Diffusion of Power and Diplomacy: New Meanings, Problem Solving, and Deadlocks in Multilateral Negotiations

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Abstract

The classic hierarchical distribution of power featuring nation-states is now increasingly supplemented with a diffusion of power with multiple actors. A hierarchical concentration of power is predicated toward bargaining coercion and great powers can impose their solutions on the weak. Diffused power allows for joint problem solving among multiple actors through negotiations but also makes reaching agreement hard because of the relatively greater equality among bargaining units. Reaching agreement in a diffusion of power is also hard because of the new perspectives and meanings that arise through globalized interactions. These new meanings – for example, commerce viewed through the lens of intra-firm rather than inter-country trade – make it hard to fashion solutions based on past understandings centered on territoriality and nation-states.

Keywords

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Negotiation theorists distinguish between negotiation structure and processes, and the connection between the two is subject to considerable debate (Odell 2000, chapter1; Kremenyuk 2002, Part 1). Negotiation structure specifies "the numbers and power of the parties" (Zartman 2002: 30), while negotiation processes address the strategies, tactics, and alternatives that are available to actors (Lax & Sebenius 1986).

This essay contributes to the explorations between negotiation structure and processes: it distinguishes further between negotiation structures with a classic hierarchical distribution of power among nation-states with power asymmetries, and a structure where power is diffused among multiple actors. In the former case, negotiations are often efficient when the strong can impose their will upon the weak. In the latter case, outcomes are uncertain.

Negotiation theory is still catching up with understanding bargaining in diffused power contexts. Building on past analysis (Singh 2000, 2008), this essay suggests that diffused power makes negotiation processes increasingly complicated for three reasons. First, diffused power makes available a host of bargaining tactics, especially to weak players, which were unavailable to them in a concentrated power context. Second, as a result of multiple players and perspectives, new meanings arise in situations of diffused power due to interactions among actors that complicate common understandings of issues. Third, diffused power can allow problem-solving – as opposed to imposition of solutions from great power – but, by the same token, it also leads to grid locks and longer negotiation periods.

This essay analyzes the contexts under which diffused power influences bargaining processes. The first section distinguishes between concentrated and diffused power structures. The subsequent sections analyze possibilities of problem-solving versus gridlocks in diffused power contexts, and negotiations with old and new meanings. Although several examples are provided throughout the essay, a final section provides a detailed illustration from commercial interactions and diplomacy. While the new global commerce environment is conducive to problem-solving, because the old 'solutions' are less meaningful, it also leads to frequent deadlocks because great powers cannot impose (old) solutions or ways of doing things.[2]

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2 A word of caution: this essay does not attempt to explain how these changed environments arise, and concentrates on their effects on diplomacy At a broad level, the causal factors for the changed environment are located in a globalization that enables or constrains traditional or new actors in global politics and in their technologies of interaction – transport, communication, ideational and human flows. However, an analysis of these causal factors is difficult for a short essay.

Old Habits, New Contexts

The distribution of the power world is now overlapped with one featuring diffused power among multiple actors making both power distributions coeval. James Rosenau (1990) was acutely aware of such *turbulence in world politics* emanating from the interdependence of the sovereignty-bound state-centric world overlapping with the multicentric world of sovereignty-free actors. There are also other formulations that speak to the breakdown of prior structures of power. For example, Hadley Bull (1977: 224–255) employed the term neo-medievalism to denote the overlapping boundaries of power among multiple political units other than nation-states.

Historically, global politics featured a concentration of power that affixed nation-states within a hierarchy of power asymmetries. In a simple two-states model of concentrated power, 'State A' may possess vast resources to negotiate an issue such as territorial security. In such a scenario, it is easy to demonstrate that State A would prevail over State B with inferior resources. The next level of complication may be multiple nation-states. At the Congress of Vienna in 1814, while many nation-states and others were present, the ensuing 19th century of peace was shaped with the conversations in a limited "Concert of Europe" – Prince Metternich of Austria, Lord Castlereagh of Britain, Prince von Hardenberg from Prussia, Tsar Alexander I from Russia, and Talleyrand from France (Kissinger 1994: Chapter 4). The Congress of Vienna is now analyzed as a powerful early instance of multilateral diplomacy. However, multilateral diplomacy in the world today on important issues looks altogether different: it is practiced with not just a few states in the room, many times more than five making a difference, but also with other international actors and organizations both inside and outside the room. The 1997 Kyoto Protocol on global greenhouse emissions owes its origins as much to intergovernmental conversations facilitated through the United Nations International Framework for Climate Change as to the 'sovereignty free' international civil society coalitions and precedents such as the Rio Earth Summit in 1992.

In general, outcomes are less determinate in a scenario where there are multiple actors – multiple states, and transnational organizations and networks – involved in negotiating multiple issues, or sub-parts of a broader issue. For example, despite the early 'success' of designing the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, the ongoing climate change negotiations have been hard. Not only have the U.S. and the EU had a hard time imposing their solutions upon the 'rest,' but also transnational civil society organizations and international institutions – the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, for example – have been quite influential in forwarding agendas and solutions. The climate change

negotiations thus offer a caution: in a world of multiple actors and multiple issues, it is not possible to make everyone bear some costs for the provision of a public good. The transaction costs of interest convergence among multiple actors remain high.

Two major features of diffused power are multiple issues and actors, which taken together re-define the vocabulary of negotiation tactics. For example, global coalition-building as a tactic becomes complex, bringing together various types of actors across disparate issues. The lead up to the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expressions featured state actors during voting. Behind the scenes, though, were cultural industries, creative workers, and civil society organizations that did not always sit on the same side of the aisle as actors: cultural industries in countries such as China, India, Japan, Mexico and U.S. favored exports. The French and Canadian industries opposed this position (Singh 2011a).

Many other negotiation tactics become available in a world of diffused power, apart from coalition building. Multiple issues can allow for trade-offs and linkages in creative ways. Christina Davis (2004) has argued that the Uruguay Round of trade talks was successful because the institutional context of GATT negotiations allowed for linkages, which enabled countries to make concessions in agriculture in return for concessions in industry. The dispute settlement mechanism at GATT's successor, the WTO, also allows small countries, if they have the will and the capacity, to challenge great powers through legal tactics. Starting in 1996, tiny Ecuador challenged the EU preferential banana regime through the WTO dispute settlement mechanism (Smith 2006). Diplomatic practices also now include "naming and shaming," especially from human rights groups to apply pressures on weak and strong powers to accept particular human rights norms. After UN Under Secretary-General Jan Egelund described the U.S. foreign aid as "stingy" following the Asian Tsunami in December 2007, the naming tactic tore at the heart of United States' perception of itself as a generous nation, and the Bush Administration increased its pledged humanitarian assistance from $35 million to $350 million (Steele 2007).

Old Habits

The current global context, as mentioned above, includes overlaps between concentrated and diffused power with each becoming dominant under particular conditions. To notice concentrated power, one need only walk into a commercial treaty room, in which a great power like the United States persuades a Colombia or a Peru to sign onto a text essentially prepared by trade officials

in Washington, DC.[3] Given the difficulty of reaching diplomatic agreement
with multiple players (and global media and CNN effects), great powers also
favor diplomacy among a few countries and away from public scrutiny.[4] The
recent Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement on intellectual property issues,
negotiated between 2008 and 2011, was kept a secret by the Bush and Obama
Administrations, under the guise of security, even though ACTA was clearly a
commercial treaty, negotiated by the U.S. Trade Representative. However, in
April 2010, a French NGO leaked the text, and since then the agreement has had
difficult passage: in June 2011, the Mexican legislature faced global pressures
that led Mexican legislators to recommend treaty rejection to (then) President
Felipe Calderón.

Concentration of power is also visible when great powers 'forum shop' their
negotiations away from diffused power scenarios. In 2013, the U.S. and the EU
began negotiations on a bilateral trade pact termed the Transatlantic Trade
and Investment Partnership (TTIP) agreement. Beyond increasing bilateral
trade, TTIP was also supposed to make weak powers capitulate to great power
demands at the WTO with the threat that great powers would leave and sign
bilateral accords elsewhere if weak powers did not agree.

The 'old' meaning of diplomacy, getting others to do what you want, remains
legitimate to some extent.[5] While global interactions redefine meanings for
the practice of diplomacy, old habits persist. An ex-Israeli diplomat had the
following to say of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's reluctance to negoti-
ate on Palestine after a fiery speech in the U.S. Congress in 2011: "Everything
is changing but he is determined that everything stays the same" (quoted in

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3 Peru signed a free trade agreement with the United States in April 2006, and Colombia in
   November 2006. The treaty texts for both FTAs are similar.
4 The CNN effect refers to the pervasive effects of 24-hour and ubiquitous news media on for-
   eign policies.
5 Conduct a search for the word diplomacy on the Internet, and you would wonder why we
   ever think this would be a legitimate instrument for solving global problems. Will Rogers,
   the entertainer: "Diplomacy is the art of saying 'nice doggie' until you can find a rock." Mark
   Twain: "The principle of give and take is the principle of diplomacy – give one, take ten." Even
   Trygve Lie, the first Secretary General of the United Nations, in an era when global idealism
   was at an all time high, chimed in: "A real diplomat is one who can cut his neighbor's throat
   without having his neighbor notice it." Despite these views, diplomacy may not be such a
   deceitful and manipulative endeavor after all; media and politics continually urge leaders
   to find diplomatic solutions. See, http://thinkexist.com/quotations/diplomacy/. Accessed
   5 August 2014.

Stevens 2011). Assuming a static world can lead to ineffective, if not grievous, consequences in the practice of diplomacy and global politics.

New Contexts

Diplomacy, however, is also now regularly practiced in a diffusion of power environment, which takes into account two elements: one, there are multiple actors involved in diplomacy and not just nation-states; two, there are multiple issues or many dimensions to an issue.[6] Table 1 captures these elements and distinguishes them from their counterparts in a traditional power configuration, often termed concentration or distribution of power.

The meaning of diplomacy may not translate over into an era in which the strong and the weak are not so well defined. Currently, power is diffused among many actors and not limited to nation-states. It can be redeployed for many purposes, or accords power to those in particular circumstances that might otherwise be termed weak. For example, Anne Marie Slaughter (2009) writes of networks in which power is both horizontally and vertically distributed. In her schema, even like units – for example, regulatory authorities across countries – also have a stake in the practice of diplomacy and they may practice it without the kind of coercion we perceive when power is concentrated in the hands of few.

TABLE 1   *Two elements of global power configurations*

Negotiations Elements	Diffusion of Power	Concentration of Power
Number of issues or sub-issues	Multiple (e.g., several sub-issues within services)	Singular or framed as singular (e.g., 'security')
Number of actors (states, international organizations, NGOS, MNCS)	Multiple	Bilateral, even in pluralistic contexts (for example, North-South, U.S.-EU)

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6   A provocative example comes from the 2014 Israel-Gaza conflict. Israel clearly won the military conflict, but both the Palestinians and the Israelis won 'hearts and minds' through their respective public diplomacy over various social media forums (Sherwood 16 July 2014).

In a complex and networked world, where payoffs for finding mutually acceptable solutions are high, problem-solving can emerge as a norm. Zacher noted in the historical context of international regimes that telecommunications came with "a mandate for interconnection" (Zacher with Sutton 1996). National authorities were forced to find solutions to standardization, interconnection protocols, pricing strategies and the like after the 1865 conference in Paris that created the International Telegraph Union, later the ITU of telecommunications, one of the oldest international organizations in our midst. All global politics now might come with a mandate for interconnection.

Problem-solving and Gridlocks

Preferences and interests remain unchanged through time in a world of concentrated power. A take-it-or-leave-it dictum from a great power is one way of characterizing this possibility. Even where the balance of power includes five nation-states, such as the 1815 Congress of Vienna, preferences and interests can remain quite fixed: increasing states' territorial security or ensuring a balance of power among them. In other words, the Congress of Vienna can be analyzed from the perspective of how five powers balanced each other in a delicate game in which Count Metternich played on the fears of a resurgent Germany, a Russian threat from the East, and from France in the West, to enable Austria to become a power broker. Arguably, there is a great deal of problem-solving in any negotiation, including the Congress of Vienna, but it took place in a well-defined context and followed state interests to a desired solution, namely a balance of power.

In a diffused power context, creative problem-solving must take place in order to avoid deadlocks. When interests cannot be easily defined, solutions are not readily apparent, and there are multiple actors present, prefabricated solutions or historical diplomatic practices may be ineffective. For example, how should cyber-security be handled and who should represent whom at diplomatic conferences on that issue? Should it be the defense or the foreign policy apparatus of the nation-states, cyber-security personnel from commercial enterprises, or civil liberties groups fearing individual or collective surveillance in the name of security? If a number of cyber attacks originate in Mainland China, as is regularly reported, what is the best way to contain this new 'threat' from China? What kind of a war can be declared against cyber attacks? And, if a multilateral conference is convened in 2015 – let's call it the Congress of Beijing – who would say what to whom to contain these threats? What would a balance of power in cyber security even resemble?

Going back now to Zacher's notion of 'a mandate for interconnection', problem-solving in a diffusion of power can be imagined as an activity that increases the utility of all players in the diplomatic bargaining process through a solution found during the diplomatic interactions. When a great power cannot impose solutions, the solutions must arise from a mutual convergence of interests, often through perspectives raised during the negotiations. The Montreal Protocol on limiting emissions of chlorofluorocarbons resulted from some creative problem-solving during the negotiations that allowed hardline and conservative governments, such as that of President Ronald Reagan in the U.S. or Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the UK, to come on board (Haas 1992). As the negotiations proceeded, it was believed that the solution would need to await final scientific validation of the widening hole in the Ozone layer, and, second, that the U.S. or the UK would be mostly likely to propose or impose the solution – or thwart those of others. The scientists did uncover this evidence in 1989, but one year after the Montreal Protocol was already signed to phase out the production of CFCs. The preemptive solution arose from commercial firms such as Du Pont, which developed an alternative to CFCs, allowing the Reagan and Thatcher governments to pose a "win-set" that would not be rejected by conservative constituencies. The idea of developing an alternative to CFCs, following heightened international diplomatic activity, prompted firms and scientists to propose new solutions. More importantly, while Du Pont proposed a technical alternative to CFCs, the Montreal Protocol itself was a diplomatic bargain.

It is reasonable to expect that in a world of diffused power with multiple actors and issues, it could also be hard to reach agreements through diplomacy. Among important global issues in our midst, this can be noticed in the inability to reach an agreement in the Doha Round of trade talks launched in 2001 or the global climate change negotiations that begun in 1992 with the Rio Earth Summit.

The difficulty of reaching diplomatic agreements in a world of diffused power might dispose actors to try to recreate, or feel nostalgic for, a world of concentrated power in which agreement was easier (Mearsheimer 1990). Nevertheless, diffused power yields a dilemma: while agreements are hard to reach in a diffused power world, global actors cannot walk away and recreate a world of concentrated power that would yield mutually beneficial solutions. An exception is forum-shopping, but even this tactic has clear limits in a world of diffused power. As the Doha Round stalled, the U.S. signed bilateral agreements with countries in Latin America, North Africa, and East Asia. Barring a few bilaterals with countries such as Oman or Morocco for security reasons, bilateral trade with the countries in these agreements is limited; thus, the net

benefits to the U.S. of these 'defections' to such bilateral agreements are small. The recent TTIP negotiations (mentioned above) since 2013 or the 12-country negotiations on the Trans-Pacific Partnership are a departure, but at the same time multilateral, and can be examined from a diffusion of power context.

In a diffused power world, things do not always fall apart even without agreement on important issues. This is the Janus-faced nature of the diffused power dilemma mentioned above: neither can the great powers defect to make significant gains, nor can they unsettle the diffused power processes such that multilateral cooperation declines. For example, despite the difficulty of reaching agreement in the Doha Round, the international trade system remains intact and, by some estimates, continues to deepen and expand. After the global economic slowdown and a 2.2 percent increase in trade in 2013, international trade is expected to grow 4.7 percent in 2014, and 5.3 percent in 2015 (WTO 2014).

New Actors and New Meanings

In a prior era, global interactions defined the recognition of the predominant political organization of our times, the nation-state. Diplomatic interactions in the United Nations, for example, represented a sovereign state that was recognized as such by other states. Therefore, Palestine and Taiwan could not be recognized as sovereign states, although on 9 July 2011, South Sudan was conferred that status.

The United Nations system operates on the basis of states as primary actors. During its creation, other collectively held meanings or global cultural understandings existed and provided alternatives. Several examples can be cited. The Economic and Social Council of the UN formally recognized Non-State Actors, a practice that has continued in other UN agencies. The International Labor Organization has a tripartite structure that attends to nation-states, trade union, and firms. The French wanted UNESCO to be composed of only intellectual and civil society organizations, building upon an earlier organization – the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation – that had come about through the League of Nations. However, the United States and the UK wanted it to be nation-state driven. As a compromise, UNESCO was headquartered in Paris and National Commissions representing civil society and other actors guided the work of member-states (Singh 2011b). The point is this: the domination of nation-states in world affairs and their recognition through global governance arrangements such as the UN represent global cultural understandings that have been formulated through past interactions.

As global human interactions have evolved, the dominance of the nation-state in these arrangements is increasingly contested. For example, the World Intellectual Property Organization is de jure nation-state driven; de facto, its revenues, goals and administrative procedures reflect the patent, copyright and trademark firms to which it caters. The World Summit for Information Society (WSIS) and its successor the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), both convened by the United Nations in this century, bring together states, firms, and civil society to deliberate Internet governance as co-equal actors. Although often dismissed as 'talking shops', they may represent or suggest the shape of cultural contests to come. Importantly, in our current cultural moment, with issues such as intellectual property and the Internet, it is hard to limit global discussions to nation-states or ascribe pre-fixed national meanings to these discussions.

Transformations overlap with the status quo, rather than replace them altogether. The beginnings of nation-states as political units overlapped empires, the church, and the city-states (Ruggie 1993). The first task, therefore, for practicing diplomacy in the new world is to take stock of the old and the new identities of actors and issues. The following analysis attempts to do this for issues of global commerce in the context of diplomacy and negotiations.

An Illustration from Commerce

It is hard to explain the continuing global economic cooperation and growth in international trade from the perspective of nation-states alone. Most current theories, however, follow a 'national' logic in their explanations. Comparative economic advantage in products is derived from national distribution of resources or factors of production, and most rules that govern trade are explained from the perspective of interstate diplomacy and negotiations. As a result, theories of international economic negotiation that take diplomacy and negotiation into account usually only feature state actors. Other actors, if allowed, are subservient to state interests. In such cases, state interests are guided by a political maximization of power even when negotiating on economic matters.

Economic negotiations between the United States and the Europeans or the Japanese in the immediate post-war are frequently cited as examples of how power works. Given its superior capabilities, the predominance of its authority, and the salience of military-political relations in the world, a powerful state could easily convert its capabilities into action because there was great deal of fungibility of power where military-political relations are concerned. Power, therefore, is extended across many issue-areas. Strong states could discipline or socialize weaker states into following their dictates. For example, it was only

in the Uruguay Round of trade talks (1986–94) that developing countries were effectively included in economic negotiations. Until then, great powers used their authority to exclude them, discipline them (President Reagan in Cancun in 1983 telling the South to allow international investments or expect nothing), or to make them conform (unilaterally imposed quantitative restrictions to exports from the developing world). The weak on their part protested or employed confrontational strategies but they did so without much effect. At best they played off great powers against each other to squeeze concessions for themselves or try to find loopholes in the odds against them to make themselves better off.[7]

However, diplomacy is no longer practiced in a context defined solely by states and their 'instrumental' power maximization prerogatives. Diplomacy in a diffusion of power takes place in a networked environment consisting of many actors in pursuit of many goals and issues. Currently, the power of dominant state actors is overlapped by the multiple influences of international organizations, market-oriented actors, sub-state and parastatal actors, transnational or domestic interest groups and other societal actors. These groups may not work out their interests through the state or they may operate in situations where the state's authority to enforce its prerogatives is increasingly limited. Here, instead of power across many issue areas exercised by an omnipotent actor (state), power configurations in particular issue areas become important.

Despite the difficulty of reaching multilateral trade agreements in the current era, global trade continues to grow. The institutionalized patterns of global trade after the decline of U.S. hegemony may result from new habits of practice among global corporations and the opening of markets in the developing world. In the year 2013, total world merchandise trade was over $18.8 trillion and that of commercial service an additional $4.6 trillion, and despite the slowdown in the global economy, trade has grown at an average rate of 5.3 percent in the 1993–2013 period (it was 6.0% for 1993–2008) (WTO 2014). This amounted to nearly 20 percent of the total economic product in the world, and trade growth rates were higher than gross world product growth rates.

Deadlocked multilateral negotiations may be departures then from the new meanings of international trade and other forms of negotiation that are available in a diffusion of power environment. For example, the product cycles no longer obey the dictates of high-tech activity located in the North and low-tech in the developing world. Countries such as India, which had opposed the inclusion of services on the global trade agenda in the 1980s, reflecting only

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7   For an example of the former strategy, see Wriggins (1976). For an example of the latter strategy, see Yoffie (1983).

U.S. interests, are now service export powerhouses themselves. Global inter-
actions through negotiations, rather than mere comparative advantage, have
awakened India to its potential in export of services. This cultural shift in the
way the Global South responds to international trade is not just a result of
macro-level socialization into the global market economy, as many claim, but
may be an outcome of complex learning through micro-level diplomatic inter-
actions and negotiations.

A second aspect of a different product cycle is even more complex: the
global economy now operates through intricate value-added chains that are
hard to understand through theories of comparative advantage posited in
national terms. While U.S. frets about its trade deficits from China, the latter
argues that most of the exports are value-added by American firms operating
in China. Apple's iPod is often taken as an example: it is only nominally an
American product, with nearly 500 parts assembled together in Shenzen and
then shipped to the U.S. and other markets. Footwear exports from China that
face 'protectionist' barriers abroad are for brand names such as American Nike
or German Adidas.

Diffusion of power also explains the declining legitimacy of trade principles
that catered to great powers, and the availability of new negotiation tactics
that further contribute to this declining legitimacy. Since the formation of
GATT, the U.S. had harangued the developing world and others to cut its trade-
distorting subsidies, especially in agriculture. When asked to cut its own subsi-
dies, it could rely on the vast prerogatives of its material power. While opening
markets abroad, it maintained a vast and inefficient system of subsidies to
domestic farmers. The case of cotton subsidies is illustrative. In 2010, the U.S.
lost its case for maintaining subsidies after successive challenges from Brazil at
the WTO since 2004. In mid-June 2010, Brazil agreed to hold off on retaliatory
measures in return for a package of $147.3 million in payments from the United
States to Brazilian farmers and a promise that domestic subsidies would be
cut in the next farm bill. The 2014 farm bill did not cut these subsidies but the
U.S. settled the dispute in September 2014 by paying the Brazil Cotton Institute
$300 million for capacity-building (Singh 2014). Power asymmetries explain the
ability of the U.S. to maintain its domestic subsidies despite the WTO rulings.
However, diffusion of power explains the use of international legal principles
(WTO dispute settlement) to resolve the issue, and the declining legitimacy of
the U.S. position on trade liberalization, which had for a long time rested on its
instrumental power to dictate negotiation outcomes (Singh 2010).

In summary, one way to explain the on-going 'failure' of the Doha Round
is to argue that in a flattened power distribution domestic interests cannot
be reconciled easily at the global level with the great powers telling the weak

powers what to do. However, this is only a partial explanation – it ignores
the complex processes of production and distribution in the global economy
that have little to do with nation-states and their prerogatives in Geneva. The
partial explanation also overlooks the processes of learning and interaction
that have changed the interests of states in new issue-areas, such as services.
(Table 2 summarizes a few of these trends)

Conclusion

Diffusion of power processes supplement, rather than replace, traditional
hierarchical distributions of power. States, for example, remain important

TABLE 2   *Changing conceptions of commerce*

Dimensions	Fixed National Interests	Emergent Negotiated And Networked Interests
Dominant Actors	Nation–states	Nation–states and non-state actors
Global authority structures	Hierarchical	Decentralized/diffused
Dominant Understanding	Commerce understood in national terms	Understood territorially and extra-territorially (intra-firm trade): complex product cycles
Theories explaining enhancement of commerce	Comparative advantage with developed country hubs and developing country spokes	Co-productions, and advantages from new issue-areas in trade (services and intellectual property)
Linkages with other issues	National priorities dominate, with security-commerce linkages.	Non-state actors do not see trade in national terms.

actors but must now practice diplomacy in a vastly changed cultural context in which neither security nor commerce may be understood only in territorial and hierarchical terms. Diffused power leads to emergent meanings – as departures from meanings that existed earlier, or as nascent ones that arise with changes in our environment – such as the issue of cybersecurity or intra-firm trade. Diffused power also makes available an array of negotiation tactics that allow for problem-solving and, as the discussion on commerce suggests, continuation of global cooperation despite the difficulties of reaching agreement through inter-state negotiations.

The importance of global diplomacy in a diffusion of power context sits betwixt an assessment that dilutes the value of negotiations in an era of multiple actors, and one that elevates it to an elite realm in which few participate. In 1977, Hedley Bull remarked that in a world of instant communication, diplomacy threatened to become "loudspeaker diplomacy; " diplomats and policymakers would play popular politics with their constituencies than reach agreement behind closed doors (Bull 1995). He envisaged the end of diplomacy in an era of instant communications – and this was before the age of the Internet. On the other hand, scholars argue that contrary to the presence of globalized media, diplomacy remains an elite realm that can never approximate the conditions of the 'public sphere' in the Habermas sense of allowing in all relevant voices to speak equally and freely and without coercion (Keohane 2001). Viewed as such, diplomacy even in a diffused power world is full or coercion and manipulation.

We live neither in a world of 'loudspeaker diplomacy' in which diplomacy is dead, nor in a world of 'elite diplomacy' away from public and media scrutiny. The term 'diffused power diplomacy' is certainly not as evocative or glamorous as 'loudspeaker diplomacy' or 'elite realm' but in its enunciation it evokes a world in which multiple types of actors practice diplomacy and indulge in varying degrees of persuasions and problem-solving. International human rights networks are now effective when they make their case inside the diplomatic chambers of international conferences from where they were previously barred. Global firms do not always wait for national governments to get their act together but also prefer business-to-business diplomacy in creating markets. This essay demonstrates that while allowing for problem-solving, new forms of diplomacy can also lead to difficult deadlocks. Neither the world of diplomacy as problem-solving nor the one with deadlocks supports the contention that diplomacy in a diffused power context is dead or elitist.

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