs. travellers entering the UK from virus hotspots without so much as a swab or temperature check. There is little sign that governments are working collectively or consistently. Advice from the World Health Organization (WHO) secretary general is not heeded. Instead, we hear of front-line health workers in wealthy, developed countries still functioning without access to adequate protective clothing.⤴

We see footage of people sprayed with toxic detergent or beaten in the street because they are desperately looking for food for their families. We hear of emergency measures in Hungary which amount to the discarding of the democracy it fought to reinstate after 1989. These are images that will not easily be forgotten once the pandemic is over and countries try to repair their damaged reputation. Meanwhile, the myths continue to circulate on social media that the pandemic is a hoax, or just another flu, or that it can be cured by sunlight or sips of warm water. Why are people so ready to believe fake news? Does it reflect a basic mistrust of official messages, as Hugo Mercier of the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) suggested?⤴ What can governments do to restore this possible loss of faith in officialdom?

Public diplomacy is at the forefront of no one's mind at the moment, but states will be judged in the future for their behaviour towards their own citizens and to one another, so perhaps the first step at this time of crisis is for states to stop the tit-for-tat blame-laying, to stop playing the propaganda game, and to seize the opportunity for collective action and making use of the new technologies available to us. Twenty years ago, it would

have been unimaginable to hold international conferences remotely. Hourly updates on support available for citizens stranded in foreign countries would have been impossible without Facebook.

Data on the spread of the virus⬀ and exchanges of what measures have proved effective would have taken days to compile and share. This crisis has forced the international community to adopt new ways of working, new methods of meeting, and new forms of communications. The technology has been around for a while. Other sectors of society have already undergone their digital transformation. In diplomacy, many governments have only slowly embraced the new tools and working practices, perhaps because of IT infrastructure difficulties, perhaps because of nervousness about confidentiality, while some remain reluctant to set aside the diplomatic protocols and rules of procedure appropriate for a non-digital era. This is the ideal opportunity for diplomatic services to change their mindset and find novel ways of collaborative working.

Without meeting up physically, 53 countries have signed up to the United Nations secretary general's appeal⬀ on 23 March, backed by the Pope, for a global ceasefire. States that haven't yet done so should join up, preferably without the same old tired 'It's not us, it's them' defence. States could meet remotely to discuss packages of support for developing countries whose economies have almost completely shut down because of lockdowns elsewhere or for the hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons who have no options for social distancing or protecting themselves. And states could collectively review ways of countering fake news and of maximising outreach to people who haven't yet got the message that preventative measures apply equally to everyone, using whatever digital tools are appropriate.

This pandemic will pass in time, but our societies will have changed. Our diplomatic services need to change alongside them. How governments perform now in managing the pandemic internationally, working together instead of against each other, will shape future public perceptions at home and elsewhere of their competence, their honesty, and their dependability. And how they perform in future crises will depend on how well they have observed the lessons from this one.

Gennike Mayer

Interpreter, Translator, Communicator at Interpreting Your Needs

Studying with DiploFoundation has been quite a journey... and not over yet!

I first saw the ad for the Master/Postgraduate Diploma in Contemporary Diplomacy⬀ while working in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh – the town that welcomed close to one million Rohingya refugees fleeing violence in Myanmar.

I shared an office with an Australian colleague who wore the title of humanitarian diplomacy liaison. It sounded fancy and we got along well, often exchanging views on the highly political aspects of the Rohingya crisis. I felt like my communications portfolio was restrictive and I longed to cross over into the role of a humanitarian diplomat who could make a difference by amplifying the voices of the voiceless behind the scenes, in the corridors of power, through the tools of diplomacy. From my tiny room in CXB, I prepared my application and sent it off to DiploFoundation on 15 October 2018, days before travelling home for a much-needed sanity break. I immediately received an email that my application was incomplete. Forgive me, my mind was already on vacation! There I was emerging from my first night's sleep back home, having to focus my brain cells on developing a dissertation proposal on my cell phone as I left my laptop behind in Bangladesh.

Have you ever tried typing on a small screen with jetlagged eyes? Me neither, but I somehow managed to send something sensible to Diplo's administrators and get back to my vacation in the paradise island that I call home – Tobago. Once my 'staycation' was over, I headed back to Bangladesh, my Rohingya reality. Weeks later, I received confirmation that I was admitted to the programme and thankfully received a partial scholarship. My next sanity break from the chaos of Cox's Bazar was the MA/PGD introductory workshop in Malta in February 2019. Work took on a different flavour as I had something specific to look forward to. Don't get me wrong, I enjoyed my job working on the Rohingya crisis, but I needed an outlet for venting my frustrations and nurturing my other interests.

Diplo's programme was a chance to step out of my comfort zone and stretch myself beyond the psychological and physical boundaries that I involuntarily set for myself. It was also a chance for constructive venting of my concerns about the never-ending Rohingya crisis while equipping me with concrete tools for processing what I was experiencing. Travelling to Europe in February was unimaginable to me. I'm from the Caribbean where it's 32 degrees Celsius year-round and there I was heading to Malta fearful of being bitten by the cold. Once

the fear subsided, I managed to have a relaxing weekend before the 10-day course began, with an additional weekend to explore Malta at the end of it all. In between was the most intellectually stimulating and fun-loving experience I had in a long time! I met classmates and lecturers from all over the world, from different backgrounds, and at different stations of their lives. We became so engrossed in group assignments that we often lingered around in the conference room well beyond class lectures were done, chatting the night away. We shared breakfast, lunch, and dinner; class notes and secret hopes; aspirations and trepidations.

We arrived as strangers, but left as friends. I even met a kindred spirit from Kenya who shares my birthdate. February 2019 turned out to be a month to remember! Who would have thought that in December 2019 I would overnight at my Kenyan classmate's home in Nairobi on the way to my new duty station in Zimbabwe or hold her one-month old son in my arms? Who would have thought that I would share a festive Christmas meal and ring in 2020 with classmates from Zimbabwe or have them help me find the perfect place to live without the hassle of visiting? These are true friendships we all need in life and it all unfolded thanks to Diplo.

It's been a real journey – literally and metaphorically – with Diplo! There have been highs and lows with zones of turbulence. The cabin pressure dropped a few times but there was always a friendly, reassuring attendant on board in the persons of Patrick, Tanja, and Sylvana who have been on call at any time ready to assist in finding workable solutions. The beauty of Diplo's programmes is the tremendous flexibility of following classes online. This was crucial for me as I travelled often during the year. Thankfully I was able to log in to classes wherever I was in the world: from hotel rooms in Kuala Lumpur and Dhaka, the sidelines of international conferences in Barbados and St. Lucia, public libraries when I had no wi-fi at home, to my current lockdown location in Zimbabwe. When I missed a class, I was able to review the lecture transcripts and make my contributions to the discussion through hypertext.

Submitting assignments couldn't be easier with the user-friendly navigation tools.

Thankfully, Diplo's flexibility extends offline as well. Due to uncertain contract work and health concerns, I was not able to pay all my fees up front, but Diplo extended a reasonable payment plan which made it possible for me to go all the way from a postgraduate to a Master programme.

As I prepare my dissertation and gear up for the last few classes of the final module, I am sincerely grateful to Diplo for the opportunities extended to me. It is not an exaggeration to say that 2019/2020 has been the most hectic and fulfilling year of my life. Even in the midst of the current COVID-19 crisis, when the world we know has shifted from outdoors to indoors, and offline to online, we are witnessing a sudden surge in online collaboration and connected communities. In a real sense, Diplo's online learning platform prepared me for this in advance. While the transition to an online environment can be unsettling for many, Diplo's lecturers and support staff are extremely helpful in allaying the fears of newcomers.

As I come to the end of the programme, I feel confident and equipped to move into the next growth phase of my career. No one knows for sure how long this COVID-19 crisis will last and what the new normal will look like after this planetary quarantine is lifted. I choose to remain optimistic and eagerly await graduation to be able to meet up with my cohort buddies again in Malta. I firmly believe that the skills learnt along the way and the friendships nurtured will lead me to yet another unknown destination where I can confidently serve in a contemporary diplomatic capacity wherever I am needed most.

Tracy Hackshaw

ICT & Digital Economy Strategist

Waking up to a 'new normal' or What does a post-Covid-19 world look like in small island developing states (SIDS)?

First published on *DiploFoundation Blog*, 14 May

We need to ensure we digitalise all of our business processes as to enable the effective digital transformation of our governments, businesses, and educational institutions so that the disruptive solutions brought by the global pandemic, including remote work, digital health, elearning, and fintech, are collectively recognised as a pivot point in our history. There... I've done it... I've met the challenge of how many currently fashionable buzzwords and jargon I can stuff into a single sentence.

Everything we've been reading about dealing with the issues the global economy will face in the post-COVID-19 world tends to sound something like what I've written above. I can't promise you that I will not touch upon these topics and mention these buzzwords again, but I do hope I can bring a certain degree of pragmatism to the conversation, especially given that I hail from Trinidad and Tobago, a twin-island country in the Caribbean, categorised as a small island developing state (SIDS) with approximately 50 odd others scattered across our various oceans.

SIDS economies are generally characterised by their dependence on earning revenue from the exportation of, either raw materials, or partially finished goods extracted from the physical elements of their territories, be that: sugar, bananas, cocoa, tea, coffee, or some other edible element; or bauxite, gold, oil, natural gas, or some other mineral resource commodity traded on the international markets; or the numerous downstream industries that are based on these extractive industries. I would even go so far as to classify the tourism industry as part of this dependency phenomena as it is based on the physical elements of the 'sun, sand, and sea', or in the case of those not as richly blessed, the basic elements of nature leading to vibrant 'ecotourism' industries. What do all of these have in common? Earlier, I used the terms 'dependence and dependency' as, by and large, SIDS economies exhibit elements of what Best and Levitt describe as a 'plantation economy' (see also the work of George Beckford in this regard). A plantation economy is a loose structuralist (depending on your perspective) variant, or sibling, of the 1970s neo-Marxist/liberal reformist dependency theory and (later)

the 'world system' theories that (arguably) dominated Latin America and the Caribbean academic thinking of the time.

These aspects, or characteristics, include the history of key industry ownerships by multinational corporations, the repatriation of profits, and the limited to non-existent domestic linkages in SIDS. In essence, the balance of trade between SIDS and trading-partner countries in the 'metropole' is inequitable and almost completely in favour of developed countries, resulting in a pattern of income distribution that effectively discriminates against economic transformation.

What this all means is that SIDS economies are rather disproportionately affected by the shifts in global economic patterns. These economies are at higher risk to be deprioritised in global supply chains, and of course, they are at a major risk of disruption in the thrust towards a truly globalised digital economy. Not to mention that they are likely to wear the added burden of being some of the very first countries to feel the effects of the climate emergency, including extremely unpredictable natural hazards and disasters, including hurricanes/cyclones, floods, landslides, drought, and even earthquakes. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the economic loss from disasters in SIDS showed a staggering increase from USD$8.7 billion (2000–2007) to over USD$14 billion (2008–2015). Climate change poses a further challenge as rising sea levels are responsible for extreme coastal flooding and endangering the livelihoods of over 4.2 million people. In this regard, SIDS are already faced with extraordinary challenges of protecting their inhabitants, infrastructure, and ways of life and in meeting the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

So, as the world slowly begins to turn its attention to planning for the post-COVID-19 'new normal', what does this mean for SIDS given their peculiar circumstances? Certainly, a one-sizefits-all solution offered by the traditional development aid/lending agencies will not work in this case. By the same token, while each country must seek to develop its own individual and contextualised recovery plan, there are likely to be areas for co-operation across the oceans, where collaboration and working together in their 50+ numbers, or at least in their regional collectives, will put them in a stronger position to avoid ramifications of marginalisation as the entire globe scrambles to optimise scarce available resources over the next 12 months.

1. Food security

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) has projected⬈ that the number of people facing acute food insecurity (IPC/CH 3 or worse) stands to rise to 265 million in 2020, up by 130 million from the 135 million in 2019, as a result of the economic impact of COVID-19.

SIDS have the potential to be severely affected as many are net importers of food with populations that are dependent on income from remittances and tourism. Extremely impoverished SIDS like Haiti, which has 3.7 million (35% of its population) in food crisis or worse conditions, will need assistance from regional and global donor agencies as well as other countries that are in a position to help. However, it is becoming apparent that the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to result in short- to medium-term food production supply chain disruptions across the board. State actors must ensure that fiscal and trade policies that emerge in response to the pandemic encourage the strengthening, rather than the weakening or inadvertent disruption, of global food trade. One particularly interesting measure that has been suggested emanated⬈ from Latin America and the Caribbean region, where it was recommended that states consider the introduction and promotion of electronic food commerce platforms and applications as well as other measures to reduce the impact of healthy social distancing and to favour chains with fewer intermediaries between producers, small- and medium-sized businesses in neighbourhoods, and consumers.

2. Healthcare

It has been well documented⬈ that SIDS have disproportionately high cases of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension, with unacceptably high rates of morbidity and mortality. Currently, NCDs account for around 75% of all deaths in the Pacific Island countries and territories⬈ including much higher rates of premature (below the age of 60) deaths in many Pacific countries than the comparable global average. Several countries with the highest overweight and obesity rates in the world are in the Caribbean and Pacific SIDS, with the added cofactor that three of the top ten worst rates of tobacco use in the world are in the Pacific region.⬈ Healthcare systems in SIDS have therefore been already under tremendous pressure before COVID-19, with the current pandemic forcing states to invest significant additional resources to prepare for, and to react to, the added burden of the still mostly unknown and highly communicable nature of the disease. At present, there is still no approved treatment, cure, or vaccine for the Coronavirus, and it does not appear that there is an immediate-term solution on the horizon. To this end, SIDS healthcare professionals and facilities will continue to be strained in their bid to cope, coupled with them being particularly affected by the global 'shortage' in personal protective equipment (PPE) that is imperative for healthcare workers to be able to continue to work effectively to combat the in-country epidemics and, of course, to simply stay healthy and alive.

3. Digital policy and related issues

SIDS, by their very nature, prior to the pandemic, have already faced the challenges of remoteness and inability to 'participate' on equal terms in a wide range of activities. Travel is difficult and often prohibitively expensive at both inter- and intranational levels. Internet connectivity remains a lingering challenge in terms of both the last mile and getting beyond 'best-effort' broadband services to remote and underpopulated/ underserviced/underserved areas within the territories. Businesses are slow, and often resistant, to adapt to digital thinking including (paradoxically) the concept of remote work, while schools lack the resources to furnish students and teachers with the necessary skills and equipment to easily adapt to e-learning modalities, not to mention the additional overhead required to infuse digital thinking into standardised curricula.

The opportunity exists, right at this very moment, for the acceleration of a 'virtual tsunami' (the turning of a typically negative concept into a positive) that contains 'waves' of digital transformation to positively impact SIDS. A perfect storm, of sorts, is one that includes several points. Governments and telecommunication regulators should unleash and unlock the resources within the Universal Service Fund to tackle, once and for all, the remaining access, accessibility and digital inclusion challenges within the SIDS, thereby ensuring meaningful and affordable broadband connectivity. Chambers of commerce, state small business development, and export promotion entities should join forces to clear the logjams than are currently prohibiting the acceleration of digital business development, including: promoting the widespread adoption of local e-commerce activities, building institutional capacity (including legislation, fiscal incentives, technological infrastructure, etc.); strengthening national digital payments infrastructure; implementing supporting logistics; and ongoing training and (digital) skills development.

Public and private sector actors should fully adopt work from home/remote working protocols involving best practice initiatives such as staggered staffing workdays (e.g. three days remote, two days onsite) and shifts, where required, provision of the necessary tools to support working from home (e.g. reimbursement of appropriate broadband and mobile data charges, if not already on employer-offered plans; loans/assignment of mobile equipment; assistance with the establishment of home offices; and deployment of collaborative productivity tools that could potentially even enhance productivity when working remotely).

The education and training paradigm should take a quantum leap forward, fully embracing digital transformation at the following levels: strategy, curriculum development, technology infrastructure and e-learning platforms, data analytics, and ongoing skills development. The kickstart that the larger industry received as a result of the pandemic should now be rapidly built upon and all of the lessons that have been learned within SIDS, and indeed globally, from these recent experiences can be fused into a wider drive towards making education and training more relevant, and widely available and accessible to many more groupings both on a synchronous and self-paced basis.

André Saramago

Assistant Professor of International Relations at the University of Coimbra (Portugal) and Online Teaching and Research Assistant of DiploFoundation

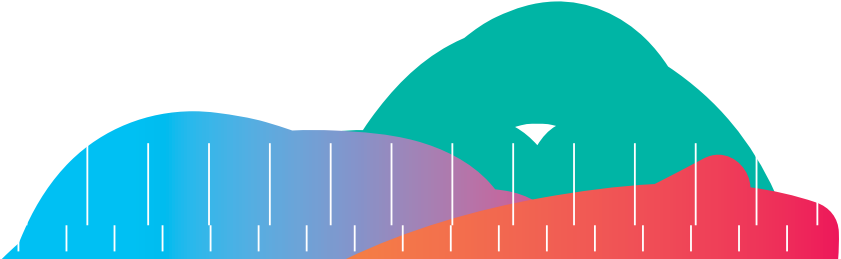## ASEAN's multilateral answer to COVID-19

First published on *DiploFoundation Blog*, 9 June

As COVID-19 spreads across the globe, South East Asia has become a particularly affected region, numbering, by 2 June 2020, more than 90 000 COVID-19 cases and 2000 deaths. As a region characterised by the deep interdependence of its countries, with substantial daily flows of people across borders, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has argued that a concerted answer to the challenges posed by the global pandemic is essential. ASEAN has been playing a pivotal role in co-ordinating the regional answer to COVID-19 through a series of multilateral diplomatic initiatives, making use of its complex institutional network. ASEAN has tried to nurture the ASEAN-Way approach for which it is known, striking a balance between national initiatives on the part of its member states, while encouraging regional co-operation that emphasises 'ASEAN centrality' as the 'basis for cooperation within the region'.

On 19 February 2020, before the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic, ASEAN defence ministers met at their retreat in Hanoi, Vietnam, where they issued a Joint Statement, making a commitment to promote co-operation amongst ASEAN defence establishments, especially in the fields of military medicine and sharing information relevant to combating disease outbreaks. After the WHO declared the pandemic on 11 March, ASEAN convened an ASEAN Plus Three (APT) video conference with ASEAN's health ministers and representatives from China, Japan, and South Korea, where a shared commitment was made to enhance 'free, open, transparent and timely sharing of information, data and expertise on COVID-19 prevention, detection, control and response measures', as well as to increase the 'coordination to share information on rapid research and development of diagnostics, antiviral medicines and vaccines'.

These commitments were further reinforced at the Special ASEAN Summit on Coronavirus Disease 2019 that took place on 14 April via video conference, where the centrality of ASEAN's emergency response network for the novel Coronavirus was additionally underlined. The network involves a series of institutions such as the ASEAN Emergency Operations Centre, the ASEAN Risk Assessment and Risk Communication Centre, the ASEAN BioDiaspora Virtual Centre (which is now responsible for compiling statistics on the development of the pandemic in the region), and the ASEAN Centre for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Management.

These institutions have been placed at the forefront of co-ordinating technical and political efforts to contain and fight the pandemic in South East Asia. The Special Summit further underlined the importance of co-operation with ASEAN's external partners, namely via the utilisation of the APT Emergency Rice Reserve to ensure food security in the region, with a view to reinforce the 'resilience and sustainability of regional supply chains of food, commodities, medicines, medical and other essential supplies'. Finally, the Special Summit sought to establish a foundation for the post-pandemic period by

encouraging the development of a post-pandemic recovery plan that allows the sharing of lessons-learned between member states, and restoring 'ASEAN's connectivity', namely in the fields of tourism, business, and social activities.

ASEAN's efforts at multilateral diplomacy as the preferred avenue for tackling COVID-19 extend beyond the immediate Asian region, as is evidenced by the organisation's efforts to reinforce co-ordination with both the United States and the European Union. Hence, on 30 March, the ASEAN-EU Ministerial Video Conference on COVID-19 took place, and was chaired by Singapore's Minister for Foreign Affairs and current co-ordinator of the ASEAN-EU Dialogue Partnership Vivian Balakrishnan, Senior Minister of State for Health and Transport of Singapore Lam Pin Min, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission Josep Borrell, and European Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič.

The joint statement of the Ministerial Conference's members emphasised the importance of ASEAN-EU co-operation in two main fields. First, in the definition of a clear criteria on when and how to impose time-limited travel restrictions between the two regions as a way to contain the spread of COVID-19 (especially in the potential scenario of the long-term existence of the virus). Second, it emphasised the need to 'double-down' on the co-operation between the two regions, especially in the fields of trade and investment, as to nurture the return to the 'spirit of openness' on which the future recovery of European and South East Asian economies and livelihoods depends. Parallel efforts have also been developed in the context of ASEAN-US relations through the Special ASEAN-United States Foreign Ministers' Meeting on Corona Virus Disease 2019 that was chaired by Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Lao PDR Saleumxay Kommasith and US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo. The joint statement, beyond a commitment to further co-operation and information sharing, emphasised the need to reinforce existing structures of co-operation in the area of health between ASEAN and the USA, such as the US-ASEAN Health Futures Initiative, directed towards the training of health professionals and the development of healthcare systems in the ASEAN region.

The mechanism of USAID's alliance with Vietnam titled 'Improving Access, Curriculum and Teaching in Medical Education and Emerging Diseases' (IMPACT-MED), which is oriented towards strengthening and expanding Vietnam's COVID-19 infectious control protocols, was highlighted as an example of good practices that could be emulated elsewhere in the region. ASEAN's robust efforts at multilateral diplomacy, as the preferred approach to tackling COVID- 19, can be seen as going against recent tendencies towards growing isolationism and suspicion towards multilateral frameworks by some global players. This has led analysts such as Rifki Dermawan to argue that ASEAN's way of tackling COVID-19 'symbolizes the power of multilateralism [...] as a solution to global problems'. It represents a belief that transborder challenges, such as infectious diseases, require multilateral diplomatic co-operation on penalty of becoming unmanageable in ways that could entail severe costs in terms of human lives and long-term economic effects. However, it has also been noted that ASEAN's answer to COVID-19 follows an already-tested approach of quickly organising emergency multilateral meetings to deal with non-traditional security emergencies, a similar pattern witnessed in 2003 during the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) epidemic.

As underlined by Sankari Sundararanam, the real challenge lies in legislating the co-ordination and information-sharing commitments that were developed in these special meetings into concrete policies. It also requires an understanding of if and how multilateral diplomacy dynamics, practised for non-traditional security crises (such as SARS and COVID-19), can be treated more like traditional security threats (such as the South China Sea issues that continue to threaten regional peace and security).

Sebnem Tugce Pala

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Can autonomous vehicles be the heroes of the COVID-19 pandemic?

First published on *DiploFoundation Blog*, 9 June

Transportation as the growth engine of the economy has been one of the industries that has been hit the hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has substantially impacted how we work, how we travel, and how we use technology. It has put an incredible strain on global supply chains, from medical supplies to household goods, as spikes in demand stress-test logistics infrastructures. We are now at a crossroads which represents a good opportunity to rethink our modes of transportation. Autonomous vehicles are already used to alleviate the strain on existing delivery services while addressing the demand and reducing the risk of exposure for citizens.

Sustainability in transportation starts with autonomous vehicles; this pandemic has been a game changer for autonomous vehicles in every aspect and has highlighted the significance of the deployment of autonomous vehicles further. For instance, the Mayo Clinic has teamed up with the Jacksonville Transportation Authority and self-driving start-ups Beep and Navya for a project in Florida. In this project, autonomous shuttles began servicing a route between a drive-through testing site and a processing laboratory at the Mayo Clinic's Florida campus on 30 March. Basically, autonomous vehicles are moving COVID-19 tests from a drive-through testing check-point, to a lab for analysis, all without a human on board.

Moreover, Starship Technologies has deployed a fleet of 20 autonomous on-demand vehicles in Fairfax, Virginia, and these vehicles will deliver food and groceries from a handful of restaurants and markets in and around the city's downtown area. These vehicles have separate insulated areas for hot and cold items and are equipped with cameras, sensors, and other technology to help them glean traffic patterns, curb-cuts, and other information about the urban environment they find themselves in. In California, the Department of Motor vehicles recently authorised Nuro R2 to test driverless delivery vehicles in some parts of the Bay Area. Nuro's was originally designed for outdoor package delivery.

However, the R2 is now supporting two medical facilities, one at the San Mateo Event Center, and the other at the Sleep Train Arena in Sacramento. It delivers linens and medical supplies, as it moves down aisles filled with patient cots during the pandemic.

Another autonomous vehicle start-up Kiwibot⬀ delivers safety and sanitary products to students in Berkeley and Denver. Cruise⬀ is now using its autonomous vehicles to deliver meals to local recipients and they have made more than 1200 contactless deliveries to low-income, senior citizens from the food bank, and 2500 meals from local restaurants to several organisations serving in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Although the use of autonomous vehicles for human transportation are still uncertain and controversial, as well as very lengthy in terms of the regulatory process, the use cases mentioned have proven the worth of autonomous vehicles for deliveries. It is clear that the technology is well advanced and very useful. Autonomous delivery vehicles have the potential to become part of our everyday lives in a post COVID-19 world.

Geoff Berridge

Emeritus Professor of International Politics at the University of Leicester and Senior Fellow, DiploFoundation

The Sacoolas affair: Diplomatic immunity or special immunity?

First published on *DiploFoundation Blog*, 10 June

When the abuse of diplomatic immunity is alleged to have occurred, it usually refers to diplomatic officers taking advantage of their special status under the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations⬀ (VCDR) to avoid penalties for misdemeanours, such as ignoring parking regulations, shoplifting, and so on; occasionally for more serious offences. But governments that, in return for favours, grant diplomatic immunity to those who manifestly do not discharge diplomatic functions,⬀ or discharge some in abnormal circumstances and might be adequately protected by other legal means, also abuse diplomatic immunity. Both forms of abuse bring a vital principle into disrepute and thereby threaten its application in circumstances when it is properly needed.

A current case in point of the latter kind is provided by a revelation prised by the press from the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) about Royal Air Force (RAF) Croughton in the English Midlands, and subsequently confirmed in a statement by the foreign secretary in the House of Commons on 21 October 2019.⬀ Despite its name, RAF Croughton is a large US intelligence communications hub,⬀ an important cog in the Five Eyes intelligence alliance, and operates under the aegis of the US Air Force's 501st Combat Support Wing. Under a special UK-USA agreement sealed in 1995, diplomatic immunity was extended to intelligence officers, among others, on RAF Croughton staff.

And it is for this reason that Anne Sacoolas has so far escaped what could have been a prison term of up to five years⬀ for killing young British motorcyclist Harry Dunn while at the wheel of a car (reportedly carrying diplomatic plates)⬀ being driven on the wrong side of the road in late August. For she is the wife of Jonathan Sacoolas, a US intelligence officer based at RAF Croughton, and the VCDR provides that members of the immediate family of a 'diplomat' enjoy privileges and immunities identical to those of the diplomatic officer.

Although Anne Sacoolas initially co-operated with the police investigation, she was swiftly flown back to the United States. Back home, obviously she no longer has diplomatic immunity; neither, perhaps less obviously, does her diplomatic immunity at the time free her of criminal responsibility for the killing of Harry Dunn, since diplomatic immunity is only procedural in nature (Denza, Diplomatic Law, 2008, pp. 311-312⬀).

But interesting questions remain. First, did diplomatic law permit the UK government to grant diplomatic immunity to persons working on an air base? The answer to this question must be 'yes'. First, there is nothing in the VCDR to suggest that the working part of a mission must only occupy one site, providing that any 'offices forming part of the mission in localities other than those in which the [main part of the] mission itself is established' are set up with the express consent of the sending state (VCDR Article 12); hence the legally legitimate view of British diplomats that RAF Croughton was treated as an 'annex' of the US Embassy in London. Second, an important purpose of a diplomatic mission is to gather intelligence (albeit by 'lawful means') and promote intelligence liaison between friendly states. And third, it is common practice for intelligence officers and their immediate families to be given 'diplomatic cover' in embassies, although not always as members of the 'diplomatic staff' – an important point in the context of this case. Thus the technicians among them, such as those working for the US National Security Agency (NSA), who traditionally clustered in the attics or in sheds on the roofs of large embassies, will almost certainly be members of the VCDR's second tier of embassy staff, the 'administrative and technical staff'. This was effectively acknowledged by the foreign secretary in his 21 October statement. And members of this class not only enjoy diplomatic immunity as well (except relative to civil and administrative – as opposed to criminal – jurisdiction when acting unofficially, VCDR Art. 37(2)); but also do not appear on the published diplomatic list.

The consequence of this is that the argument – commonly heard in the early days of this affair – that the Sacoolas family was not entitled to diplomatic immunity because the husband's name did not appear on the London Diplomatic List falls away. The FCO might, therefore, have been legally entitled to extend diplomatic immunity to US personnel posted at RAF Croughton, but did they need to? This is the second question. American intelligence technicians at RAF Croughton do not work in an unfriendly state; nor are their cloistered existence and super-protected communications likely to expose them to hostile pressure. Besides, they could benefit from special treatment via the Visiting Forces Act (1952). That service personnel and civilian support personnel of the United States in the UK are embraced by this act is confirmed by the listing of the USA in Part II of Schedule 1 to the Visiting Forces and International Headquarters (Application of Law) Order (1999). The conclusion, therefore, is inescapable. The British government has given diplomatic immunity to intelligence agency technical officers at RAF Croughton because it regards their work as vital and sensitive and because its most important ally, the United States, no doubt asked for it. And it probably asked for it because, apart from the fact that CIA and NSA officers are neither fliers nor civilian support staff of the US Air Force, the Visiting Forces Act provides nothing like the degree of immunity from UK jurisdiction afforded by diplomatic status and, unless waiver were to have been granted in her case, would certainly not have saved Anne Sacoolas from British justice.

The easiest way to understand this is to look at the succinct guidance to this legislation provided by the UK Crown Prosecution Service here. Nevertheless, the political expediency that was the background to the Sacoolas affair has produced an unfortunate consequence for diplomacy. By describing and treating as 'diplomats' persons who neither in the popular imagination nor in the understanding of the VCDR remotely resemble genuine diplomats and work in an establishment that is the very antithesis of a diplomatic mission, it has further tarnished the principle of diplomatic immunity itself, as well as possibly made its beneficiaries in such cases less careful about the need to obey domestic laws. Consideration should be seriously given to making all of the staff of establishments like RAF Croughton fall back on something resembling the Visiting Forces Act and, failing this, at the very least, to calling their 'diplomatic immunity' something else; for example, 'special immunity'.

Darija Medić

Web and Software Programmer and Digital Art Project Coordinator at DiploFoundation

A policy of science fiction: Behind the scenes of race and technology

First published on DiploFoundation Blog, 10 June

'Black people live the estrangement that science fiction writers imagine.'
Greg Tate (US writer, musician, and founding member of the Black Rock Coalition)

Situated writing and reading: a few caveats

This text is a particular policy reading of media and science fiction narrative, to open conceptual pathways for accessing widespread issues of systemic repression in how they relate to the history of technology, policy and intersectional identity. With special focus on examples from Afrofuturist popular culture, it will provide implications that the heritage of colonialism brings to spaces of regulation, invisible to many stakeholders, while hypervisible to others.

There are a few significant caveats for gracefully landing into this discussion. Firstly, Afrofuturism as a genre of science fiction was developed in an emancipatory effort to subvert the spectatorship of the Western white gaze. This text paradoxically reverts both the readership and the authorship to a predominantly white one: as the author I am a cisgender woman, locating myself in the Balkans, a conflict region in the geopolitical periphery of Western organisation of power. The intended readership of this is one embedded in policy and therefore conventionally Western and white, being that large international policy organizations have main headquarters in Western Europe and the USA. The purpose is not to appropriate, but to acknowledge the value Afrofuturism brings to a confrontation with sociopolitical and economic issues of race and technology that are difficult to see from the default, normed lens of those who are not systemically oppressed in these terms. It particularly focuses on pertaining tropes of constituting blackness, crucial for rethinking the conditions in which policy processes as agents of global norming arise. This text is not intended as a reflection on the emancipatory extent of the ideas presented in the examples that will be explored. Likewise, it doesn't take part in discussions related to possible repressive applications of the genre in serving as an escapist modality of hope, while pacifying its storytellers and listeners to think of change in potentiality and fantasy. It is also not analysing
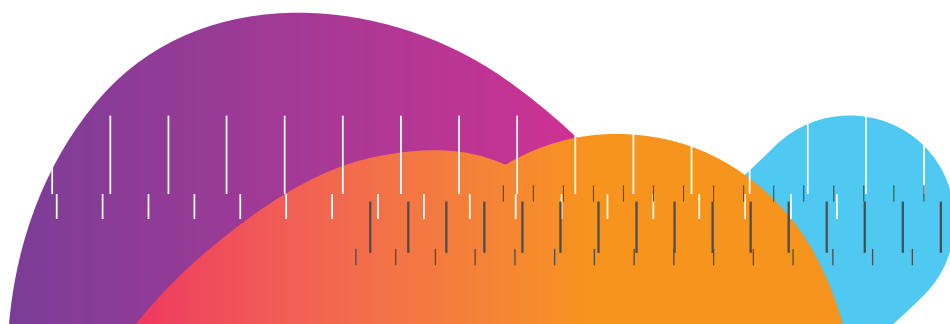
broader discussions of origins and authenticity within the genre. This text focuses on several examples from popular culture around the moving image as they have presented themselves in the context of the United States, located predominantly on the East Coast, especially for their embeddedness in broader popular mainstream US culture. The scope of this inquiry has revealed a few cards, while many are left unaddressed and would deserve a separate writing, such as how gender plays into the further mechanisms of racial oppression (misogynoir, the historical role of white women in constituting white supremacy) and to questions of race and technology in policy.

One of the most common conversations in policy on understanding the impact (and regulation) of technology is the argument between the views of technology as a neutral tool and technology as a deeply political one. At the same time, authors such as Isabel Wilkerson argue that historically, the Black body has been foundational in building the concept of the human and social infrastructure in Western societies. Arnold R Towns argues that the Black body is similarly to media infrastructures rendered invisible in its function to such societies. If we were to consider these ideas of the black body deeply embedded in the Western definitions of what is and what is not human, it has a controversial, yet direct connection to technology. The rest of this text serves to try and unpack this introduction with the specific lens that Afrofuturist imagery offers.

Afrofuturism is a genre of black speculative fiction and culture, spanning science fiction writing, film, music such as jazz and hip hop, and visual art.⧉ Featuring names such as painter Jean-Michel Basquiat⧉, writer Octavia Butler,⧉ multimedia artist and singer Janelle Monáe and singer-songwriter George Clinton,⧉ it came to the forefront of Western cultural discussions with the appearance of Marvel's 2018 film *Black Panther.*⧉ This recognition quickly opened the door to appropriation, as was seen in a controversial exhibition inspired by Afrofuturism in Berlin in 2019,⧉ showing 21 white, mostly male artists and 1 person of colour. The commodification of the now popular genre, exoticism of protagonists open many poignant issues surrounding the weaponization of identity politics, but they are a subject for another writing. Underneath these incidents lie legacies of infrastructures that show structural concepts surrounding how technology is seen, operated and governed. The attempt of this text is to unpack some of these governing infrastructures. Afrofuturim also shows that dominant narratives within popular science fiction and culture have revolved around a narrow definition of a lived human experience, which is predicated on a western heteronormative perspective. Traditionally a genre about the 'human' as a universal being and 'technology' as the supernatural and artificial, science fiction has powerful contributions from positions that have historically been seen as on the periphery of the human. Only recently have these diverse narratives emerged within the fictional global literary and art landscape (Latinofuturism,⧉ Romafuturism⧉), popularizing the role fiction plays in building many community bonds. Alternative fictions show the importance of storytelling as a way of survival. They imagine the future and reinvent the past from the perspective of those in a disadvantaged social position.

For that purpose, we'll step into the genre of Afrofuturism to extract notions of colonisation and applications of the relationship between race and technology from this marginalised but vital field of storytelling, drawing on three films in particular: (*Black Panther* (2018), the film that mainstreamed Afrofuturism; *Brother from Another Planet* (1984); and *Space is the Place* (1974).

Scene 1: Freedom of expression

Space is the Place

The first scene of the film opens with young African Americans in a youth centre in Oakland in 1972. They're singing, talking, playing table tennis, and relaxing. All of a sudden, we see a close-up of shiny futuristic shoes. Wearing them is a black man with a cape and a type of golden diadem on his head. He is accompanied by a pair of extravagantly costumed women, their faces obscured by massive gilded animal masks: one of a dog, one of an eagle. They appear vaguely Egyptian, but certainly not of this world.

'What it is, what it is?'
'Why your shoes so big?'
'Are those moon shoes?' one girl asks.
'How do we know you for real?'
'How do we know you ain't some old hippie or something?' asks another.
Then the black mystical persona answers:
How do you know I'm real? I'm not real. I'm just like you. You don't exist in this society. If you did, your people wouldn't be seeking equal rights. You're not real. If you were, you'd have some status among the nations of the world. So we're both myths. I do not come to you as a reality; I come to you as a myth, because that's what black people are. Myths. I came from a dream that the black man dreamed a long time ago. I'm actually a presence sent to you by your ancestors.

The man speaking is Sun Ra (born Herman Poole Blount). Sun Ra was a prolific author, poet, and musician, who taught a course called 'The Black Man in the Cosmos' at the University of California, Berkeley. In interviews he claimed that he came from Saturn and that he was just visiting. His mystical half-Egyptian name, eccentric behaviour, and otherworldly music front an Afrofuturist ethos of spiritual strength in navigating American society. By legitimising a mythical existence, he gave both an answer to the inexplicable black condition and a hope for an elevated parallel existence which could be reached through music.

Sun Ra spent his youth in highly segregated Chicago where blacks lived in poverty and were confined to specific areas of the city. He experienced prison himself, after refusing to go as a soldier in the Second World War and was released after a year, due to his plea based on the devastating effect the imprisonment had on him. His work echoed the storyline of crime and punishment, one common to the black experience – "living in confinement and dying in prison" (A Pure Solar World: Sun Ra and the Birth of Afrofuturism). Confinement in all its forms has followed the history of the black body in colonialism, from embarking on boats on the coasts of Africa with the hope of avoiding slave destiny by jumping off them and committing suicide, to the conditions of incarcerated life as slaves, treated as disposable. This heritage of confinement meant the sanctioning of life and defining the identity of slaves as the opposite, the other, a negation of human life – not having, not being allowed, not talking. That is the story of Afrofuturist other worlds, of almost not being here in the present in

order to survive it. The black person in this sense lives the paradox of hypervisibility and invisibility, many authors such as Mowatt et al. (2013) have brought this point to light. Their existence is noticed by everyone, but are given predetermined fixed meaning and stigma, while their individual stories remain invisible and denied.

This paradox is most clearly visible in the targeting of black people in contexts of crime and proportionate policy brutality that is still commonly practiced. The outcomes that are being globally witnessed today only bring to light the shadow side of society called systemic oppression.

Built on historical infrastructures intertwined with a colonial legacy, contemporary technoculture extends the reach to which polarisation of opinions can be automated, quickly amplifying existing prejudices, such as ones based on racial stereotyping. Algorithmic radicalisation is the ease with which an opinion can find support online, and quickly get polarised through further connections. Bias is mostly inscribed in the datasets that machine-learning algorithms are based on. The current market of facial-recognition software has most commonly been found to less accurately identify women, especially those of colour. Predictive AI software, such as Amazon Rekognition, broadly used by the police in several US states, has shown consistent levels of discrimination based on race and gender, inaccurately predicting and accusing black men and women of committing crimes. The demands of many digital and civil rights organisations, activists and researchers have finally gotten attention in the last few years with some law enforcement agencies suspending their use of this software.

Such an erasure of one's identity through fixation on cast demarcations quite literally produces an individual bodily traumatic response through dissociation and spiritual affinity. Sun Ra's way of escape from a fixed scenario of life was through imagination, through myth, through the creation of another world, far away from planet Earth altogether. He advocated redeeming power through that which was exoticised as superstitious, considered irrational, and primitive.

The power of such a narrative spread to create a community and an activist movement, a strong social force and a genre that is now called Afrofuturism. As inspirational as Sun Ra's character and work were, we will detach from his orbit to make space for other places of the Afrofuturist imaginarium, with his ensemble The Arkestra playing in the background.

'Every desire
is an end
and every end
is a desire
then
the end of the world
is a desire of the world
what type of end do you desire?'
- Sun Ra, This Planet is Doomed: The Science Fiction Poetry
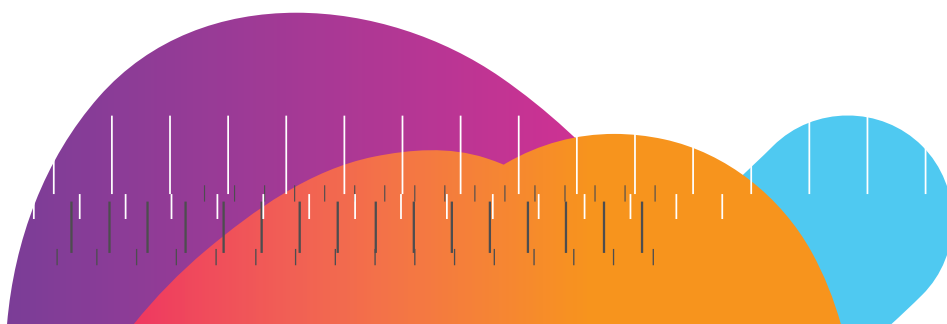
Scene 2: Encryption

Brother from Another Planet

An alien falls to Earth, into Harlem, in 1984. He takes the identity of a mute black person gifted with healing hands. Word travels, and soon the black community starts paying him to repair electronic appliances, during which time he demonstrates the power to heal open wounds.

'You don't talk, huh? Well that's good. If you don't talk, you don't talk people into things. You don't talk, you don't lie. You don't talk, you can't complain,' we hear from the woman at the house at which he stays for a short period.

While the lack of language is present throughout the film, encrypted coded communication allows the alien to escape the oppressors from his home planet and survive. This metaphor refers to the history of erasing African languages and the creation of alternative modes of communication, as black people had to resort to coded language in order to survive, too.

> **'We need images of tomorrow, and our people need them more than most.'**
> - Samuel R. Delany (American author, 1978)

Historically during the transatlantic slave trade, the systematic erasure of memory was done both by separating families and denying them their language, as to speak it meant death. Black slave history is like science fiction: abducted and subjected to extreme experiments, handed a future defined either by confinement or death, in a land where everyone else speaks and looks like an alien.

On the other side of colonial remains, the British government's Operation Legacy, ⬈ largely conducted in the 1960s targeted the removal of archives documenting torture in around 37 African countries. The records were either destroyed or sent back to England during the process of decolonisation. Caroline Elkins' *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya*, ⬈ a Pulitzer-prize-winning ⬈ account of atrocities in Kenya, wasn't initially accepted because of its reliance on oral history. It achieved acclaim only when the British government released its archive material, between 2011–13. This case raises the question what happens in other occasions when there are no official documents, or where the government responsible refuses to confirm such accounts, even though they would be accurate?

Alongside the importance of thinking through issues of erasure and silencing, *Brother from Another Planet* explores the importance of coded, encrypted language as a means of connecting and understanding. While encryption is the basis of safe communication, the integrity of communication is more certain when creatively coded. Digital policy and personal and social identities are entwined on every level, since policy governs the use and distribution of technology within a society. Race, gender and class, subjugated to the reinforcement of

division in society, become an amplifying aspect of data colonialism, casting light on prescribed norms of algorithmic classification.

Technology has shown to be instrumental and controversial for both understanding and facilitating segregation, acting as an amplifier in both directions. While communication technologies offer viral polarisation of political opinions, and spread fear, panic, and anger, they also create a space for awakening to social inequalities, and to hearing and understanding the importance of movements such as Black Lives Matter. Through the momentum of public attention, means of communication broaden the space for narrative and voicing into spaces previously difficult to access. These moments are key to enabling the social sensory apparatus to hear stories that have not been registered as part of that society, and directly affect its functioning, enabling changes such as inclusive terminology in software to replace racially fueled terms such as "master","slave", "blacklist" and "whitelist". Narrative plays a much more valuable role than it is given credit for.

Back in the land of ancestors, different conditions for black communities could be imagined.

Scene 3: *The Digital divide*

Black Panther

An example of the harmonious existence with nature is the land of Wakanda from the movie *Black Panther,* the film that brought the genre of Afrofuturism to the spotlight. Wakanda is a beautiful hidden jewel, technologically superior to the rest of the world. Its superiority lies in the fact that their technology is used for healing and maintaining the well-being of society, as opposed to conquering and invading. The animal spirit of the narrative, the black panther is a creature that never attacks, only defends.

> *'We will work to be an example of how we, brothers and sisters of this earth should treat each other. Now, more than ever, the illusion of division threatens our very existence. We all know the truth. More connects us than separates us. But in times of crisis, the wise build bridges, while the foolish build barriers. We must find a way to look after one another, as if we were one, single tribe.'*

Black Panther (Ryan Coogler, 2018)

As a film, the *Black Panther* can be seen as an argument for the decentralisation of the technical market and the development of a more caring society, one that nurtures rather than destroys the very nature humans live in. In effect, in times of global warming, the clock is ticking for humanity to take responsibility for its impact, and change its patterns of behaviour in order to survive as a species.
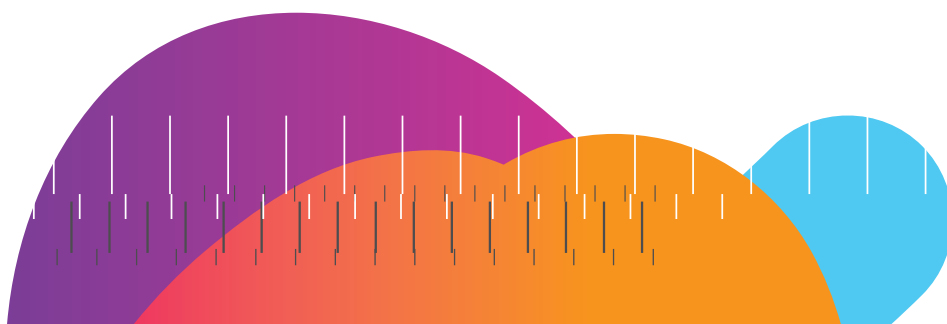
There is no need to go further than the telecommunications infrastructure to recall that old empires created networks, both on land and underwater, networks that still live in today's digital infrastructures. The fastest data route from West Africa to the rest of the world is based on the old colonial underwater cable infrastructure that goes through London. Nevertheless, Africa remains the least connected continent in the world, the one from which value has historically been most extracted for the purpose of others.

Reflecting on the question of colonialism and the black body, one could also say that, historically, black people were subjugated by and transformed into technology themselves, by being dehumanised, devalued into moving currency, and set to an industrial purpose for the Western white man. Therefore, the focus on technology as a key topic in Black Panther is that of facilitating empowerment, since the one who has access and means to technology is the one who has power. Logically, this transforms the role of black people in society, from being objects to becoming empowered subjects, giving them back their dignity and, humanity, and recreating an erased history, in a continuation of abolitionist thought. What this film teaches the viewer is to rethink the social context of today in creating futures, and the norms of accepted inequality and centrality, which are founded on layers of convoluted history and politics.

Towards futurisms

> *'Class, race, gender, sexism, nationalism, militarism [...] the toxic energies of our time want to come through us. They want to come out. They need to be rewritten and we have to be conscious about how that happens, so that we're not writing the same narrative'*
> - Adrienne Maree Brown⬈

Though true, to develop the sensory capacity to grasp the effect society has on the environment, the dominant social paradigms of hierarchy and power first have to heal their own receptors for internal mechanisms. Only by unlearning the norms under which identities are habituated is there space to grasp one person's science fiction as another person's reality. With the growth in populist politics and viral media, a critical and contextual approach to technologies⬈ that perpetuate oppression and affective behaviour has become more important than ever. While living inside the high-speed train of tech-positivist arrogance, one can often overlook how expression can be systemically silenced, and how specific parts of society are affected by this silencing. The role of technology is fundamental in shaping spaces of visibility, presence, and agency. Stepping out of fiction as a space for imagination that maintains the status quo while escaping to a better world, Afrofuturism (together with many other possible futurisms⬈) offers keys for understanding where the social sensory apparatus is blinded and suffocated.

More importantly, the value of storytelling serves as a reminder that narratives can be chosen, created, and then embodied as a life lived, not in a distant future, but in the now.⬈ Policy is a space of executable power prescribing and enacting social norms. Practising the change of narrative⬈ daily can lead to emergent strategies⬈ and change in the world. One in which communities would not need to fight for the right to breathe. This change begins by understanding that societies based on systemic inequalities among which each individual is taking part, acknowledging the differences in realities that are faced in this system and then listening to a different experience with curiosity.
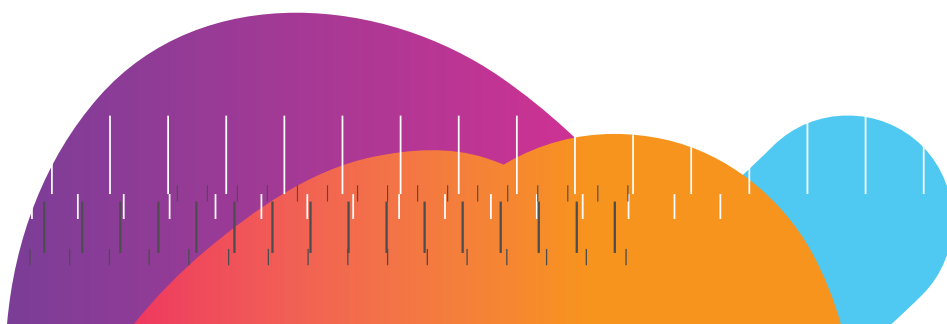
A sensory contribution

As an inspiration for enhancing listening capacities, this reading comes with a sample playlist of Afrofuturist classics:

Jimi Hendrix – Electric Ladyland

George Clinton – Computer games

Janelle Monáe - Dirty Computer

Herbie Hancock – Future shock

Bernie Worrel – Blackatronic Sciences

Parliament – Funkadelic Astrofunk

Sun Ra – Space is the place

Public Enemy – Fear of a Black Planet

Flying Lotus – Cosmogramma

Janelle Monáe – The Archandroid

Afrika Bambaataa & Soulsonic Force – Planet Rock

Metamorphosis.fm

Source: Ford Foundation gallery, 2019. Exhibition Utopian Imagination, New York City.

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HLPF 2020: Leaving the digital behind?

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In view of the ongoing global health crisis, for the first time ever since its establishment in 2013, the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) was held virtually. Dedicated to the 'Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development', the HLPF gathered representatives from UN member states to move the needle on poverty, food security, gender equality, climate change, and health in the decade of action.

A series of regular meetings and side events, held over the course of 2 weeks, were also an occasion for 47 countries (16 from Africa, 11 from Asia-Pacific, 11 from Europe, and 9 from Latin America and the Caribbean) to present voluntary national reviews (VNRs) and address progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda).

Despite the fact that technology made it happen, the 2020 edition of the HLPF fell short on digital issues. This comes as somewhat of a surprise considering that digital technology is often regarded as the 'invisible sustainable development goal (SDG)' that seeps through all 17 goals.

The first six months of 2020 are possibly the most vivid illustration of this. As the world's economic, political, social and health systems came to a test amid the outbreak of COVID-19, it was digital technology that helped facilitate 'business continuity' of humanity during the pandemic. From the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in early detection and big data insights, to online learning and remote work – you name it, tech was there. Nevertheless, this growing relevance of technology was not reflected in this year's HLPF's discussions. To add to the element of surprise, less than a month ago, the UN secretary general published his Roadmap for Digital Cooperation where he stressed the role of new technologies in the attainment of SDGs, in particular in the context of digital public goods and digital capacity building.

1. General debate shies away from the digital

This year's event was marked by COVID-19 with more than a fourth of HLPF sessions being dedicated to the crisis. Digital technology was somewhat under the radar with 16 sessions, out of which 7 tackled data specifically. From a total of 90 analysed government statements delivered at the general debate, only 28 made direct reference to digital technology. This rather low number represents an important decline in comparison to the 53 statements from last year that referred to digital innovation. While statements from developed countries highlighted the important role played by digital transformation in response to COVID-19, citing online diagnosis,

distance learning and e-solutions for continuity of public and private services, developing countries pointed towards the issue of the digital divide which has become even more pronounced during the crisis.

Speaking on behalf of the least developed countries (LDCs), Malawi underscored that only 19% of the population in LDCs has access to the Internet which, in turn, threatens to push people back into poverty by limiting access to resources. One of these resources is online education that has become unavailable to 90% of students due to lockdown measures. Enhancement of the quality, availability, and affordability of the Internet was therefore stressed as a priority, as well as an investment in digital literacy and skills which was particularly emphasised by Greece.

2. Tech in Voluntary National Reviews

The VNRs (perhaps with reason) were a lot more concrete in terms of the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the attainment of SDGs. The digital was addressed in 44 out of 45 analysed VNR. In addition to sharing data on Internet penetration, and the number of computer and smartphone users, certain countries went a step further and provided concrete examples of the digital transformation as means of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. National efforts range from cybersecurity and strengthening of the digital economy to digital literacy.

For instance, North Macedonia highlighted that it was the first country in the region to adopt digital identities, while Estonia has created a nation-wide digital registry for hospitals which helps individuals find an appointment with a medical specialist. Austria, which has incorporated digitalisation as one of its three focus areas, launched the 'fit4Internet' initiative that aims to leave no one in the digital age behind, whereas Bangladesh has undertaken measures to make all government websites accessible to persons with disabilities and provide them with digital learning platforms. A similar course of action has been taken in Uganda where a 'National Digital Vision' was developed in order to minimise the exclusion of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups. Just across the border in Kenya, an online work program 'Ajira Digital' was launched to boost youth participation in online work.

That said, the VNRs focused on the challenges of digital transformation. North Macedonia, Papua New Guinea, Mozambique, and Bulgaria cited that the low investments in technology development are slowing down the digitalisation and adoption of technology, and are having, among other things, a negative impact on financial inclusion, growth of businesses, delivery of public services, and precision agriculture.

Challenges are equally faced on SDG indicators. With 9.3% of the adult population using the Internet, Malawi is unlikely to meet the target of 100% set out in the SDG indicator 'Proportion of individuals using the Internet' (Indicator 17.8.1.). Citing weak telecommunications infrastructure, the size of the country, and relatively weak population density, Niger also remains behind in connecting to the Internet since in 2018 only 10.2% of its population was online.

As illustrated in the VNRs, digitalisation goes far beyond the Internet haves and have-nots, and encompasses a myriad of factors ranging from the availability of the right infrastructure, to the mindset and readiness to embrace digitalisation. What for some may appear as an increasingly digitalising world for others remains a hurdle on the path to sustainable development.
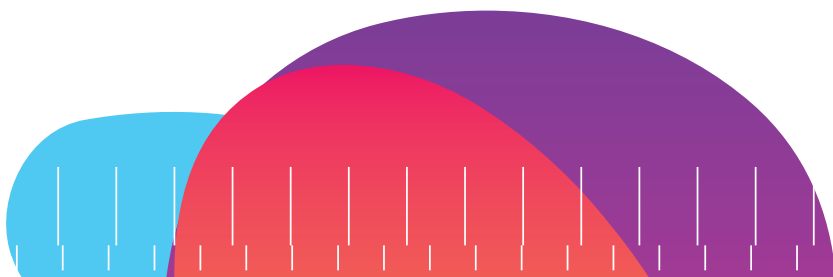
Petru Dumitriu

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Artificial intelligence (AI) and the human condition

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Dr Jovan Kurbalija, conductor of the orchestra called DiploFoundation, proposed a project called HumAInism⤢: Visionary governance for humanity with artificial intelligence. The main aim of the vision would be to find a way towards an outline of a 'new social contract'. A wise initiative in the right place!

The old social contract of Jean-Jacques Rousseau was born in Geneva, too. As a first spontaneous and amateur-ish reaction to this lofty initiative, I was wondering if a new social contract is the suitable means to address the impact of artificial intelligence. I believe that we should rather start by redefining the human condition besieged by artificiality. Why? Well, simply because by lifting artificial intelligence onto the pedestal of the future of humanity, as we do, we actually consent, with considerable enthusiasm and optimism, to delegate some of the specific functions of the human being to the more competent algorithms. If that is the case, we have to contemplate, inter alia, a number of possible implications.

1. The twilight of brainpower?

This kind of prospective governance should reflect on the consequences of the use of artificial intelligence on our brainpower. I do not want to go through the famous checklist of ifs by Rudyard Kipling, but I can afford to ask myself, 'shall I be a Man?' if:

I do not have to learn languages (because algorithms will translate and interpret for me in any circumstances); I do not need to know the multiplication table (which is already the case of some of the unanimously acclaimed millennials, virtuosi of the use of iPhones); I do not have to memorise anything (because my smartphone is there, smarter than I am); I do not need to orient myself in the space (believe me or not, I noticed someone using a GPS to find toilets in an airport); I do not have to choose my own bride (because the optimal, divorce-free choice, will be determined by a heartless, but more rational algorithm), etc., etc.!

The list could continue, but as short as it is, I have reasons to believe that, at the invitation of artificial intelligence, my brainpower may take a long and underserved break, for many of its functions will be useless. My fingers will eventually be more practical than my brain.

2. A new kind of polarisation?

Despite its generous promise for improved efficiency, productivity, enhanced collective intelligence, and other goodies, artificial intelligence may lead to a new kind of polarisation between two fundamental social strata: the minority of coders and the majority of users. The more we rely on coders and programmers, the more we increase the gap between their knowledge and our ignorance, their sight and our blindness. An increasing number of people will depend on a decreasing number of coders/programmers. The latter's minds will still work, ours will be at leisure. If the coders write smart contracts, we may not need philosophers to write social contracts. We may anticipate a worrisome Gini coefficient of intelligence distribution, but humankind will keep moving.

3. Exploring the dark side and redefining progress?

We should not forget that all new technologies initially served good intentions and later turned against humans. Fire was meant to bring warmth and cook meat, but then it served to burn people at the stake and in Holocaust ovens. Dynamite was intended to help excavation for construction, then it served to destroy human settlements. Atomic energy was supposed to produce more light and electric power, then it served to annihilate cities and any form of life.

Planes were invented to carry people, but they are also used to carry and drop bombs over them. Drones were acclaimed as tools to carry mail and medical aid to inaccessible places, and soon enough they were used for terrorist attacks. The paradigm of a prospective governance should be reversed: before advertising the potential benefits, we should analyse and prevent the potential dangers. Should we not stop equalising new technologies with inevitable progress? Should we not redefine progress?

4. The danger of a new totalitarianism?

Undermining factors such as money, manipulations, fake news, junk knowledge, etc., already challenge democracy. The social media mobilisation can act as a disruptive factor, but it is not capable of generating rational, systematic, constructive solutions, as well as accountability for its own slogans. With the disappearance of classes and the transformation of the masses into mere statistics and media ratings, artificial intelligence may take us to a new kind of totalitarianism. We already witness the emergence of new technology-enabled illegitimate powers across borders, ideologies, and classes. Power corrupts power holders! While we can assume that a possible rebellion of artificial intelligence against humans can be avoided by good faith programming, we may not be able prevent the abuses of the new power.

5. Creating new gods?

The need for a superior intelligence has accompanied us since the dawn of humanity. So far, religious beliefs have survived all advances in science and technology because religion was created and accepted as a higher moral guide, above empirical knowledge and evidence. Artificial intelligence will undermine irreversibly the human propensity to have faith in a superior spiritual power. The algorithms may replace God and create a vacuum in the human soul.

Therefore, studies about future governance should envisage all the consequences of outsourcing human brain functions to artificial intelligence. Hopefully, there are still some ifs in the poetic prescription of Kipling, which can make the difference: If you can dream – and not make dreams your master; If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim; one could still be a Man!

Aldo Matteucci

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A tale of influencers

First published on *DiploFoundation Blog*, 22 July

Influencers are as old as Adam and Eve – the snake and Eve took on this role in turn. Shamans and priests were influencers or, as in China, a Confucian bureaucracy. Next to the top-down influencers, each community had its local influencers as well, often emergent personalities. Then, the process was verbal, relying on speech, rituals, or images. With the Renaissance, secular influencers took center stage, reaching a first high in the age of Enlightenment. The Penny Press and newspapers spread political ideas to an expanding, literate readership. Industrialisation spawned economic influencers – marketing. Since then, the influencing techniques in both areas have commingled. For the first time, the process could be documented – print, photo, and recording allowed the historian or social scientist to trace the overt and covert ways of the influencers and the outcome in the people's actions. At the same time, we began to understand the link between the message and the surrounding social and economic context. One could begin to guess the reasons for success and failure of an idea – but also the essential role of happenstance.

The influencers' message yields meaning for each listener. The addressees link it to their experience and, in so doing, alter or transform the meaning to suit them. Across people, the message's words become a useful shorthand – a cliché, a rhetorical device - for a complex set of underlying meanings – pars pro toto. The message is thus and always highly fluid, both across listeners and time. 'Language is collective, and protean.' A message's spread and success depend on the degree of fuzziness. As we agree on the words while intending different meanings, influencers use the fuzziness to create coalitions for common action. The author has charted the ever-changing content of two messages that have dominated political discourse of the USA in the first half of the twentieth century – and now suddenly again. They are AMERICAN DREAM and AMERICA FIRST. Here a personal synopsis.

1. American Dream

The 'American Dream' is not dead, we just have no idea what it means anymore. The 'American Dream' emerged as a progressive shorthand in the heydays of the Gilded Age. It aspired to rein in rampant and unregulated capitalism. (A spokesman for this view was Walter Lippman.) It meant grappling with inequality, sharing benefits and abilities, and restraining monopoly power. Antitrust laws were meant to protect the small producer, not the
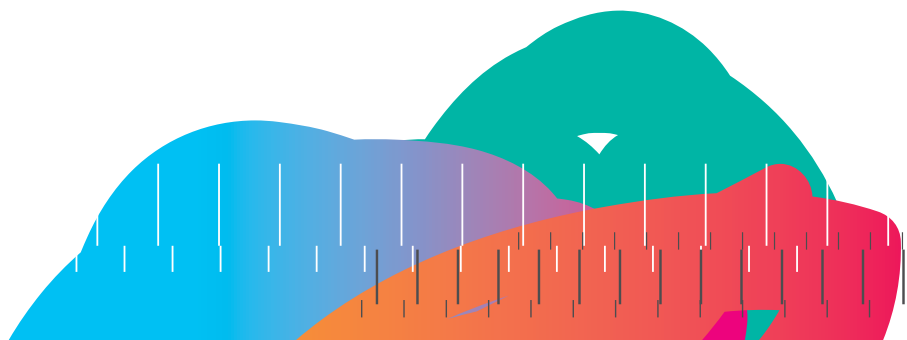
consumers. Emergent consumerism transformed the meaning. Those who could not make it rich in the stock market of the Jazz Age, at least shared in the feeling of being rich by using aspirational goods like soap, the motor vehicle, and other mass-consumption goods. Come the Great Depression, the 'American Dream' re-focused on social welfare. Roosevelt articulated it as 'Freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear.' It was a collective dream of empowerment as well as mutual trust and dependency. The modern collective expressed itself in the state, protecting its citizens from authoritarianism, plutocracy, and oligarchy, as tyranny went corporate, while ensuring that economic poverty not become moral poverty. The phrase echoed the shift from Locke's 'life, liberty, and property' to Jefferson's 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.'

By the end of the decade, however, the meaning was changing surreptitiously. WWII muddied the shift. In 1947, as the world painfully picked up the pieces of WWII, President Truman reformulated his predecessor's liberties by replacing freedom from want and fear with 'freedom of enterprise'. This was an opening salvo to the Cold War. Political rights were to be enshrined in the Declaration of Human Rights – a list of negative liberties. In parallel, the West studiously wanted to avoid the balancing inclusion of economic rights as positive rights. So orphaned, prosperity merged with the negative set. The Austrian political and economic school was also in the ascendency, for whom any state involvement was the 'Way to serfdom'. On a personal note, I'd like to add the emergence, after 1938, of the infinitely popular superhero comics (Wonder Woman, Superman, Batman, and the many avatars). All could dream the personal dream of hidden omnipotence under the cover of mediocrity.

If anything, today's 'American Dream' is the opposite of its original meaning. It rejects all social responsibility for a libertarian creed of personal power and right. Rather than a collective tradition, the message of the American dream today reads like individual stories within a nonexisting frame story or hallucination.

2. America First

History is the raw material for nationalist or ethnic or fundamentalist ideologies, as poppies are the raw material for heroin addiction.

If the story of the 'American Dream' is one of a battle between two antithetic sub-tropes vying for control of the all-embracing one above, 'America First', always a political slogan. Its core message remains the same: affirming the entitlement of the old prerogatives of white, Protestant, male establishment power. What varies is the extent to which its overt and covert components are explicated – the balance between words over code. (Many call the covert code dog-whistle message.) 'America First' emerged at the end of the nineteenth century as American ethno-nationalism one that. It tried to strike a balance between immigration and assimilation; between exclusion (Chinese, Japanese, Jews and non-Nordic races) and inclusion. It aimed at 'hyphenated Americans', urging them to place their country of adoption over that of origin. In parallel, by acts and deeds it revived the theme of racial discrimination after the establishment of Jim Crow.

The Second Ku Klux Klan spread from Georgia in 1915 to become a nationwide political force. Lynching was not far behind. President Wilson used America First in 1915 to justify the country's non-intervention in WWI – the USA would not take sides but bring its view of an orderly world to the warring parties. Wilson's 14 points were the internationalist realisation. It soon turned to world-scale jingoism in the public's mind.
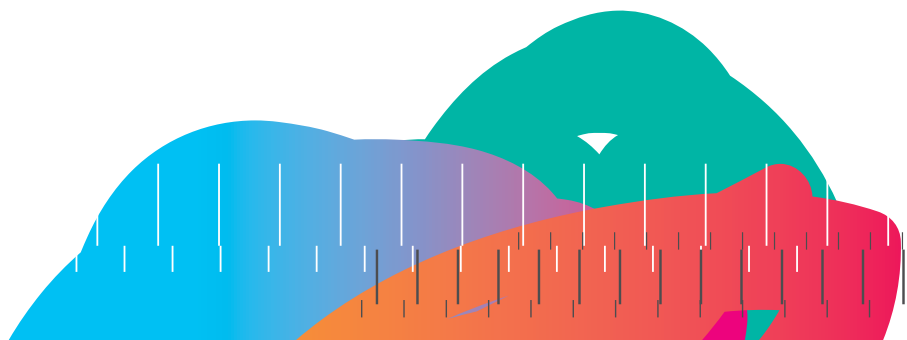
In the two decades before WWII, the overt part of 'America First' were its links with Fascism and Nazism. Against Roosevelt's social democracy, the movement proposed an alternative, corporate way of structuring and running a state for the benefit of the political and economic elite. Charles Lindbergh was the face of it, until he overplayed his cards and was discredited. This overt part disappeared with the world conflict. Racism traversed the war and took on systemic, i.e., covert forms. The post-WWII housing projects were kept 'homogeneous,' a code-word for segregation. The charter school movement emerged as the riposte to school desegregation. As the civil rights movement in the 1950s brought progress to the Afro-Americans, resentment built up: suddenly law and order took precedence over social programs. Mass incarceration and the weaponising of the police ensued.

It took Donald Trump to let the systemic character of US racism emerge into the glare of the political light. He made his political fortune to a good extent by trying to delegitimise President Barack Obama through the birther issue. Trump's election has brought together an unholy alliance of racist, fascist, and libertarian feelings, coupled with a mastery in the manipulation of minds and news that could bring democracy down.

The study of public and political phrases as their meaning evolves through time and intersects with context and chance, is essential. We are just at the beginning. The present discursive approach leaves, in my view, much to be desired. On the one side, we need better tools of visualisation – so as better to grasp the complexity. We must integrate history, anthropology, and social psychology, so that we can establish hypotheses and create models we can falsify. We need to inoculate our study against anachronism. And after that, we may humbly, and in good faith, accept the lack of coherence that underlies historical and political processes.

Badriyya Yusuf

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Africa and internet governance: At the table or on the menu?

First published on *DiploFoundation Blog*, 28 July

Internet governance (IG) is a particularly challenging puzzle when viewed from the perspective of countries in the Global South. Many of these countries are asymmetrically integrated and constrained by structures of dependence established by more advanced countries. This is clear in the push for IG reform by countries in the Global South, arguing that the current model does not adequately address their concerns about access and affordability. Ideally, the plurality of interests and the involvement of diverse stakeholders beyond states, such as civil society, academia, and the private sector, makes the multistakeholder model of IG a well-suited mechanism for Africa's participation in global IG.

Yet, as Africa increasingly integrates into the digital realm, its ability to substantially engage in global IG requires reassessment. There is a significant difference between participating in international 'talk shops' and in contributing to the actual practice of IG. This post critically examines the multistakeholder model of IG from an African perspective. The argument is that significant variations in actor participation, as well as power relations, continue to undermine effective IG participation from countries in the Global South. This supports the argument put forward by Mark Raymond and Laura DeNardis that the multistakeholder model of IG is a misnomer because several of its functions revolve around single groups of specialised actors. Failure to address this reality is complicit in IG failing to live up to its multistakeholder rhetoric.

Reasons often cited for suboptimal participation from African stakeholders in IG include financial constraints to travel to governance institutions and events, the lack of specialised technical expertise, and even a disinterest in issues as a result of different national priorities. These have often resulted in the lack of regional Internet policy co-ordination and a limited ability to move forward an African agenda at the global level. Interestingly, many of the constraints that have traditionally limited effective African participation in global IG are gradually changing. For example, while broadband access continues to be a problem, Internet penetration rates continue to rise through wireless access.
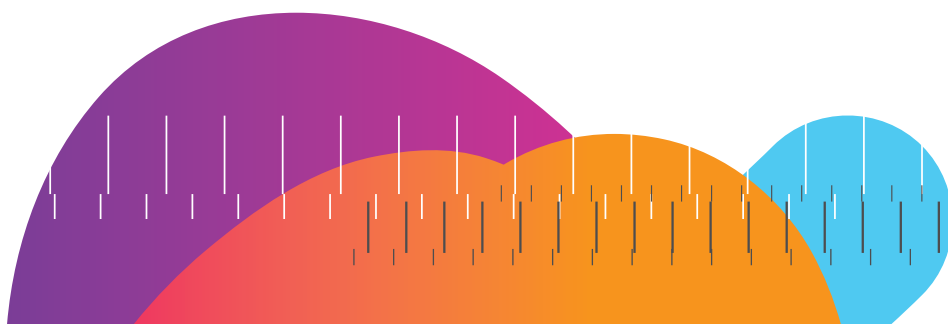
Capacity building and knowledge sharing is widely facilitated by regional and national Internet Governance Forums, technical institutions, and civil society organisations. Similarly, remote participation is increasingly offered as an option for attending IG forums. Have these been effective for African global IG participation? The history of IG provides some insights into this question. IG has traditionally been the purview of epistemic communities of private companies and technical bodies committed to keeping the Internet a borderless space outside government control. This took a different turn in the mid-1990s as states and more non-state actors entered the field making IG a political issue. Developed countries, largely dissatisfied with international governance institutions and processes, have argued for preserving the selfregulating private sector driven multistakeholder model of IG. Many developing states and civil society organisations, however, favour multilateral processes. They argue that intergovernmental structures offer formal sovereign equality for states, and contend they allow more room for democratic governance with the full participation of all stakeholders.

This schism has been evident in contentions over the definition of IG. Global IG has been described to be a multiple-hat phenomenon, whereby the same wellestablished players in its global political economy move within key institutions. Specialised expertise in technical aspects of IG makes it a 'power elitist process' which includes/ excludes actors as was demonstrated in the Bylaws of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) when it was created. While initially centred around the USA, the power elite expanded to include transnational companies from Europe, and intergovernmental organisations such as the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The recognition that not all stakeholders should have equal standing was a factor in the resistance to handing oversight of the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) to the multistakeholder group.

From this perspective, an institutionalised system of hegemony is created, whereby international norms can be seen to primarily benefit their creators. Even then, organisations involved in IG are purported to retain discretion in considerations of how stakeholders are assessed and factored into decisions. Arguably, these are some of the reasons which informed calls for more effective digital co-operation which require complimenting multilateralism by multistakeholderism as recommended by the UNSG's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation.

In reality, not all stakeholders are equally important in global IG where efficiency is perceived to be sacrificed by inclusion of too many voices. The African Internet ecosystem is clearly not among the key players of the broad network of global IG. Hindered by ineffective national information and communication technology (ICT) policies and regulations, and the uneven global distribution of Internet resources, the private sector has traditionally not been active in the global agenda setting of the Internet. This is evident even in global partnerships which work on the basis of consensuses such as the 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP). It remains to be seen to what extent the proliferation of iHubs across the continent will make a substantive and sustainable difference.

Similarly, involvement in global IG is primarily limited to the participation of states and some civil society organisations in multilateral multistakeholder 'talk-shop' forums. A glimpse of these dynamics can be seen in the World Conference on International Telecommunications 12 (WCIT-12) outcome. This was an event at which member states of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) negotiated proposed revisions to the International Telecommunications Regulations (ITRs). This entailed a proposal to expand the ITU's mandate to include
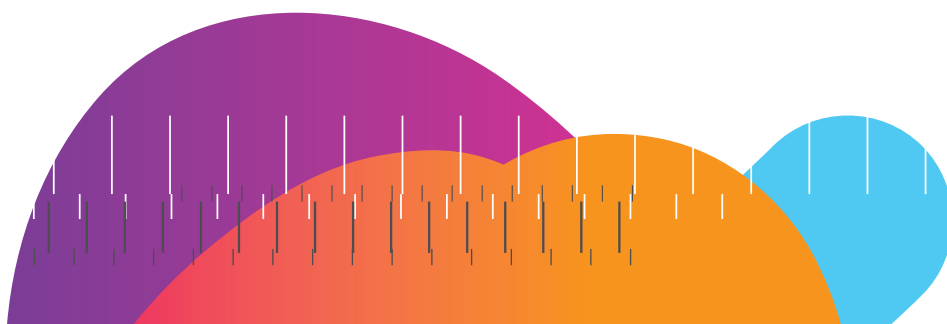
IG, vehemently opposed by developed countries. Only three African member states took sides with developed countries and declined to sign the ITRs – Kenya, Gambia, and Malawi.

A closer look at the Internet ecosystems in African countries helps explain much of the variance in WCIT-12 outcomes. Driven by a 'digital decade' from 2007–2017, Kenya has been a supporter of the multistakeholder IG model and even enshrined it in its Constitution in 2010. Kenyan IG-related agencies consult with various stakeholders – despite allegations of preferential treatment for telecoms. Kenya decided against revisions to ITRs at WCIT-12 because of potential destabilising effects on its thriving Internet-based industries, and similar implications for its status as an Internet traffic exporting country. Another concern was that M-Pesa's innovative mobile banking service would be placed under the provisions of the ITRs. Civil society organisations were included in Kenya's delegation to WCIT-12 and involved in decisionmaking. In contrast, South Africa is among the countries which favoured governmental oversight of IG at WCIT-12. As is typical for most African countries, the South African domestic implementation of multistakeholderism is best described as ad hoc, having limited engagement with stakeholders. Local IG agendas are not well developed resulting in default adaptation of intergovernmental agendas which might not necessarily be best for national interests.

In conclusion, an African perspective of multistakeholder IG highlights the necessity for stakeholders to be fully engaged in the varied components of IG, beyond simply attending talk shops. This reinforces and recognises the agency of African state actors and non-state actors in global affairs. This post has analysed the domestic and international constraints faced by African stakeholders seeking inclusion into the 'power elite' structures of IG. It has also demonstrated how countries like Kenya have managed to turn the tables around by proactively developing a local IG agenda and focusing on its national priorities in the international arena. This is similar to what developed countries do and, until Africans learn to follow suit, they will remain on the menu of IG negotiation tables.

Katharina Höne

Director of Research of DiploFoundation

GPT–3 for diplomacy?

First published on *DiploFoundation Blog*, 24 September

The artificial intelligence (AI) Generative Pre-trained Transformer 3 (GPT-3) can write texts on any topic. OpenAI, the organisation that developed and released it as a beta version in June 2020, describes it as a general-purpose application for creating text, 'allowing users to try it on virtually any English language task'. GPT-3 is a scaling up, by two orders of magnitude, of the previous model released by OpenAI, making it 'the most powerful natural language processing (NLP) application available today'.

The promises are greater accuracy and an improved ability to transfer things learned in one context to a different context. Overall, GPT-3 can mimic a variety of styles and genres, and in doing so, return texts that look very much like having been written by a human. The Guardian recently used it to write an article. So, what does this mean for diplomats whose daily work is steeped in the art and craft of language?

1. Automated diplomacy

When thinking through the use of AI for specific tasks and within specific professions, it is useful to distinguish between augmentation and automation. Augmentation describes a situation where parts of a task are taken over by a machine. Automation means that the whole process is taken over by a machine with extremely minimal, if any, human intervention. What can GPT-3 deliver in terms of augmented and automated diplomacy?

2. Augmentation: Efficiency tools

OpenAI's website includes a number of use cases that are also applicable to the work of diplomats. First, the company CaseText uses GPT-3 to search through legal documents and to facilitate litigations and presentations by lawyers. Similar applications in the area of international law are not hard to imagine, and have indeed already been suggested and tested (the Cognitive Trade Advisor is an example). Second, productivity tools that lead to better decisions could also be applied in the field of diplomatic practice. Third, 'comprehension tools', that provide quick summaries of long texts, might also eventually aid the work of diplomats. As these tools become more widely available and used, it is not far-fetched to suggest that diplomats will use them in their daily work, either as off-the-shelf productivity tools or as custom-build systems that take the specifics of the work of diplomats into account.

With GPT-3 becoming available beyond the beta version, developing custom applications should move within easy reach. It's also worth pointing out that the tools described here are nothing new, the difference being that GPT-3 is the latest and most powerful NLP tool available today. The promise associated with use cases like these is greater efficiency and productivity. While this resonates well in a business context, it resonates less when it comes to diplomatic practice.

To be clear, ministries of foreign affairs are under budgetary constraints and have an obligation to use public money responsibly. It can also be an advantage to be faster and more efficient when doing research in preparation for a negotiation. However, finding an agreement or being successful in negotiating texts cannot be measured by these efficiency metrics. While greater efficiency can be an advantage for negotiators and can level the planning field for small and developing states, it does not win you the overall 'battle'.

3. Automation: Diplomatic writing tasks

GPT-3 delivers some interesting results on the basis of an initial short piece of text submitted to the system. It matches the tone and style and returns a text that is, more often than not, understandable and reasonable. More importantly, it is hard, if not impossible, to distinguish that text from a piece written by a human being. Therefore, we can assume that the system will be able to match the tone and style of a typical diplomatic speech, for example, those delivered at the opening of the UN General Assembly each year. It is also feasible that it will match certain positions and interests based on the initial short text submitted to it. If you give the system a speech by Prime Minister of New Zealand Jacinda Ardern, it will very likely return a text that believably sounds like a speech by her. If you give the system a speech by US President Donald Trump, it will very likely return a text that believably sounds like a speech by him.

While such a text might be interesting as an initial suggestion or a general template, it will need a lot of editing and rewriting. Although we were not able to test GPT-3 ourselves, we assume that the text, also passable as having been written by a human being, will still miss the mark in the context of diplomatic practice. The following aspects are very likely missing: overall coherence; references to specific examples that are most useful in this context; references to historic moments important for an occasion; and an understanding of the relations between countries and how they should be reflected, often implicitly, in specific parts of the speech.

The explanation for these doubts and potential shortcomings is simple: GPT-3 operates by mapping relationships between words without having an understanding of the meaning of the words. It's great at predicting the next word in a sentence, but lacks understanding of the overall context. This explains the statement from Open AI that GPT-3's 'success generally varies depending on how complex the task is'. For these more complex tasks, human editors and writers are needed. For example, it's also worth noting that, according to the editor's note accompanying the Guardian article mentioned above, the article was a piece of augmented, not automated, journalism. Journalists selected and rearranged passages, and the article went through the usual editing process. An opinion piece also published in the Guardian suggested that 90% of the text generated by GPT-3 was discarded before editing.

This is not to take away from the fact that GPT-3 is a huge accomplishment and a big step for these types of language processing AIs. It might serve as a way of making speech-writing quicker by already providing templates
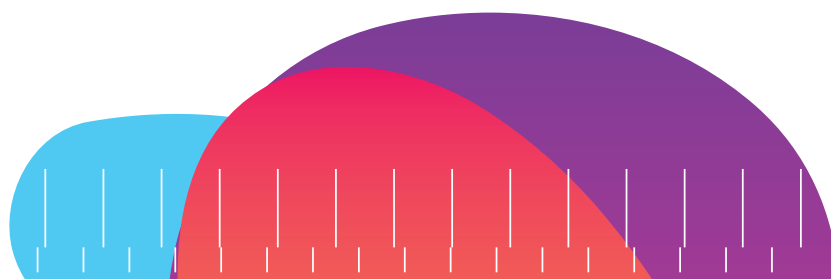
and useful suggestions. In this sense, it could work much like the autocomplete function in e-mail services and word processors. This brings us back to the automation-vs-augmentation question, and the, perhaps, reassuring knowledge that neither diplomats nor human speech-writers are likely to be replaced anytime soon.

4. The way forward?

Without having tested GPT-3 ourselves, we cannot be sure, but the hunch is that more specialised systems are needed in the area of diplomacy. In a paper released by the mothers and fathers of GPT-3, it is suggested that relying on a more-text-more-computing-power approach will eventually come up against limits. With such an approach, the system becomes better and better at predicting the word most likely to appear next in a sentence. It does not, however, become better at keeping the next sentence or the text as a whole 'in mind' (for a detailed discussion of this point, see this article on GPT-3). For that, a different approach is needed.

At DiploFoundation, as part of our AI humAInism project, we have experimented with how this different approach could look like in the field of diplomacy. Our own Speech Generator is meant as an illustration of what can be done and how it can be done. Diplomats working in the field of digital policy and cybersecurity will find it particularly interesting to experiment with. The Speech Generator allows for selecting an opinion on various key topics on the basis of which a speech is generated.

In contrast to applications like GPT-3, we tried to mimic the human process of writing a speech by using smaller algorithms trained for specific tasks, such as an algorithm for finding keywords and phrases ('underlining'), an algorithm for recommending paragraphs on a specific topic, an algorithm for summarising paragraphs, etc. As our developer Jovan Njegic would say, 'in this way, we try to form a system of interconnected algorithms, which imitate not the results of the writing process, but the human process of reasoning during speech-writing'. This also means that if a result is not appropriate, the user can go back and tweak the process. Our speech generator is an illustration, not a fully fledged application for diplomats, but it might just point us in the right future direction.

Anastasiya Kazakovia

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Cybersecurity requires governments to step in

First published on *DiploFoundation Blog*, 9 December

For delivering secure-by-design digital products, companies currently lack market incentives. Just as governments need industry for developing smart regulations and policies, the industry needs governments for setting the tone and impetus for the market. It is difficult to disagree with Bruce Schneier when he says that, in particular, the 'Internet of Things (IoT) will remain insecure unless the government steps in and fixes the problem'. But he said that in November 2016; four years later – this is still the case. In approaching digital transformation and making sure it will be cyber-resilient, the industry needs governments to join the dialogue on fixing the growing common cyber-insecurity.

The first reason explaining why governments need to step in is the lack of incentives for companies to invest in cybersecurity. Cybersecurity awareness does not equal cybersecure behaviour: even if companies are aware of industry security best practices, it does not mean that those practices are actually implemented. Companies' decision-making regarding investment choices is influenced by the return on investment (ROI); thus, the chief executive officer (CEO) of a medium-sized company would likely ask: 'Why do I need to think about making my products safer? How would that help me earn profit to innovate further?' Instead, that typical CEO will likely decide 'to optimize production and product-support costs; come up with new, attractive features; and have consumers change products faster'.

The role of governments, in this case, seems critical: in consultation with the private sector, governments need to create the right economic environment as well as to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which often lack resources and capacity, with certain targeted policy tools that would be part of the common technology ecosystem. In building closer dialogues and trusted partnerships with companies of any size, the governments' role is to shape the rules so that cybersecurity becomes a competitive advantage. Addressing the lack of resources and capacity through stimulating educational programmes and RnD investments is another possible direction in which governments can play a critical role.

The second reason for greater government intervention for building a cyber-resilient digital transformation is the existing complexity of regulatory approaches. At the SAP Product Security Summit in 2019, Holger Mack and Tom Schröer showed that in today's IT products, less than 5% of the computer code is home-grown; the rest is code of third-party companies or third-partycomponents. Why is this so? To produce and deliver faster, as well

as to ensure the interoperability of IT products, companies need to optimise their software development and use modules of other vendors. However, growing in complexity and sophistication, modern software products are becoming more vulnerable. In managing modern IT products, into which a great many third-party components are embedded, the manufacturer needs to decide: (1) which certification is necessary to pass, and (2) how certification should be approached. The answer to both questions may not satisfy the needs because there is no institutional framework in which certification could be considered optimal within the particular market. What is more, it is impossible to imagine stand-alone certification for the entire technology stack: for each module and component, there would be, probably, separate certification requirements. While large enterprises are more likely to be able to handle this, SMEs would face a huge burden to their business in attempting to ensure rigorous regulatory compliance.

Therefore, again, governments, in consultation with the private sector, need to address this issue by agreeing on baseline security requirements and on different layers of certification to address different levels of the criticality of technologies. The idea behind this is to secure technology and enhance confidence in technology through standards and certification – but this has to be made proportionate to the companies' size and sector of operations.

The third reason for the government to play a bigger role in designing security policies is the need for greater transparency and accountability about handling vulnerabilities – in both the public and private sector. There are no 100%-secure products, and probably never will be. This is the default situation: humans, who produce technology, sometimes make mistakes. But it is humans' responsibility to address these mistakes too, and accountability remains critical. A vulnerability may remain undiscovered for some time, but the digital security risk appears only when the vulnerability is discovered and (intentionally or unintentionally) exploited.

This why we need greater transparency and accountability about how vulnerabilities are handled. While companies are currently enhancing software development and implementing secure-by-design practices for reducing vulnerabilities, we also need this transparency from governments. Particularly, governments not only need to promote responsible vulnerability management and disclosure among software manufacturers, but they need to follow those processes and be a part of collective efforts together with the industry, including critical infrastructure owners and cybersecurity providers.

Concluding this piece, we must add a disclaimer that this is not an exhaustive list of all the reasons; there might be more. While the IT security community is getting better at maintaining the security of applications, it is often the people who use the technology who are the 'weakest links', and it would be naïve to presume that the behaviour of people may be 'fixed' forever. Thus, it is not the technology per se, but the use of technology that creates risks, and therefore, here too, industry will not be able to go it alone in incentivising both other companies and users to turn cybersecurity awareness into secure behaviour. The Geneva Dialogue on Responsible Behaviour in Cyberspace – an international conversation on product security led by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland and DiploFoundation – has taken a big step forward this year by preparing baseline good practices for reducing vulnerabilities. But further work needs to be done to make those practices international and interoperable. The success in building a secure-by-design IT ecosystem will depend on the ability of both governments and industry to be agile in keeping up with consumer demand, and making sure that security and safety are built-in when designing innovative solutions.

Jovan Kurbalija

Founding Director of DiploFoundation and Head of the Geneva Internet Platform

Nature and digital: A historical view from Geneva

First published on *DiploFoundation Blog*, 11 December

Three hundred years ago, Charles Bonnet was born in the thriving intellectual epicentre of Geneva. Botanist, lawyer, philosopher, psychologist, and politician were but a few parts of what was a rich life of academic pursuits. This genuine renaissance figure trained in law as a profession, and enjoyed a brief political career, gaining membership to the Council of the Republic of Geneva from 1752 and 1768.

Bonnet's initial scientific interest was in studying insects and germs. When his interests moved into botany, he made important early observations by patiently studying gas bubbles on leaves that formed when submerged in water, indicating gas exchange (Recherches sur l'usage des feuilles dans les plantes). Some current climate change insights can even be traced back to Bonnet. He argued that trees and plants have the power of sensation, which remains an under-researched field to this day.

In psychology, his descriptions of vivid, complex visual hallucinations experienced by people of otherwise sound mind became known as Charles Bonnet Syndrome. In his Contemplation de la nature (1765), a philosophical work, he developed complex thinking concerning the human condition. The natural sciences were his great passion, and today his work can help us to deal with one of the main challenges ahead of us: the interplay between digital and nature.

As we search for 'formulas' to deal with climate change, AI and other pressing issues however, we may be inspired by Bonnet. For example, his most notable contribution to the field of botany was in coining the term "phyllotaxis" ('leaf arrangement' in Greek) as a description of the ways that leaves are distributed on trees. Bonnet discovered that leaves are distributed according to Fibonnaci's sequence of numbers: 0-1-1-2-3-5-8-13…

Fibonacci, otherwise known as Leonardo de Pisa, was a 13th Century Italian mathematician who expressed in the Liber Abaci (1202), and whose namesake was given to, the sequence of numbers such that each number is the sum of the two preceding:

0+1=1; 1+1=2; 1+2=3; 2+3=5; 3+5=8; 5+8=13…

In addition, the ratio of two consecutive Fibonacci numbers tends to the golden ratio (1.61) as they increase:

$$8/5 = 1.60$$
$$13/8 = 1.62$$
$$21/13 = 1.61$$
$$34/21 = 1.61$$
$$55/34 = 1.61$$
$$89/55 = 1.61$$

Bonnet realised that leaves follow the Fibonacci sequence, and thereby the golden ratio, in order to maximise their exposure to sunlight. Distribution starts with two leaves, followed by three in the next row, and so on. Thus, he discovered an important bridge between nature and mathematics, and subsequently he put the golden ratio in the centre of his enquiries.

Bonnet was, as reflected in his deep and varied interests, a 'boundary spanner' or polymath, a type of person that is badly needed today. We tend to see more and more people with esoteric specialisations, and ever fewer people with the broad spectrum of talent required to deal with cross-cutting issues. Next time you walk in the park, think about two points that Bonnet left for us: a link between mathematics and nature, and the need to think beyond siloed fields in discussing politics or doing scientific research.

For example, as we are trying to regulate artificial intelligence, we may - at least - consult the way nature has regulated the development of 'biological algorithms' since time immemorial. If Bonnet could observe a formula in the distribution of leaves, we may discover the formula for dealing with AI and other challenges of modern society. The ultimate aim spans eras in our search for more sunlight, creativity, and purpose.

3. Master's dissertation abstracts

Every year, DiploFoundation welcomes applicants to its Master/Postgraduate Diploma in Contemporary Diplomacy. This is a program aimed at working diplomats and international relations professionals with a view to training them in the theoretical and practical aspects, as well as the main issues and challenges, of contemporary diplomacy. The program enjoys close to 300 alumni and, every year, more than 15 students graduate from this program. This is a sample of some of the abstracts of the dissertations that were submitted during the last year, exhibiting the wide range of topics that are covered and researched in the Master/Postgraduate Diploma in Contemporary Diplomacy.⧉

Arlette Alexandra Wijnhout

NGO Diplomacy: The lack of aid work protection afforded by state governments

Over the past five years, attacks on non-governmental personnel have increased around the world, with the consequence of aid workers being wounded, kidnapped or even killed. This dissertation analysed the adequacy of United Nations answers to this phenomenon, as the organization sought to improve security conditions for aid workers. Research showed that resolutions made by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) set overly ambitious targets and unrealistic timing, while suffering from budgetary constraints and lack of coordination for their implementation. Furthermore, political self-interest on the part of several countries, make NGO's interests irrelevant for multiple governments. These shortcomings have led not only to UN incapacity to promote the improvement of security conditions of aid workers, but also to investigate alleged violations of obligations holding perpetrators accountable. The dissertation thus concludes that the UNSC has the responsibility to charge penalties when violations of the binding laws have taken place. When awareness is created and the prevention of aid work incidents is on the international political agenda, points of improvement on law enforcement, resolution draft and accountability can be addressed.
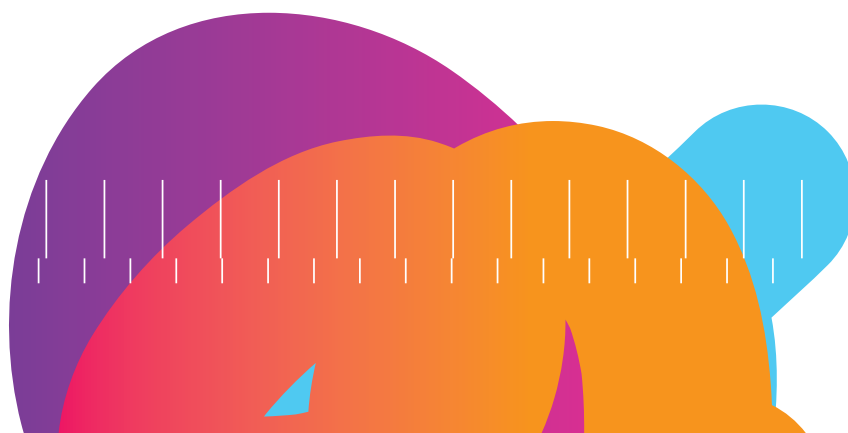
Mercy Mutemi

The Cost of Being Left Behind: What it means to be unconnected to the internet in Kenya in 2020

The Internet has been hailed for its unprecedented transformational potential which only accrues upon connection. This dissertation examined the economic, political and sociocultural leaps that have been made possible by Internet use, by juxtaposing these developments to the reality of those that remain unconnected, taking Kenya as its case study. Disparity in Internet connectivity is argued to breed inequality, as the unconnected are left behind from participating in any of the economic, political and sociocultural benefits associated with Internet access. The picture that emerges is one of two separate realities. Those with access to the Internet are well on their way to the realization of fundamental human rights. The unconnected are held back by their disadvantage. As the Kenyan government moves its operations online, this handicap deepens the unconnected plight even further. There is thus an urgent need to remedy the inequality between the connected and the unconnected. To achieve this, this research proposed an upheaval in the current policy underlying the deployment of Internet infrastructure. It advocated for making the Internet a public good and treating it as such. The research called to question the government's approach towards taxation and offered proposals for alternative efforts geared towards access. Barriers to entry must be addressed in order to protect vulnerable members of society. This research thus made the case for universal access to the Internet in Kenya and for the declaration of access to the Internet as a basic human right.

Raúl Mendoza Gallo

Towards the definition of a public diplomacy strategy for Mexico in the face of its relationship with the United States of America

Either from a social, economic or political perspective, the relationship between Mexico and the U.S. is strategic and essential for the future of both countries. However, the bilateral relationship has been impacted by a series of negative perceptions, stereotypes and misconceptions that affect the character of exchanges between the two countries, with consequences for policy formulation, such as the predominant negative perceptions on Mexican immigrants in the U.S. This dissertation argued that this situation requires Mexico to undertake an unprecedented effort to change the stereotypical narrative that the U.S. holds about Mexico and Mexicans. In this effort, Public Diplomacy (PD) was identified as a relevant tool to assess negative perceptions and positively influence public opinion in the U.S. However, as a relevant instrument for Mexican foreign policy, PD has been underutilised in the context of the bilateral relationship, since the country has lacked a comprehensive strategy towards the U.S., with the exception of some desegregated initiatives and isolated campaigns that have proven the country's potential. Under that notion, the dissertation analysed the current state of public perceptions of Mexico in the U.S., the potential of PD as a foreign policy tool following the case study of the Republic of Korea, and formulated a theoretical proposal for the definition of a PD comprehensive strategy for the Mexican government. This strategy was identified as a necessary condition to improve U.S.-Mexico relations and consolidate the presence of the "Mexico" brand in the US, with a view to improving relations between the two countries and the situation of the large Mexican diaspora in the U.S.

Shita Laksmi

Defining Internet Intermediary Liabity: Unveiling context and contestation practices in Germany and Singapore

Internet intermediary liability is an on-going subject of discussion. Defining what is the Internet intermediary and looking at the responsibilities and liabilities are a challenge in itself. This dissertation showed that individual countries have their own way of defining Internet intermediary including deciding its liability. Knowledge of technical aspects matters in making regulations. Social-political context also matters in governing Internet intermediary and contestation between stakeholders. As Internet policy discussion has multi-stakeholder nature, contestation between (or among) stakeholders is inescapable. This research carried out a review of the regulation in Germany and Singapore for Internet intermediary. Both countries were found to have defined liability towards Internet intermediary differently, with consequences for their regulatory frameworks. Political context was found to be a main determining factor in the definition and type of regulations of Internet intermediary adopted by each country, with different stakeholders shaping that context in accordance with their degree of influence in governmental decision-making processes. The research also showed that the main determining factors for Internet intermediary regulation in Germany and Singapore were to be found at the domestic sphere rather than originating in regional or international context.

4. Book reviews

Reviewed by Kishan Rana

Values in Foreign Policy: Investigating ideals and interests, **Krishnan Srinivasan, James Mayall and Sanjay Pulipaka [Eds.]. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019, 293 pp. ISNB: 978-1-78660-750-8**

This is a fascinating study of a subject, both relevant and elusive. It should provoke reflection. The Introduction asks if there are discrete values that can be described as Asian, and if these exist, are they congruent or in completion with Western values? Eight of the book's 14 chapters examine values in Asia, while the rest look at the West, the US, Europe and the Islamic world. In a succinct two page forward, Robert Kaplan notes that values can be delusional, self-serving or cynical, but without a belief in its own values, foreign policy is nearly impossible to execute. He notes that Chinese 'harbour no doubts about their centality' in the world. His trenchant advice: 'The degree to which Indians can engage in internal discussion about what their civilisational values are – and how they can help improve the world – will actually advance India's power and influence.'

How West-centric are the values examined in this book? The Universal Declaration on Human Rights adopted by the UN at its 1945 founding focused on individual rights, the right to self-determination and civil and political rights. Rights to a decent life and economic equity – today the overriding preoccupation for half the world – find no mention. Of the two principal developing states present at the Declaration's framing, China was represented by a KMT regime facing existential challenge; India was immersed in the impending finale to its independence struggle. Consequently, the values of the Global South never became part of a global agenda. The book does not address this omission, which is at the root of many of today's world challenges.

Co-editor James Mayall tackles values in European foreign policy. Examining the influx of refugees and economic migrants into Europe, he notes: 'the official Europeans response...amounted to an insurance policy for their value systems, combining economic assistance to exporting countries to reduce the incentive for people to move abroad, and failing that to establish efficient border posts...' He adds that while Europe practices it's 'secular liberal values', it will find it more and more difficult to sustain liberalism abroad while pulling up the drawbridge against the outside world and handling discriminatory pressure against minorities at home.

President Trump inevitably dominates the essay on the US by William Antholis. Trump's America First doctrine swings to the 'furthest end away from universalism across all strands of values and interests'. The real question is not whether the country's democracy establishment can withstand Trump's challenge, 'but also whether they have the support of democratic publics at home and abroad. That conflict is as old as the republic.' M Ozkan and K Chatterjee suggest that no single set of values can be identified as exclusively Islamic, or understood as such across the Muslim world. Looking to Turkey and Iran they believe that the political language of Islam in diplomatic activities will expand in the years ahead both as 'inspiration for policy formulation and the language of legitimacy'. One might ask how that squares with the Islamic world's silence over China's current repression of Xinjiang's Uighurs, though Turkey did speak out for a while?

Co-editor K Srinivasan tackles Indian foreign policy values; 'lofty ideals give way to parochial pragmatism'. Summarising the evolution of India's foreign policy, he argues that principles derived from India's 'presumed moral superiority' and unique universalism 'quickly floundered against the harsh realities of government responsibilities and international politics'. After Nehru's death 'only some rhetorically flourishes of an ethi-

cal foreign policy survived'. He quotes bombastic statements by leaders on India's role in the world and its uniqueness, jumping to the conclusion that 'the nature of its aspirations remains potentially adverse to its greater integration with the global system'. True, at different times, India has taken an 'outlier' role (NPT, some phases of WTO decision-making, now RCEP), but the country's international cooperation track record and participation on global decisons is self-evident. What unrealistic assertions by different leaders on foreign policy values show is an absence of much-needed domestic dialogue.

Japan proclaimed a 'value oriented diplomacy' in 2006 under the Abe government, emphasising universal values such as democracy, freedom, human rights, rule of law and market economy. Postwar Japan has mainly espoused these universal values. Yet, 'Japan as also had the desires to assert its own indigenous values', even if not articulated in a concrete manner. We see today 'the stirrings of a more traditionalist national identity'. In contrast, the essay on Indonesia (Thailand too, not covered in this book) shows that in some Asian countries values have provided a certain consistency in foreign policy.

A short essay by Professor Zhang Lihua of Tsinghua University gives a boilerplate assertion of how China's foreign policy is rooted in it's ancient culture. She walks us through the basics of Taoism, the Book of Changes, Confucianism, and Huangdi Neijing, to claim that harmony, benevolence, righteousness, etiquette, wisdom, and faithfullness are embodied in China's governance, each of these reflected in the country's contemporary actions. It may not be nice to apply a reality check to this essay. When harmony is the desired goal, what does it matter if the methods used to get there are unharmonious? Seen through a wider lens, foreign policy values will be contextual. When you are at the top of the heap you look for stability and tranquillity. From the bottom, your perspective orients you to transformative change and equity. We can add the words of chapter author Tadashi Anno: 'States are likely to espouse those values according to which it is easiest to enhance their self esteem'.