Media Impact on Diplomatic Practice:
An Evolutionary Model of Change

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Abstract

Based on a range of interviews with foreign diplomats in London, the paper explains the considerable variation in the way communication technologies both affect diplomatic practices and are appropriated by diplomats to pursue the respective countries' information gathering and outreach objectives. The study shows that London, as an information environment, is experienced differently by each of the diplomats and embassy actors. The analysis elaborates an explanatory model of the "communication behaviour" of foreign diplomats in London based on an evolutionary analogy: foreign diplomats in the context of the British capital, within their respective embassy organizations, can each be compared to the members of a species attempting to survive in a natural environment. The nuances highlighted by the model challenge the largely homogeneous and generalized nature of current debates about media and diplomacy, as well as public diplomacy.

Introduction

Communication is essential to diplomacy. It always has been. As Nicolson (1954:2) wrote 'The origins of diplomacy lie buried in the darkness preceding what we call "the dawn of history." There came a stage when the anthropoid apes inhabiting one group of caves realised that it might be profitable to reach some understanding with neighbouring groups regarding the limits of their respective hunting territories.' Information gathering, reporting, and sharing have been across the centuries the staple diet of diplomats. In ancient Egypt, the Amarna Letters, a collection of cuneiform tablets written in the fourteenth century BC, contain references to Egypt's need for intelligence to maintain control of its Asian empire (Jönsson and Hall 2003: 197). The Byzantines also saw information gathering as the purpose of all diplomatic exchanges (ibid.: 197). In more recent times the UN Vienna Convention of Diplomatic Relations (1961) still emphasizes such functions. Besides the immunity of the diplomat's person, the document grants protection to the mission's communications: 'The receiving State shall permit and protect free communication on the part of the mission for all official purposes. In communicating with the Government and the other missions and consulates of the sending State, wherever situated, the mission may employ all appropriate means, including diplomatic couriers and messages in code or cipher' (Art. 27.1; see also the other commas of Art. 27 and Art. 40.3).

Communication is so crucial to diplomatic activity that, over history, virtually any advance in communication technology has affected the practice of diplomacy. Nickles (2003) in *Under the Wire*, specifically examines the impact of the telegraph on diplomatic activities. He describes the 'acceleration of international relations' and 'obliteration' of distance resulting from the possibility for messages to travel via cable faster than people could until then by ship, horse, or train (ibid.: 79). The faster reporting of events, in his analysis, also led to an increase in the power of public opinion and its pressure on politicians during international crises (ibid.: 84-102). Jules Cambon, former French ambassador to the United States, claimed in 1905 that 'faster communications, the press and the democratic indiscretion had overthrown the "old diplomacy"' (Hamilton and Langhorne 1995: 137). Upon receiving his first telegram in the 1840s, then British Foreign Minister Lord Palmerston reportedly said, "By God, this is the end of diplomacy!" (Fong 2010, n.p.). He was referring to the notion that the technologies of the day, by enabling instant communication across distances, made diplomats almost redundant. The same notion was implied by US diplomat Brzezinski in the 1990s when he famously said that if foreign ministries and embassies 'did not already exist, they surely would not have to be invented' (Hamilton and Langhorne, 1995: 231-232).

The last significant ethnographic study about the impact of the media in international diplomatic negotiation was conducted by Davison (1974) in the early 1970s. By interviewing diplomats and journalists across the US and Western Europe he observed that the media played a crucial role: 'the press serves as the eyes and ears of diplomacy. Diplomatic reporting and national intelligence services play a significant supporting role, but most of the information reaching governments about developments throughout the world comes from the wire services, newspapers, news magazines, radio, and television. Furthermore, mass media reports come in first; supplementary information via diplomatic or intelligence channels arrives hours, days, or even weeks later. And it is often maintained that much of the information flowing through official channels is originally culled from the press in any case' (Davison 1974: 177).

Over forty years later, new communication technologies like the internet, mobile phones, and more recently social media applications, especially social networking platforms like *Twitter* or *Facebook*, are regarded by many as drivers of revolutionary changes in our societies. If the speed at which information travels today might not be radically new (Neumann 1996), the ubiquity of information, its digital sharing across platforms, ease of storage, the possibility of communicating at very low if not virtually no-cost with wide audiences across borders are redesigning the scope and patterns of social interactions, as well as of political processes. Communities of interest, as in the case of advocacy networks, form across national borders among individuals who might have never met (Keck and Sikkink 1998). The distinction between domestic and international politics is increasingly blurring. If the transformation of communication has such a deep reaching impact on our lives, what are its effects on diplomacy?

As previously in history, when a revolution was claimed virtually any time a new communication technology made its appearance (Neumann 1996: 111), assertions are being made about the current development of a new kind of diplomacy. Some of the terms used are 'virtual diplomacy' (Smith 2000; Brown and Studemeister 2001, for instance), 'cyberdiplomacy' (Potter 2002), 'media diplomacy' (Karl 1982; Gilboa 1998 and 2002, for example). Grant (2005) talks about a 'democratization of diplomacy.' He particularly refers the increasing influence of non-state actors, the creation of new community of interests, and the growing relevance of freedom of information legislation brought about in the domain of international relations by the Internet. The opportunities offered by social networking media to connect governments to worldwide audiences bypassing the mainstream media also lead to a blurring of the distinction between *diplomacy*, in its strict sense the negotiation among official actors, and *public diplomacy*, the communication between governments and foreign publics.[1] Melissen (2005), in this respect, talks about a 'new public diplomacy.' Former US Undersecretary for Public Diplomacy Glassman refers to a 'public diplomacy 2.0' (Glassman 2008).

While there seems to be little doubt that some kind of transformation is occurring within diplomatic practices, how can the impact of new technological developments on diplomacy be theorized? How can we conceptualize the transformation of diplomatic practices? How is change produced? Can its extent be assessed and measured? Do different technologies lead to different kinds of change? Which forms do they take? And do they affect all diplomatic actors in the same way?

These are the questions addressed by the paper on the basis of a range of interviews with foreign diplomats in London. Although both limited in scope and exploratory in nature, the study firmly points at diversified patterns of both impact by technologies on diplomatic activities and appropriation of such technologies by diplomats depending on the foreign country considered. It also shows that London, as an information environment, is experienced differently by each of

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[1] Nicholson (1939: 15-16), for example, defined diplomacy as 'the management of international relations by negotiation; the method by which these relations are adjusted and managed by ambassadors and envoys.' For a review of the evolution of the meaning of public diplomacy see Cull (2006).

the diplomats and embassy actors. The analysis elaborates an explanatory model of the "communication behaviour" of foreign diplomats in London based on an evolutionary analogy: foreign diplomats in the London context, within their respective embassy organizations, can each be compared to the members of a species attempting to survive in a natural environment. The nuances highlighted by the model challenge the largely homogeneous and generalized nature of current debates about media and diplomacy, as well as public diplomacy.

The argument will unfold by first examining the scope and limitations of the literature about the connection between communication, media, and diplomacy. After a brief methodological note, it will move on to the interview findings. They will be illustrated through the evolutionary model and supported be the evidence of numerous interview excerpts. The conclusions show the crucial importance of ethnographic and comparative research if any of the current analysis about media and diplomacy in the 21st century has to have any real-world relevance.

Diplomacy, media, and public diplomacy: The unaddressed problems
Although there is no lack of research on the relationship between media and diplomacy, current literature is not successful in theorizing the change that the development of communication technologies really produces on diplomatic practices. This is surprising, given that most of the literature appears to engage precisely in this endeavour and largely consists in theoretical analyses that often take the form of modelling and conceptual categorization. Such inability in truly explaining change is due to the fact that, as it will be illustrated in a moment, each stream of the debate is one-sided in three respects: it tends to concentrate either on structural explanations or on agency (although mainly as governmental and institutional action rather than individual); it is grounded in the perspective of single countries, mainly the US; and, possibly as a consequence of this last single vintage point, tends to homogenize and generalize. A comprehensive explanation of change, instead, should illuminate both how technological structures constrain and enable practices, but also how at the same time individuals appropriate that technology. It should also be able to explain variation of change across different political, social, and media contexts. These aspects will now be illustrated in turn, starting from a brief discussion of the very notion of change, then moving on to a review of the literature.

What is change? How does change happen? Hölsti (1998) points out that, despite its 'critical importance,' the notion of change in Politics and International Relations 'remains undertheorized' (1). In fact, as he continues, there is 'not even the beginning of a consensus' when it comes to define what change is, how we identify it, let alone how we measure it (2). He raises the questions, for example, of whether change should be conceptualized as a replacement of the old with something new (whatever "old" and "new" are) (7-8), as an addition of complexity to what exists (so that old and new coexists) (8); a new synthesis of the old and new creating something "higher" in a Hegelian sense (8-9); or a transformation of the old (9). While this paper acknowledges that there are different possible ways of understanding change and does not even attempt to resolve the thorny question of which should be the best definition, it is based on a specific ontology of the world that implicitly contains an explanation of how change is socially produced.

For Hay, a world ontology is 'a general statement of the manner in which agents are believed to appropriate their context and the consequences of that appropriation for their development as agents and for that of the context itself' (Hay 2002: 113). The study is based on a constructionist ontology of the world (Giddens 1984). In this perspective structure and agency are mutually dependent and mutually constitutive. Structures are the medium and outcome of the social action they constrain. This means that structures do not exist separately from social action but are implicated in its production and reproduction (ibid: 376). In other words structures are at the same time the result of human agency and a constraint on it. The unfolding of social reality can be explained through the continuous interplay of agents and structures. If agency and structures always reflected each other, however, no change would ever occur. People's behaviour would

be shaped by structures. The repetition of the same behaviour would keep on reinforcing those structures, making the possibility of deviation from that course of action (possibly yet another definition of change) increasingly remote. Change, instead, lies in the slight disconnection between agency and structures within the process of their dynamic unfolding over time: structures pose a constraint on individual action, but do not entirely determine it.

In this perspective, and going back to explaining the effects of communication transformations on diplomacy, change cannot be explained only through the impact of technology on social practice—a view which would privilege structural constraints over individual agency and which is called elsewhere *technological determinism*—but it is also about the appropriation of technological tools by individuals, both as people and institutions. This paper is precisely about explaining the changing proportions—and differing relative outcomes—in the dynamic mixture of agency and structures in the London diplomatic environment.

The analysis aims at filling gaps in the literature, where two main trends can be identified: the first focuses on the impact of communication technologies on diplomacy (privileging technological constraints on political action); the second is about the exploitation of technology, mainly by governmental and institutional actors, to pursue their interests, goals and objectives (therefore emphasizing agency at the expense of structure). They will now be reviewed in turn.

Media impact on diplomacy
Within Political Communication literature, there has been a growing realization that the media have an impact on the practice of diplomacy. This has largely led to theoretical discussions including modelling and categorizations of the different ways in which the media can affect diplomatic activity, either supporting or preventing negotiation (Gilboa 2000; Naveh 2002, for instance). Gilboa (2001), among the most elaborate analyses, distinguishes for instance three models of 'uses and effects' about the way the media are used as a tool of foreign policy and international negotiation: 'public diplomacy,' where state and nonstate actors use the media to influence public opinion abroad; 'media diplomacy,' where officials use the media to communicate with actors and promote conflict resolution; 'media-broker diplomacy,' where journalists serve as temporary mediators in international negotiations. The empirical studies in this area tend to address the way media, especially live TV news, affects foreign policy making (for example Seib 1996; "CNN effect" literature and its critiques: Livingston 1997; Strobel 1997, Robinson 2002) and mostly involve international crises as case studies.

The problem with this literature is not so much the inability to explain some kind of transformation technologies lead to in the political process. The argument here is not that it is not rigorous or does not contribute to our understanding. It does illuminate the complex relationship between media and political processes in the context of instantaneous global communication. It does not, however, explain *contingent* change: how technology affects diplomatic practices of specific countries in specific political, social, and media environments. Even the literature that attempts defining the conditions of validity of a working hypothesis, for example establishing in which circumstances the CNN effect materializes (or doesn't), end up in general statements about the relationship between governments, publics and media. The studies that look at specific case studies tend to examine different crises (time points) within one country only (mainly the US). To what extent do existing analyses apply to other countries? Through which micro-interactions between politicians, journalists, members of the public do the processes described by the CNN effect work (or don't)?

In addition to this, both theoretical and empirical studies within this branch of the literature tend not to address the impact of communication technologies on the everyday practice of politics: How do media affect the decision-making processes of the single policy-makers? How do policy-makers actually use the media to make sense of the political reality in their country and abroad? What is the impact of the media beyond times of crisis?

Exploitation of technology to advance institutional goals

A second strand of research is represented by the ever-growing literature about public diplomacy, whose focus is the analysis of how the use of global communication technologies can contribute to improved communication across borders. This focus has consolidated after 9/11 through the research of a large number of American scholars and is strategically aimed at addressing the "gulf of misunderstanding" that appears to fuel extremism against the West, particularly the US, in some quarters of the Muslim world. The ultimate goal of the debate is identifying ways in which public diplomacy can become more effective. Most analyses are based on extrapolations made on the basis of medium characteristics, as well as sensible assumption about sending and receiving messages. Less attention is given to the complexity of conditions a successful communication strategy needs to deal with. Corman (2009), in this respect, points out that US public diplomacy efforts, which should communicate American values and contribute to winning hearts and minds in the global war against terrorism, are based on the notion that 'messages' are transmitted by an Information Source through a Transmitter (via a Signal) to a Receiver, which will then convey the message to the desired Destination. The implications are that communication occurs only when messages are sent; that successful communication can be achieved by improving the skill of the communicator; by reducing the 'noise' in the system; by carefully planning the content of the message and carefully transmitting it. This model of communication is outdated. As he puts it: it was 'cutting-edge at the time of Eisenhower' (ibid).

Despite the differing levels of sophistication (Entman 2008, for example), this branch of literature tends to neglect the experience of actual diplomats and embassies in foreign countries. The result is that most of this literature is constituted by theoretical and speculative analyses. What is the perspective of the practitioners of diplomacy? Most of the contributions also come from US-based scholars. Given that the US is the most powerful country on Earth, it is not unreasonable to hypothesize that the point of view of smaller and less influential countries—what about Belgium, for example, or an obscure African state?—is going to be extremely different. What is the perspective of other countries? Would the recommendation elaborated for a more effective American public diplomacy also apply to them?

This literature also tends to talk about audiences in general terms: 'European publics,' 'the Arab world,' 'world audiences.' There are huge cultural differences between people living in Iceland and Cyprus (Europe), as there are between citizens of Turkey and Saudi Arabia (the Arab world), and between those who live in the Tirol region of Northern Italy and those living in Sicily, to consider variation within a single country. How can any analysis of the effectiveness of the communication with audiences have any practical relevance if local differences are not taken into consideration?

The study presented in this paper aims to address at least some of these gaps by exploring local specificity and variation through ethnographic interviews. It particularly it addresses: 1) the way communication technologies both constrain and enable the activities of foreign diplomats; 2) how diplomats appropriate communication technologies to pursue their own duties and advance the interests of the governments they represent.

Methodology: The London case

The study is based on 16 interviews conducted with foreign diplomats in London over the period 12 July and 18 August 2010.[2] They involved mostly face-to-face conversations (12) but also phone interviews (4). The researcher spoke with 16 sources (4 women, 12 men) from 14 countries: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Egypt, Greece, India, Japan, Malta, Russia, Sweden, Syria, US. Over thirty countries were initially approached for an interview. Their range was designed to cover variation in world geographical location, form of government of the home country, economic resources, level of influence in world affairs, membership of international alliances and organizations, foreign policy agenda, closeness of historical ties to the UK (former colonies, for example), tradition of journalism in the home country (objective vs.

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[2] Form the point of view of the author, "foreign" means "non-British."

commentary-oriented, for example, or press freedom vs. varying degree of state control). The final sample of countries, which was largely shaped by the diplomats' availability despite the fact that up to two e-mails and letter reminders were sent, appears to meet these criteria.

The interviews lasted between 21 minutes and just over an hour (61 minutes). Most of the interviews lasted around 40 minutes. The roles of the diplomats ranged from Political Counsellor, First Secretary, Press Officer, to Head of the Press Office, Head of the Information and Culture Department, Deputy High Commissioner, and High Commissioner. The sources had spent between 12 months and 13 years in London and between 14 months and 31 years in the diplomatic service of their respective country, with several of the interviewees having over than 20 years experience. Given the fact that London occupies one of the highest levels in the ranking of assignments within a diplomat's career, almost all interviewees had been posted to other foreign capitals and had covered diplomatic assignments before. Their previous postings covered Washington, New York, Ankara, Beirut, Amman, Tripoli, Brussels, Geneva, Madrid, Brasilia, Moscow, Cairo, Dubai, Damascus, Wellington, Hong Kong, Jakarta, Delhi, and countries like Bhutan, Portugal and Bolivia. The most senior interviewee had been posted to six previous locations. The sources were therefore in the position to confidently compare their current activities within the London diplomatic and information environment to their previous experiences in other countries. They were able to comment about the changes they had witnessed in the diplomatic practices of their respective countries since the advent of the internet, mobile phones, and e-mails. Some even remembered the introduction of fax machines and the computer. Most of the interviewees had also covered a variety of diplomatic responsibilities over their career: different portfolios, administrative tasks (like that of translator), involvement as representatives of their countries in UN and WTO negotiations in Geneva, or with EU countries in Brussels. They were thus able to elaborate on the role of communication technologies and the media in the fulfilling of diplomatic functions at different levels and in a variety of contexts.

The questions of the semistructured interviews are available in the Appendix at the end of the paper. They reflect the exploratory nature of the investigation. They covered three main areas, corresponding to three distinct sections: 1) Personal background of the interviewee; 2) Media consumption and media use; 3) Political and information environment.
The sources were assured of their complete anonimity in exchange for greater openness and frankness. This is why all identifiers have been removed from the interview excerpts. The interviewees will be refereed at as 'sources' or 'diplomats.' Only their country of origin will be indicated.

Explaining the relationship between communication technologies and diplomacy
The interviews with foreign diplomats in London suggest that the relationship between communication technologies and diplomacy cannot be explained in general terms. In fact, it is characterized by an extreme level of nuance when it comes to describing the extent to which communication technologies might constrain or enable a diplomat's activities in any given posting, the extent to which diplomats take advantage of available technology, and their choice of the most appropriate platforms to achieve the political and administrative goals of the countries they respectively represent. The impact of communication technology on diplomatic practice, in fact, is not an undifferentiated or homogeneous process. To be more precise, it is not only communication technologies "having an impact," but diplomats adapting to technologies and selectively using them, often creatively, to face the challenges posed by the political, social, and media environment in which they operate.

The impact of communication technology on the life and practice of diplomats
As already observed by Davison (1974), diplomats' information diet has traditionally been extremely rich. Already in the 1970s they consumed an astonishing number of media sources. Davison, on this point, wrote that 'each diplomat who was interviewed was asked to list the

news sources he [sic] usually followed. So many sources were mentioned by the first few respondents that the investigator became sceptical of the claims. Therefore, prior to later interviews, he purchased a number of papers at newsstands in order to be able to inquire about specific news items. The claims appear to be valid. In no case did a diplomat prove to be ignorant about the contents of a paper that he [sic] mentioned as a regular source' (175n.1).

A first way in which the advances in communication technologies affect the diplomatic routine of today's diplomats is offering even greater access to sources of information. Huge volumes of information are easily and cheaply available—and more quickly. A statement by the German interviewee well represents the spectrum of media consulted on a daily basis by foreign diplomats in London:

> 'In my particular field I rely mostly on the media and first of all the print media and their online editions. So [in terms of] print media, I get several newspapers every day. I look at *The Times, The Independent, The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph, and The Financial Times*, so with *The Financial Times* I am not really reading it. And I look at the online editions. I use several…I am using the BBC website, the news website. I am using *BBC radio* and TV a lot. Then I am getting a lot of news briefs by e-mail. There is DODS[3] [...]-they issue a number of bulletins daily (2) [...] [in terms of weekly publications] we have all the usual stuff. *The Spectator, The New Statesman, The Economist* and so forth. I use them for background information but I don't read everything (4).'

The sources consulted might change in other embassies, also depending on the portfolio of the interviewee. For example the Syrian source would consult, among the rest, the *Jewish Chronicle* (http://www.thejc.com/) (1) and the blog *Syria Comment (http://www.joshualandis.com/blog/)* (6). The Egyptian diplomat would read the Arab newspapers published in London: *Asharq al-Awsat*[4] and *Al-Hayat*[5] (2). The Greek source would also follow ethnic local media like *London Greek Radio*, Eleftheria[6] and Parikiaki (Cypriot weekly newspaper)[7] (at the time of the interview at the Greek embassy a TV was on and set on a Greek channel). Several embassies like that of Greece, Japan, India would also routinely monitor tabloids. The Egyptian press office would include, occasionally, also the free press.

Extremely high media consumption, however, is not a simple result of information availability. Diplomats do not consume just any information because it is there. They need reliable and accurate information. The media environment in London, they find, is characterized by high quality sources. This is the outcome of a strong tradition of objective journalism. The Russian diplomat, for example, said that the British press 'is not only very open and encompassing all the sides of the social life in the United Kingdom, but also is very astute and, capable of digging for the information' (1), 'The tradition of journalism here is very strong. Sometimes it is biased but in a very obvious way and so you can easily sort it out' (6). This situation is very different from what was experienced by the same source in one of his previous postings: 'In Ethiopia you had to take most of the material with a great pinch of salt, understanding that this [information] is poor government propaganda mainly, or a very cheap opposition assault on the government and nothing in the middle, usually. So well-thought-through, balanced analysis for assessment was very rare there' (5).

The development of communication technologies over time, as all interviewees confirm, appears to have changed diplomatic activities and routines. The experience of the Egyptian

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[3] DODS (http://www.dods.co.uk/) is a public affairs and political communication company that provides, among the rest, information about the debates taking place in the British House of Parliament. The company was mentioned by several of the interviewees.
[4] http://www.aawsat.com/english/
[5] http://international.daralhayat.com/
[6] http://www.eleftheria.co.uk/
[7] http://www.parikiaki.net/

source is presented here as an example of the range of transformations. The diplomat, for example, talks about the greater ease in communicating with large numbers of interlocutors than in the past: 'if I get something that I want to distribute to everybody else, what do I do? I just put it [...] in an email and we distribute it. By a touch of a button you can send it to 160 people; or 200 people. Before... I mean our ancestors used to use the pigeons. Remember? Later on we have the postal service and [now] we have the internet' (6). It is also easier to communicate with the broader public : 'we [at the embassy] do not have the capacities of producing short films...but for example if I go on air we sort of put it on *YouTube*. If I go on *Sky*, *BBC* you put it on *YouTube*, and we create a link so now it is much, much easier [to communicate with the public]. If we want to go and speak to the broader public we send it over there' (10-11).

As the source points out, the interaction with a greater number of contacts also has its downsides: 'it [development of new technologies] puts pressure on us. I told you the workload has increased. It's a known thing. You have, instead of getting two questions [...] one question a day, you have, 125 letters.' However, overall, the duties of the diplomats have become more manageable, increasing their efficiency: 'before [in the past] you used to get a letter. You would be fundamentally lazy to reply to that letter. Okay? It happens. You're lazy. You don't want to write a letter. You need to do sixty letters but then, oh God, I'll do two. Now with the internet, tch, tch, tch, and that's it; that's all you need to do, literally. So the intake [of work] is way higher than it was before' (9).

The global availability of media cross borders also affects the kind of information that diplomats report back to their home governments. As the basic facts among current developments in the host country (at least in the UK) are largely available back home through TV reporting or the internet, diplomats can concentrate on their analyst function and managerial as well as networking activities. The Syrian diplomat, for example, comments:

'A cultural diplomacy needs a cultural attaché who is on top of everything, organising, coordinating, conveying messages. The way you do that, technology will help you out. The technology will make your job easier because sometimes you don't need to send everything because they [Foreign Ministry] are already informed, not via me, via the usual chain of information technology so the job remains the same but it will, you know, be quicker, more efficient. This is it. You have more access to sources. I mean, when I read something in the British press I can quickly see if it's making the debate in the States. I can go onto the *Washington Post* or *New York Times* to see if they are talking about it, you know' (8-9)

A similar view was shared by a Maltese source:

'I don't need to say what's happening in the UK and I don't send a report anymore. [...] In Malta they know exactly what's happening and they can see it on TV live or on the internet. So why would we waste our time doing a summary of what's happening in the UK? Until 10 years ago when I was at the Ministry actually we were obliged every day to send a page. Nowadays it's considered [...] a waste of time because they [Foreign Ministry] can get the information, so that has changed greatly.' (10)

The new communication technologies, however, also pose challenges. They appear to accelerate the pace at which diplomats are expected to react and deliver their analyses to their respective governments. Eloquently showing the extent of such speed, asked whether he read weeklies, the Indian diplomat replied: 'there is no time, frankly', 'I can't wait for one week.' The German diplomat, in addition to this, talks about an increasing pressure on diplomats to respond not so much to what is happening, but to a reality largely manufactured by the media:

'Because if you are working in a bureaucracy, like a foreign ministry, it's not so much important what is really going on. It's important what your superiors have read. You have to respond to their perception of what is happening, not to what is really happening. I mean if they are convinced there is a war going on between Denmark and Britain and I know quite well there is no war going on it's no good saying, no, there is no war going on. I have to say yes, that is a terrible thing, and we have to do the utmost to reconcile the two countries. If everybody is convinced the war is going on I can't come up and say, no it's not going on, because, you know, we have to react to the information that lands with the perception of our government, of our superiors, and not to the world as we personally may perceive it, as a specialist. So forget about specialist thinking. You have to react to the world that is created by the media and the world in which our politicians live; not the real world, ha. That's if it exists' (8-9).

This trend, which the source had been able to witness over more than 20 years of diplomatic service, 'has become worse, yes. The virtual world created by the media [...] is making a bigger impact than before' (9).

Another challenge of our 24/7 media saturated society is for the diplomat being able to navigate the ever-increasing volume of available information and select what is important. As the Greek source put it:

'the number one issues of today, the huge volume of information that you need to control […] when you have five articles [news stories] about the same thing you need to choose. You need to see what is the most important and to react on that, you know; not to read everything because it's impossible.
This bunch I showed you [28 pages of article clippings for that day]…it was…well there's more. I mean during the [reporting of the Greek financial crisis] we had, the financial crisis in the last six months, it was like three or four bunches every day. It was impossible to read all of it. We just tried to homogenize or put some articles together and say, "This article says this and the same thing is written also in that, that and that article"… it was very tough' (13)

To this we can add an increasing diversity of the issues diplomats need to deal with. According to the Japanese diplomat this is explained by the fact that advances in technologies, not only communication but also transportation technologies, facilitate the direct contact between leaders. Better contact and communication means a decreased risk of misunderstanding and misperception (in the past communication with Russia or China was 'cumbersome and time consuming'). Now communication is 'less and less difficult.' However, 'leaders are very busy' and the time they allocate to diplomacy is quite limited. The daily work of the diplomats that constitutes the background to high-level summits is therefore very important. 'Any aspect of domestic policy can now be on the negotiating table.' So the daily work of the diplomat is now 'more diverse, heavier and important.'

The use of communication technologies by diplomats
Having said that, all interviewees did not regard these challenges as real problems in the sense that they posed unsurmountable obstacles to the fulfilling of their diplomatic functions. Even the German source who had mentioned the increasing extent to which diplomats need to respond to a reality manufactured by the media, when confronted with the question of whether this made the job more difficult, replied that it did not. The diplomat had to 'fight on both fronts [what really happens in negotiations and what is reported by the media].' As the source continued: 'Yeah, there is a world created by the media and sometimes you're an insider in a particular field, you see that there is also another world. So, one is just changing focus' (10).

Diplomats have simply adapted to the new circumstances using themselves the new communication technologies. As the Indian diplomat put it: 'anything [any technology] that

comes up and adds value, I'll use it,' 'At the end your briefing is to produce a report. How you do it is your business.' As the conversations with the other interviewees reveal, apart from the obvious use of the internet and e-mail, most of them use gadgets like Blackberries, iPhones and—one of the sources was planning to buy one soon—iPads to navigate the information tide and manage their contacts. The Syrian diplomat, for example, said that he accesses his Twitter and Facebook accounts, as well as emails via his iPhone (10) ('I check it every minute', 2). Also the Indian source commented that Twitter 'is always on' to check 'things as they happen.'

The increasing speed introduced by news technologies in the diplomatic tempo is also an advantage in communicating with officials back home and in making diplomacy 'more capable.' This can be illustrated through an exchange with the Russian diplomat:

'Q: You have been in diplomacy for a long time. You've seen for example, the arrival of the internet, the development of mobile phones [...]. What difference do you think they make to your activity?
These things help tremendously. It requires a diplomat to react and respond to events far more quickly, quicker, than we used to do before. It helps us to streamline the communication between the Embassy and the home base in order to seek instructions to do this or that. Sometimes instructions would come directly via text on the mobile phone, even though we prefer a more classical way of communicating, er, instructions, through telegrams, ciphered telegrams, and secret cables. But sometimes, if the matter is open, why not. You can directly communicate to your Foreign Minister or Deputy Foreign Minister in charge of the United Kingdom and get instructions from him. And, to put it shortly, everything has been accelerated since the introduction of the internet and the reaction required also needs to be very prompt.

Q: Some say that because of this speed sometimes diplomats don't have enough time to think. Would you agree?
Well some say, necessity sharpens the mind and in many cases this is true. But I could agree partly to what you're saying. I think being overwhelmed with the flood of events and the sequence of events, sometimes a diplomat has very little time to think through and think ahead, ... mainly react than dictate the course of the events, and that is one of the challenges of our time. And that's why it is very important that we have, not only very speedy means of gathering information but also speedy means of delivering your analysis to your superiors, to the home base, for them to have at least some leeway of time to think it through and confirm your instructions.

Q: So where do you think diplomacy is going in the future?
Well I think diplomacy will remain as important as ever, especially the personal contacts would be the key element of diplomatic activities, because nothing can substitute the personal rapport between the two presidents, for example, or the foreign ministers. Sometimes, erm, a smile of a president can go a long way and vice versa. Frowned eyebrows can, well, sign a death sentence to, er, some initiative. So it is going to be very important but at the same time the more effective the information gathering is the more capable diplomacy is becoming' (4)

Also according to the Syrian diplomat the world is becoming 'smaller.' While the diplomat needs to act more quickly, s/he has 'the tools':

'[diplomacy is now] more dynamic; faster. It used to be very slow. The information technology, the new era of information technology, help the diplomat to be more informed and he has no choice but to be speedy, you know. Like, if my Minister now is in Damascus and something is going on in Iraq or in Britain, for instance, he would call me after two minutes, saying 'What's going on [name of the interviewee]?' Or he would call the Ambassador, 'What's going on?' you know, so you have no choice but to be quick, to

know what's going on, to establish an opinion just in case you're asked. Because we are living in a small world and if you ask me what's the change, the world is getting smaller; smaller and smaller [...] so as a diplomat you have to be well informed and [act] quickly. So traditionally you have to be well informed. What has changed is "quickly," and you have the tools.' (8)

Even the Greek source who had mentioned the Press Office of the embassy being in a 'tough' situation to cope with the amount of coverage of the Greek financial crisis disagrees that the high volume of reporting represents a problem. If media are becoming more important in society, then their management becomes more important for the embassies, which simply need to work at it systematically:

'The role of the diplomat now is not what we had in mind some years ago, and it's good for the diplomats to do everything. I mean they should, go on a rotational basis from various sections of the embassy: the political section, the financial section. The press office is very important […] because if you do something very important and you don't present it to the media it's lost. If you do something that doesn't work and you present it very well to the media it's, you know, getting the whole attention. It's very important the image you create. It's very important and it's something that you cannot do it from one day to another; you need time, you need persistence, you need strategy. It's not something very simple, it is very important.' (14)

Against those who predict the disappearance of diplomats (Ross 2009) on the ground that they become redundant in a world where all information is instantly accessible across borders, the sheer volume of information available makes them even more needed: their added value consists in interpreting the information, in knowing where to look for clues and understanding what it means. As the US diplomat succinctly puts it: 'The vast amount of information both current and historical won't analyze itself.'

While the interviews confirm that, in explaining what difference communication technologies make to diplomatic practice, no generalization can be made, and despite the extreme nuance and differentiation, it is still possible to discern patterns. They are illustrated in the next section within an explanatory model based on an evolutionary analogy.

An evolutionary analogy: Survival strategies in an information environment
The explanatory model presented here is inspired by Ronald Deibert's (1997, Chapter 1) notion of *Ecological Holism*. In *Parchment, Printing, and Hypermedia: Communication in World Order Transformation* Deibert sets off to explain the changes that communication technologies have produced in Western societies over history—as the title suggest, from the ancient time when the Romans started writing on parchment, to today's age of the information superhighway. More specifically, he uses a modified version of Medium Theory[8] and a Darwinist analogy to describe 'the processes by which marginal forces on the borders of society are brought into the center by the unintended consequences of technological innovation' (30). He explains, for example, how in XVI century Europe the Protestant Reformation raised from being a marginal to a mainstream religious movement. According to him, all social forces, like animal species, live within an environment and changes in this environment, as in Darwin's thought, affects their chances of survival. The mechanism explaining why certain social forces or ideas either flourish or perish is a '"fitness" or match with the new *communications* environment' (31, my emphasis). The fitness consists in the 'interests, goals, and logic of organization' (32) of a social force being met by a technology within the existing repertoire of communication modes available. The success of the

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[8] Medium Theory is based on the notion that media are not just channels to convey information, but are rather environments in themselves. Deibert (1997: 21) writes that 'from this perspective...large-scale changes in modes of communication shape and constrain behaviour and thought independent of message content, and in doing so help to restructure social and political institutions.'

previously mentioned Protestant Reformation movement over the Roman Catholic Church can be explained through the appearance of the printing press in the XIV century communications environment. The new technology happened to match the needs of grassroot religious heretical groups who rejected the authority of the Catholic roman Church. The printing press enabled them to publicize their believes through religious texts in vernacular, which could be produced faster and in greater numbers than handwritten manuscripts. These groups had therefore the opportunity to thrive at the expense of other groups, like bishops and monks—who, instead, communicated in Latin and had established their power on the monopoly of the written word—whose needs were not served as well by the new technology.

While the model presented in this paper borrows the idea of social actors—in this case foreign diplomats—operating within an environment in which, like natural species, they compete to survive, my explanation also takes considerable distance from Deibert's. The model presented here rejects the idea that a technological innovation simply "appears" in an information environment and that the match between a technology and the needs of a social group is accidental. While it is true that some consequences of technological innovation might have 'unforeseen effects' (29), the interviews confirm that diplomats do not either thrive or perish at the hand of technological innovation alone. On the contrary, they show considerable entrepreneurship in the way they adapt to changing conditions and manage to "survive" despite unfavourable circumstances. This aspect will be illustrated in detail and through concrete examples. In fact, although Deibert aims to overcome the monocausal reductionism of Medium Theory—the idea that technological structures rigidly determine ideas and behaviours (26-31)—his stance it is still too much oriented towards the prevalence of structures. In my model agency and structural components, being mutually constitutive, are more balanced.

The environment in which the struggle for survival of the diplomats takes place is also different from both a natural environment and Deibert's communication environment. The environment is not just one but multidimensional. An extremely interesting finding emerging from the interviews is that the very environment in which the foreign diplomats operate—London, which should be the same for all—is, instead, perceived and "lived" entirely differently by each of them.

For example some diplomats comment about the 'sheer vibrancy' of the London environment, which has no equal in the rest of the world's capitals (Indian source). For the Egyptian diplomat London is the 'world's epicentre' (2), 'the media hub of the world' because 'it's very international.' The source particularly praises the balance in journalistic reports. As he puts it, in Britain a media outlet can't get away with a 'character assassination' because it would loose credibility with its readers (12). This adds to a 'high sense of public awareness,' actually the 'highest public awareness' the source has encountered than in any other country (12-14). This positive assessment is not entirely surprising, given that it appears to favour coverage of the debate about the Middle East, a key policy issue for the Egyptian embassy, whose different voices can be represented in the media. In this respect, the Egyptian source regards British coverage 'slightly less' unbalanced than in the US.

The Japanese source underlines the number of media sources ('I wish they could decrease those numbers [of media sources]!') and the international outlook of the press, as exemplified by the *Economist* magazine: 'In the *Times* magazine you would not expect that wide attention.' This is for the source so 'stimulating and enlightening' that being posted in London can be compared to 'Enjoying your view from the upper deck of a double decker.' The Swedish source also several times praises the 'extraordinary journalists..., very interesting people and sources of knowledge' (10) a diplomat has the opportunity to meet in London.

On the other hand other sources, although still emphasizing positive aspects, like again the strength of the journalistic tradition, also criticize the limitations of the "London perspective" and how this affects the activity of their respective embassies, in terms of both gathering reliable information, but also dealing with a public that is poorly informed about foreign policy. For

example the Brazilian diplomat observes a limited interest by British media in the foreign world—a stark contrast with news in Brazil:

'the media in the UK is very inward looking. I think for instance the *Guardian* has some exceptional material on things that happened inside this country; exceptional coverage. But it engages in the same kind of odd behaviour, let's say, [...] when we're talking about other countries. And I don't have to go very far. I have never read something about Mr. Silvio Berlusconi [Italy's Prime Minister], for example, who is a partner and a leader at the same level as the Prime Minister here, I have never read something about him that did not try to downgrade him as a comic figure [...] I don't see how the British can have any impression of Italy beyond the wines, the sun, Tuscany and whatever...But the politics... and nothing good comes in terms of Italy or even other countries. So the media is terribly biased, terribly... to read only these, the papers here, would be, you know, it's...You don't give a good view of what's going on in the world. It's important, if you want to know about France you have to read French newspapers; if you want to know about Italy you have to read Italian newspapers and you have to go on and on and on looking for whatever it is because if you stay just with what you get here you have a very distorted vision of the rest of the world. And I think that's one of the reasons why its [British] foreign policy making becomes a little difficult, and that's it. Because if I contrast it with the news in Brazil it is quite extensive. It covers a lot of things that have apparently no relevance to us. You know, 'Oh, the small village in China where they have a drought,' and then you read about it and you see in the news... So I think the coverage in terms of how it treats the world is less biased and more encompassing than it is here. And I'm sure these articles have a consequence for the public and foreign policy here.'

The German source also shares the assessment that the focus of British media is mainly domestic:

'I think it's the same all over Europe. I mean you find the same phenomenon. I mean Britain is very much centred on itself, like other European countries. The proportion of reporting on domestic events is enormous compared to international coverage.
I mean there is, in the British media there is almost, it's very limited interest in global news. I mean I'm glad I don't have to rely on British media for covering international affairs because, ha, if you follow *BBC News* they have three of four news items. If you don't have stations like *Al-Jazeera* you would probably be ignorant of what is going on in the world. I mean it's an island which is only interested in itself, ha, but that is not very much different in other European countries; they are normally not interested in the outside world.
Whereas if you are in a country in Africa or Asia the focus is much more international news. You get much better information from the local media in Egypt about what is going on in the world than you get here. On the other hand in Egypt you don't get much out of the media for what is really going on in Egypt, but it's easy for them to report about the elections in Paraguay, about a political scandal in (s.l. 0.19.30) *Mauritius* and so on. That's, that's... And it is being reported. Whereas here in England, unless you make a real effort, you don't get much international news.
I mean if you subscribe to a cable network, BT or *Sky*, the number of non-English media is ridiculous. At least in Germany you get Turkish, French, Spanish, Italian channels. Here if you subscribe to any cable TV you will probably end up with a lot of completely useless British film channels and you don't get any Arab, Turkish, German, French, Chinese, Japanese channels at all. You need a satellite to really get information about things outside Britain. The BBC has no international coverage at all. It's just very much focussed on the UK. But that is not affecting my work if I am dealing with British domestic politics' (6)

Every diplomat takes advantage of the features of the environment to different extents. As seen, the same environment does not only *look* different from the perspective of every single

diplomatic actor. It could be said that that environment *is* indeed different, as if each diplomatic actor inhabited a parallel dimension even if operating in the same physical space. This is because the geometry of the environment is shaped by media access, availability of social contacts, and structure of political opportunities. The features of the environment for each actor, in other words, are defined by multiple networks. Given the importance of the communication and information gathering function of diplomats, here I am particularly concentrating on the information dimension. I will call the networks of contacts spanning both the offline and online dimensions across which information is accessed, gathered, processed, and distributed in official, media, and public domain the "information environment."

The scope of the information environment for each diplomatic actor can vary considerably, being shaped by the objectives and interests of the diplomats and embassies. For example, Egypt's interests involve not only Egyptian politics but also the wider Middle East and, partly as consequence of this, US foreign policy including the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq (sources from Egyptian embassy). Greece, instead, focuses more on the Mediterranean area. Apart from pressing economic issues at home, the attention is directed at Cyprus, Turkey, the broad community of Greek expatriates in London and a fundamental source of revenue for the Greek economy—tourism. These interests are reflected in the embassies' respective press monitoring and information gathering. Comparing the "press clippings"[9] produced by the Egyptian and Greek embassies it is really possible to grasp the notion of living in parallel worlds while always being based in London. The Egyptian clippings dated 21st July contain: in the section "Egypt" a *Financial Times* piece about the killing of a young man by a policeman in Alexandria ("Youth's killing shocks Egyptians", *FT.com*); in the section "British PM visit to USA" several articles about British PM Cameron's statements about UK forces leaving Afghanistan (from *The Telegraph, Guardian, The Independent*) as well as about the UK-US controversy over the release of the Lockerbie bomber Abdelbaset al-Megrahi (*The Independent, The Guardian*); in the section "UK" a piece about former MI5 former chief expressing the view in the Chilcot enquiry that the Iraq war 'created terrorist threat and radicalised young British Muslims' ("Why did all these sceptical officials go along with the Iraqi invasion?", *The Guardian*); comment articles about the conflict in Afghanistan in the omonymous section (*The Telegraph, The Independent, The Guardian*); the article 'Deplorable and reprehensible' UN boss savaged by outgoing aide" (*The Independent*) in the UN section; the announcement of fresh sanctions against North Korea in the US section. Although produced two days earlier, 19th July, the Greek clippings present a completely different focus—one could say, beyond the simple issue of timing, a completely different view of the world. Although the range of newspapers for that clippings' issue[10] is almost identical to that of the Egyptian one, here the attention is on Greek economic consolidation and European financial news (for example it is possible to notice articles like "Greece makes 'strong start' on reforms" *FT.com*; "IMF pulls out of Hungary loan talks", *The Wall Street Journal*; "Stress-testing Europe's banks won't stave off a deflationary vortex," The *Telegraph*). Another main focus is tourism. The articles cover: the collapse of the holiday company Goldtrail (several stories); "Turkey's tourist resort threatened with terrorist campaign" from *The Telegraph*; small cut outs from a "Travel Special" of *News of the World* (the Sunday edition of the tabloid *the Sun*) about Turkey ("Turk a look") and the Greek Islands ("Get on the right Rhodes with Greek island break").

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[9] The "press clippings" refer here to the summary of daily news produced by the embassies' press offices. The sources called them 'clippings' because that is what they traditionally used to be: clippings from the daily newspapers hard copies. The "clippings" accessed by this study were printouts of electronic files containing news stories mostly copied and pasted from websites (mainly newspapers available online).

[10] The press monitoring by Press Office of the Greek embassy appears extensive and normally involves all the main British newspapers, blogs ("Alphaville" http://ftalphaville.ft.com/ and "Stephanomics" http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/thereporters/stephanieflanders/, 5), TV channels (news feed into reports, although there would be no equivalent of the "clippings" for the footage), Greek media in London (*London Greek Radio*, *Eleftheria* and *Parikiaki* , 3).

The "struggle for survival" of the diplomats consists in their attempt to carry out their functions of representation, information gathering, and reporting back to their respective countries in the most effective manner. These objectives do not necessarily lead to competition with one another. Diplomats and embassies, however, do compete for visibility and for the attention of the local (British) media, officials, and members of the public. The London environment, in this respect, appears to present unique features in comparison to other diplomatic postings that encourage this competition. As it was put by more than one source, there is simply 'a lot going on' (Brazil, Sweden). There are so many events and such a great selection of them that it is difficult to cultivate friendships and contacts by attending events. Because London is an important hub, embassies tend to be allocated more resources and staff. This makes it unlikely to meet the same people at official events. In addition to this, as English is the *lingua franca*, the community is not as closely knit as when the language is a barrier (as it could be in Moscow, in the example provided by the Brazilian diplomat) or in a crisis- or war-torn area. The Maltese source also adds that most of the diplomats live outside the centre of London, so receptions tend to finish early to allow the commuting. This limits the contacts at receptions in comparison to, for example, the Madrid environment.

In cases in which the environment changes, as it might happen with the introduction of a new technology, the species (diplomats and embassies) have to adapt their behaviour in order to survive (i.e. keep on carrying out their functions effectively). If a country's society becomes media saturated and dominated by a 24/7 news cycle, diplomats' and embassies' competition for attention from the public in that context might become even more intense. They might feel that they need to pursue new strategies than, for example, merely issuing press releases in order to reach out to the local national public. This process of adaptation presents both constraints and elements of both innovation and flexibility. The range of actions available to some countries in order to carry out their functions in conditions that have turned unfavourable might be broader than those of others because of structural reasons: their position within the international system—the media and the public will always be interested in the US or China because of their status of world powers—or their economic resources. One can think, for example, about how the resources embedded within the networks available to the diplomats a world superpower like the US appear in comparison to those at the disposal of the representatives of a small country like Malta.

Embassies and diplomats who find themselves operating in constrained conditions, like limited financial resources, can still, however, use their options creatively. In fact, they implement very different solutions to their communication needs by selecting among the available technological platforms. Among the embassies who do not gain satisfactory attention in mainstream media some can decide, for example, to use a *Facebook* page to reach out to an online audience. Others, instead, might use face-to-face networking to communicate with British stakeholders. New communication technologies, in this respect, can open up new ways of compensating structural and financial limitations, although they do not come free from costs, as the examples in the following section will show.

An evolutionary model
The chart in Figure 1 is a visual representation of the patterns that could be detected within the interviews.
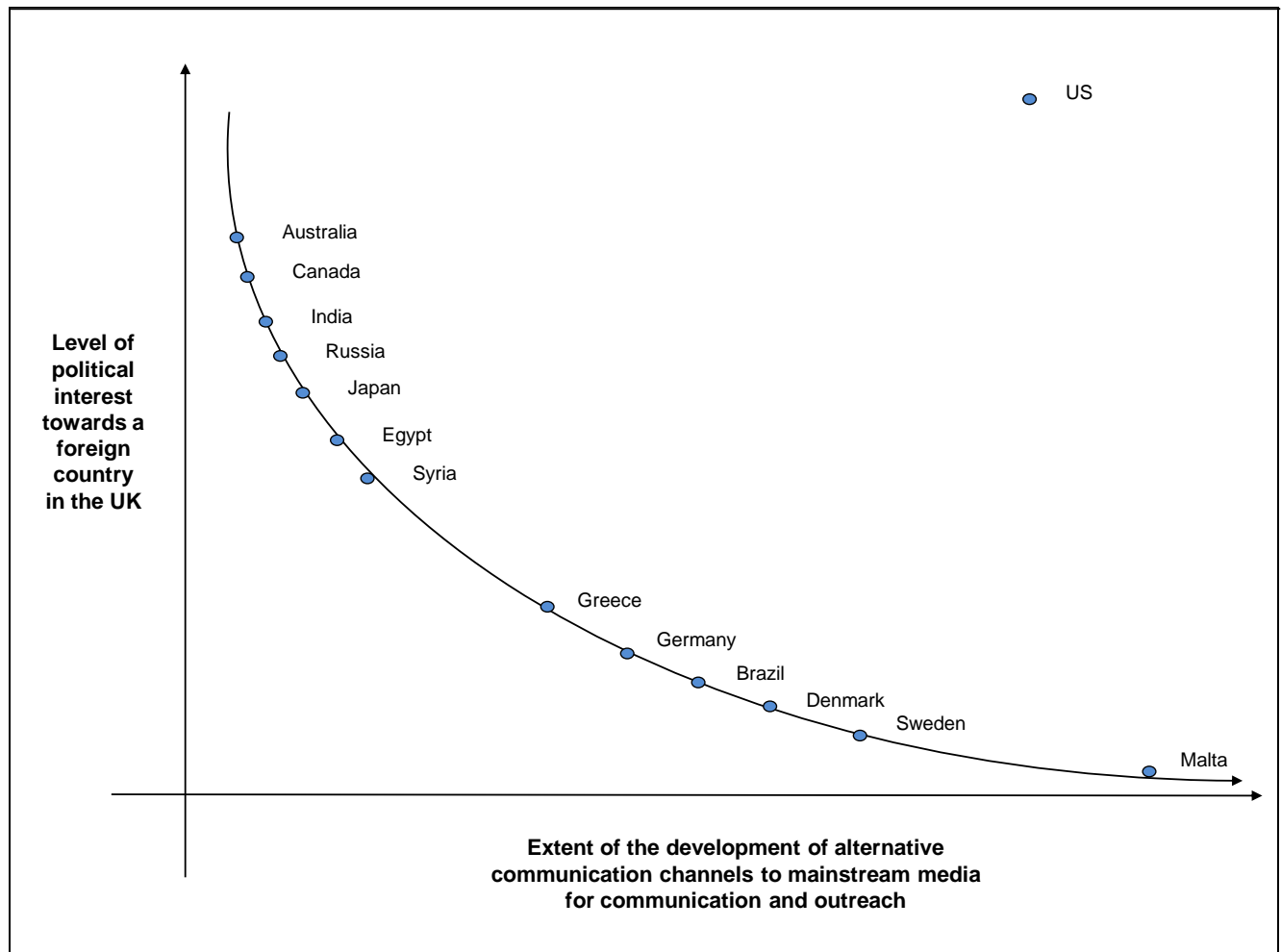
Figure 1. The position of diplomatic actors in the London information environment.

The variation of the extent to which the activities of diplomats from various countries are affected by communication technologies and the extent to which they appropriate communication tools to pursue their own interests define the position of each diplomatic actor within the London information space. Two interrelated dimensions appear to explain each actor's position. My argument is that the first dimension, the level of political interest in the UK towards foreign countries (in turn shaped by a range of factors which will be illustrated in detail in the following section), affects the second dimension, the extent to which the diplomats and embassies of those countries develop alternative communication channels to mainstream media for their communication and outreach purposes.

Level of political interest towards a foreign country in the UK
The vertical axis represents the level of political interest in the UK towards a foreign country. This level of attention is shaped, in the London case, by the UK current foreign policy, international alliances and membership of international organizations, and historical ties (for example to former colonies). On these bases officials tend to prioritize their interactions with foreign country representatives in terms of frequency of exchanges and level at which negotiations are conducted. Importantly, in the long term, the level of official interest, which also transcends the short time dimension of single governments' policy initiatives, largely affects the level of newsworthiness of those countries in the national media agenda (Archetti 2010). It therefore strongly affects the amount of coverage and visibility that diplomatic actors from those countries can achieve in the mainstream media.

The position of the countries in the chart is based on the evidence gathered through the interviews. For example Canada is placed higher than Russia, which in turn is above Japan, because statements made during the interviews emphasized both a greater possibility for the diplomats of the former countries to access high level government officials and a greater relevance of information-gathering through personal contacts than, for instance, through the media than during the interview with the Japanese counterpart. The Canadian source, for example, stated: 'We speak to Members of Parliament, Members of the House of Lords. We talk to Ministers and Junior Ministers and their staff in authority. I think that's how we would sort of get first-hand knowledge and experience [about the political situation]' (1). The Russian source stated that the task for any diplomat is 'to use intellect and tact in maintaining official relations between independent states and our primary source of information is of course official sources' (1). The mass media was presented by that source as an additional source helping making sense of the domestic political situation. The Japanese diplomat, instead, although always mentioning official sources, remarked that 'we are all eyes and ears' and that 'most information, more than 90%, is in the public domain.' The highest position of the US along the vertical axis is explained by the exceptional extent of its diplomats' access to the host government officials: the US diplomat emphasized the importance of personal contacts in the Home Office, FCO and the Cabinet Office. According to the source 'being close allies does mean that we talk about almost everything.'

This does not intend to suggest that the Japanese diplomats do not have high level access to officials or that they have "less" access. The researcher is aware that the different mention of high level official contacts in different interviews might be related, beyond the actual reality of it, to several possible reasons. They could include simple omission or the attempt to emphasize access to positively promote the image of a country; different levels of resources allocated to media monitoring within the embassies' Press Offices (as in the case of Malta, if the Press Office is not developed most of the information gathering is done through face-to-face contacts); the fact that a diplomatic role does not lead the interviewee to meet official interlocutors (a press officer, for example, would tend to meet more journalists than government authorities), the issue at hand (a Political Counsellor will most likely meet high-level officials more frequently than somebody from the embassy's Cultural Department). The ranking of the embassies in the chart, however, does appear to largely reflect the level of closeness that UK foreign policy currently presents towards the respective countries (Carter 2005, 14).

Egypt and Syria were placed higher than Germany or Greece despite the fact that the latter are members of the EU. Again, this does not mean that Germany or Greece do not receive any high-level attention. Egypt and Syria, however, tend comparatively to attract more attention because of their involvement in the debate surrounding Middle Eastern issues, especially the Israelo-Palestinian conflict and, particularly in the post 9/11 context, concerns about political and religious extremism. The point here is that, although the relative position of the countries might vary, the chart wants to reflect the fact that some of the countries whose diplomats were interviewed tend to receive greater official attention and better access to high level officials than others. This is also reflected by a greater newsworthiness, volume of media coverage, and consequently visibility in the mainstream media.

It is not surprising that Australia, Canada, India, do tend to receive extensive coverage because of their membership of the Commonwealth, their historical ties to the UK and status of former colonies. Beyond these reasons the US receives even greater attention because of its "special relationship" with the UK and its superpower status. Attention towards the US is so "natural" and almost taken for granted that the US diplomat would start the daily routine by checking the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* to see 'what the matters are in Washington' before reading the British press.

The Greek source also highlights issues related to language barriers and how Greece tends to receive little coverage because there are not many stories in English available in Greece.

Despite the availability of information across borders, in fact, English journalists cannot read Greek. The few stories that filter from Greece into British media are those picked up by British journalists in Greece (14).

Among the countries that tend to receive less coverage are Germany, Sweden or Denmark. Sweden offers a very good example of a small country that experiences difficulties in attracting the attention of the mainstream media unless officials of the calibre of the country's PM are involved:

> 'We've tried to do it [organizing press conferences] a few times when we have had visiting ministers, from Sweden and we thought there might be an interest on some issues, but it is a bit difficult because [...] some journalists say, oh they're interested but then they don't show up or very few come in the end. And, you know, there's too much going on in London and journalism is too fast. So, you know, people may pop up for a press conference or they may not. But, I think, experience has shown that the very few occasions where they're interested, [...] the Prime Minister, yes, then, you know, then journalists want to talk to him but there are quite few visits that we have [in that respect] [...] [that] would generate such a big interest from the media' (3).

But there are other structural reasons why these countries might get less access to officials. The German source talks about an increase, over the past thirty years of a ceremonial role of European embassies at the expense of their traditional hardcore and "messenger" role. This is due to both the consolidation of the EU, particularly the fact that political leaders tend to meet regularly within its institutional structures and bodies, and the technical possibility of communicating directly:

> 'if Germany has a problem with Paraguay, the foreign ministry would probably ask our ambassador in Ascension to see the foreign minister or to see the president or prime minister or whatever of that country and to deliver a strong message or to sit with him and to explain our position and to find a solution. If we, if the German government had, would have a problem with the UK government, what would happen is the head of the Chancellor's office would call the head of Downing Street, Number 10, and would say, look, Angela [Merkel] has to talk to David [Cameron]. Could we fix a phone call for two o'clock in the afternoon? And the embassy would perhaps not be even aware of it. No? Within partners like Germany and the UK a lot of business is being conducted directly between the governments themselves, between capitals, not using the embassy as a messenger or as a player, and apart from that, of course 30 years ago people didn't meet so much, didn't phone directly so much to... because of the lack of technology. Now air travel has become more intense; telephone, SMS, computer more intense; language capabilities are more readily available.
> Plus you have [...] the EU in Brussels where leaders, politicians meet regularly, so... and I mean leaders between major partners or between EU partners. So the role of the ambassador and of the Embassy has very much diminished over the past 30 years in these countries.' (12)

According to the source, a possible explanation for the increase in outreach activity, especially in the form of public diplomacy through various communication platforms, is the attempt by European embassies in London at balancing the loss of representative functions: 'we are compensating for the diminishing role of traditional diplomacy by talking about our role in public diplomacy' (11).

It therefore emerges a differentiation in the purposes of diplomacy: European embassies appear to become increasingly oriented towards administration tasks, like organizing official visits and providing the background information to high level negotiations (Sweden, Germany...). Non-

European countries' embassies appear to retain to a greater extent the "messenger" role of the diplomat. The Syrian source for example says 'A diplomat is a tool of communication' (2).

The Australian source confirms the increase of a third function—advocacy—at the expense of the information-gathering and relaying:

> *'Q: You've been in diplomacy for a long time so you must have seen the advances of the internet, mobile phones, and so on. What difference do you think these technologies have made?*
> I think proportionately, you know the job of diplomats once was to collect information and relay what was going on in their countries of accreditation. That's now largely redundant. There's other ways of doing that. I think the big change is that the, if you like, the advocacy function, the going out and trying to drive agendas for Australia in specific places, is much greater and we literally don't do any general political reporting anymore. I mean we weren't writing cables predicting who was going to win the last election. I mean the political reporting that we do tend to focus very much on specific Australian interests. So we'll be saying, you know, if the Conservatives win this is what foreign policy may look like, particularly foreign policy in areas of the world that affect us [...] We wouldn't be sending... you know once upon a time you would have been sending a cable every couple of days saying this is the latest and this is who we think is going to win. You wouldn't do that now because somebody could just go to Guardian Online or The Times Online and get that. So the extent that we're reporting [...] developments, it's very much with a view to what's the Australian angle in all of this, and then as I said much larger is kind of the advocacy and agenda setting role. You know, achieving specific objectives for Australia in the country. What used to be, once upon a time, a reasonably large function of an embassy, you know, political reporting, has now changed significantly.'

The advocacy function, however, confirming the highest position of Australia in the chart along the vertical axis, largely consists in agenda setting through official contacts: 'going down to Whitehall, trying to get the UK government to do things that we want them to do, or advocating, you know, in the public domain Australian policies on things' (5).

For some countries there might also be less *need* of access to officials to gather reliable information. This is related to quality of the information provided by British media mentioned earlier. The German source, asked to compare the proportion of time spent gathering information through the media rather than through official meetings both in London and Cairo (one of his previous postings), replied in these terms:

> **'***Q: If you were to define the proportion of your time that you spend consuming information provided by the media, versus the time you spend meeting people, what would that be?*
> If you don't include meeting people in our own embassy and co-ordinating with them [...] I would say that 80 percent of the information comes from media and 20 percent comes from personal contacts, talking to other people over lunch or going to their offices or inviting them to my office and exchanging information.
>
> *Q: And if you compared this to the previous posting in Cairo, would the proportion change?*
> I would say it was 70 percent meeting people and 30 percent following events on internet, print media, et cetera' (5).

Again in the source's words: 'there is a lot of inside information offered in the media; that is true, whereas in other countries you would perhaps have to rely more on personal contacts to get the inside story' (5).

The position of the countries in the chart is defined by another dimension, which will now be discussed.

Extent of the development of alternative communication channels beyond mainstream media
The horizontal axis indicates the extent to which countries which do not gain exposure through mainstream media depend on the development of alternative channels—particularly websites, social media like *Facebook* or *Twitter*—and face-to-face networking for their communication and outreach.

All of the embassies under analysis have a website, although the sophistication and the level of interactivity of the pages (if any) varies. The trend is that the higher the counties are on the vertical axis, the more visibility they already tend to have in the mainstream media, the less they feel under pressure to reach out to constituencies of interest through alternative communication tools. One could argue that, given that any communication effort requires a cost, in conditions of scarcity of resources, no initiative is going to be taken without at least the strong perception that it is going to produce a benefit for the embassy's outreach goals. This hypothesis is confirmed by the fact that the majority of the interviewees referred to budget cuts and resources constraints, both in human and financial terms. The Swedish source, for example, mentioned that, although the embassy used to have a "clippings" service at the time of the Swedish presidency of the EU (July-December 2009, 4), this has been cut from the budget. Indeed, the diplomat mentions 'enormous cutbacks in the foreign ministry in the last few years....it is even difficult to get IT, the computers and everything' (6), 'It's about costs all the time; not having enough money for new technology' (6). The cuts also involved almost halving the staff from what it was in the 1970s and '80s (12) as part, first, of a redistribution of resources following a bank crisis in the 1990s, then more recently the 'closing down' of 'smaller embassies in Europe' (13) to open, instead, new offices in 'hotspots' like Baghdad, Kabul and Karthoum (12). The latter require comparatively more resources: they are 'very expensive due to the security arrangements' (12). Also the Greek embassy has been affected by the country's recent financial crisis: 'we used to publish a newsletter [...] now we stopped the printing format and we just publish it [...] electronically. So no printing expenses; no mailing; just typing and sending it through email. So [this has] cut the budget in half' (6). A Maltese source commented that, both in London and beyond, 'most embassies seem to be cash strapped' (13), 'for instance in Malta, the British High Commission consisted of about, I don't know, 20, 30 people. Today that's probably down to about 8.' Another Maltese diplomat added: 'ten years ago there were ten diplomats in London to tell you the truth and now we're down to only three' (13). The Brazilian source also mentioned that the embassy is at the moment 'very short staffed.' The Japanese source, while acknowledging that the respective embassy is quite well staffed in comparison to others, did mention the need to prioritize in order to manage the workload in conditions of limited human and financial resources.

Despite the budget constraints, diplomats and embassies do not necessarily always go for the cheapest communication option. Although different platforms and communication tools are available, embassies select and use the communication tools that most directly allow them to fulfil their communication objectives. They might be very different and do not necessarily involve trying to communicate with the widest audience possible. It could be argued that a website or an e-newsletter are cost-effective options to reach out to a broad public. However, while the website of the Indian embassy is quite basic, its Press Office sends 4,000-5,000 hard copies of a fortnightly magazine produced by the embassy's Press Office to opinion leaders in the UK. The hard copy appears to be preferred to an e-newsletter and to a sophisticated website because it allows specific targeting. In addition to this, as the Indian diplomat commented, 'people still have a look' at a hard copy magazine. By being 'on the table' it might also be consulted by more people than it is sent to.

Despite the hype about the easily available networking possibilities offered by *Facebook* and *Twitter*, these platforms are not as cheap an option as they might at first appear. It is true that

they are universally available for free, but once a *Facebook* page has been established or a *Twitter* account opened, it is necessary to "keep them going." Searching for appropriate material and producing postings frequent enough to capture the interest of the network of "friends" of "followers" requires time and effort, possibly the attention of a full time member of the staff.

A *Facebook* initiative by the Danish embassy is an excellent case in this respect. The page, "Defense News, Danish Embassy in London"[11] was established in February 2010 by an intern of the Danish embassy Press Office. The purpose, as the intern (then editor of the *Facebook* page) writes in an evaluation article on the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, was to 'actively tell the British population about Denmark's international engagements; especially explaining the extensive and mutually respectful cooperation between Denmark and the United Kingdom in Afghanistan' (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2010). The reason for establishing the page, confirming the argument of this section of the paper, is that the Danish embassy wanted to tell the public news and stories that did not normally make the news in the mainstream media. As the former editor continues: 'From the beginning it has also been a clear element that the embassy should strive to be open: there are many good news stories from places like Afghanistan that are left untold by the regular press, but there is, undeniably, also bad news sometimes. This part of the truth is not being held back.' The researcher has been following the experiment since the establishment of the page and shares the Embassy's assessment (ibid.) that it was indeed very successful in generating interest among the 1,266 (at 29 October 2010) "friends" from over 20 countries through frequent (almost daily) postings. Once the intern left the embassy at the beginning of July 2010, however, the frequency of the posting has noticeably decreased. Asked whether the Press Office is committed to keep the experiment going, a source at the Danish embassy replied:

'we hope we can keep it up now [name of intern] has left. Of course, he kind of had specialist information about Afghanistan and defence and we don't have the resources to have one person just dedicated to that, which of course, would be ideal because it's a very specialised subject [...] but we will sort of find ways to [...] continue it in a smaller way because there aren't resources to have a full time employee to do it' (3)

In other cases, however, it is not the financial constraints that represent the biggest constraint to using platforms like Facebook or Twitter. Here is, to explain this point, my exchange with the Syrian diplomat:

'Q: Increasingly, through my interviews I see that everybody agrees with Facebook and Twitter being a great thing but then there is a shortage of labour within the embassies. Once you have a Twitter account then you need to tweet all the time...
And ... it's also a responsibility that governments sometimes can't afford. Because, you know, in diplomacy, sometimes you don't want to answer. If you throw yourself in these engines and social networking you can't... either you play to the end or you don't play at all, you know. So that's why, I mean, super powers they do it because they have an opinion on each cases but for a country like, I don't know – Bulgaria, Syria, Algeria – I don't think it's necessary' (6)

"Twitter diplomacy" is also not appropriate when countries are involved in a continuous low-level conflict, as in the Middle East. There diplomacy need to be more 'calm' (10). As the diplomat continues:

'when we need to say something to clarify we intervene, but we can't [rebut], every time we have propaganda against us, I mean we do react but we don't make a debate out of it.

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[11] http://www.facebook.com/pages/London-United-Kingdom/Defence-News-Danish-Embassy-in-London#!/pages/London-United-Kingdom/Defence-News-Danish-Embassy-in-London/326005760827?ref=ts

This is the nature maybe of the culture, you know. I am not saying we don't respond. We do respond. But [...] if we do respond they come back... It will be like, you know, we are giving them a credit for their news [...] You cannot, day to day, [...] tackle issues that are not true [referring to divergent opinions about Middle Eastern politics]. You say your position and that's it. If someone needs to clarify they can come to us. I am not saying we're silent. I'm saying we're calm' (10-11)

Most of embassies whose country is on the left side of the chart tend to have a very basic website, especially India, Japan, Syria and Egypt. It is interesting to notice that it is the countries that gain less attention in the mainstream media that tend to develop alternative communication channels.

The German embassy has set up a *Facebook* page, "German Embassy London."[12] The page has 1,252 Friends (29 October 2010) and posts daily, sometimes even more frequently. It highlights news about German culture both in the UK and abroad. One of the postings close to the time of writing, "Shakespeare, Bitte!" (18 October 2010), is about a season of Shakespeare's plays performed in German in London's Globe theatre. It contains the link to a BBC report about the events.[13]

The website of the Brazilian embassy is the most sophisticated among those of the countries whose diplomats were interviewed.[14] It is well-organized and contains a range of sections. One of them "Brazil in the School" includes teaching materials about Brazil that help students in British schools learn about subjects that are part of the national curriculum and that are central concerns to the Brazilian domestic and foreign policy: the environment, globalization, the rural-urban divide for instance.[15] The website publicizes the many cultural events related to Brazil, especially art, music and film festivals, that take place in London.[16] There is also a link to a Twitter feed of the Brazilian Foreign ministry.[17]

As a result of budget cuts, the Swedish embassy at the moment does not have a press officer. Dealing with the press is a function that is currently placed on the side of other portfolios of the embassy staff ('usually someone at the political department will have responsibility for press issues'). The main communication channel to the wider public appears to be the embassy website.[18] The most important outreach activity, however, given the already mentioned general difficulty in attracting the attention of the mainstream media, is targeted networking through face-to-face contact at seminars and roundtables led by the Ambassador. As the Swedish diplomat puts it:

 'I think a lot of small and medium sized countries would feel in London [...] there's so much going on and [...] there's so much knowledge here and to be interesting as a foreigner, you know, you have to be quite specific, because everyone is here and everyone wants to be heard' (7).

'you have to find areas where you are somehow, if not unique then very special, and something that fits into what's being discussed in the UK. It's difficult to come with something, 'Oh we have this great idea,' and I think you should be interested' [...], but if it fits in then you can make something out of it. Like if, like when they're discussing free schools in the UK then all of a sudden Sweden is interesting, because of that. Or, I mean before the crisis there was a lot of talk about, you know, sustainable building and climate

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[12] http://www.facebook.com/pages/London-United-Kingdom/German-Embassy-London/77962463252
[13] http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11553359
[14] http://www.brazil.org.uk/
[15] http://www.brazil.org.uk/school/index.html
[16] http://www.brazil.org.uk/events/index.html
[17] http://twitter.com/mrebrasil
[18] http://www.swedenabroad.com/Start____20308.aspx

change issues but specifically how to build not only houses but to save energy, but also build smaller societies [...], green cities, or, what do you call it, eco-cities [...]. And then there was interest in Sweden because we've come quite far when it comes to renewable energy and how to build well insulated house; things like that. So you have to sort of follow the discussion that goes on in the UK because they're not looking, you know, to Sweden for just like that. It has to fit into the discussion that goes on here' (8-9)

'you look for the right people to meet to create a follow up so to say and to try to kick start something', 'you have to be seen and you have to be, you know, you have to interact the whole time. The ambassador is out and about the whole time or having events in the residence and so it's about connecting the right people' (9).

This is a very similar kind of outreach activity as the one described by John Shaw (2007) *The Ambassador: Inside the Life of Working Diplomat*, a book about Jan Eliasson, former Swedish Ambassador in Washington DC.

The Greek embassy has recently started two *Facebook* pages: "Greek Network" and "A Pint of Greece" (6). [19] The two pages target two different, although not necessarily distinct, audiences. "A Pint of Greece," as the page states, 'aims to be a meeting place to facilitate people who are about to visit Greece, who have visited Greece in the past or live or have lived there.' The "Greek Network" 'aims at creating a wide network and keeping it informed on the latest developments regarding Greece.' Although the initiative responds to an official briefing—further promoting tourism—the idea of using *Facebook* came from within the Press Office at the embassy.

Both the Greek and Danish *Facebook* pages particularly demonstrate the entrepreneurship of the diplomats. In both cases the initiatives were developed as part of the vision of almost single individuals, without backing in terms of an explicit communication strategy from their home governments. The Greek example also suggests how this local change might turn, over time, into an official policy.

'We have about forty one press offices abroad. We are the first that we did that and, after a few days it was, our office in Washington that also started the social media activities. So it's us and Washington in the USA that started social media pages and I also communicate with some of my colleagues and I encourage them to start also their own pages on *Facebook*' (8)

It is not unreasonable to hypothesize that the fact that the Greek embassy in Washington followed in using *Facebook* and other offices (if appropriate in their respective information environment) might do the same, could place pressure on the Greek Foreign Ministry to develop an explicit social media strategy.

The outlier countries in the chart are the US and Malta. The US relies on resources that, although not unlimited, are superior to those of other nations. The fact of being a superpower gives the country a structural advantage that places it in a completely different league than all other countries considered. This appears to grant US diplomats more frequent and higher-level access to British government officials. The US receives higher coverage across the media spectrum. It could be argued that the country would receive media attention without any

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[19]"Greek Network": http://en-gb.facebook.com/posted.php?id=138645546150308&share_id=153977361279035&comments=1; "A Pint of Greece": http://www.facebook.com/pages/London-United-Kingdom/Greek-Network/110946355616226?__a=8&. The pages had respectively 264 and 70 Friends close the time when the interviews were conducted (19 August 2010). They have currently 890 and 166 (29 October 2010) respectively.

outreach communication effort due to the newsworthiness of its policies, particularly its power to affect worldwide politics. The US embassy, however, in addition to the attention in the mainstream media, also uses alternative communication channels. Their considerable development is indicated by the high position on the horizontal axis (right hand side) of the chart. The US embassy in London, more specifically, has a *Facebook* page ("U.S. Embassy London," 3,518 Friends on 29 October 2010)[20] and a *YouTube* channel.[21] The US does not have to balance, as it appears to be the case with other countries, the achievement of minimum levels of attention in the public domain with budget constraints. The establishment of a *Facebook* page is not a tool to compensate the lack of attention in mainstream media. Nonetheless the question can be raised whether the US is still under some form of constraint and whether it is precisely its superpower status that places a pressure on the country to adopt the latest technologies and showing some sort of innovation in its diplomatic practices.

Malta is, in many respects, another extreme case. The coverage of the country, despite being a Commonwealth member, is very limited. A Maltese source confirms this by saying that the "clippings" service of the embassy has been cut because the press could be easily monitored by the single diplomats: 'The truth is, if you search in *Google* and [add] the date it will give you all the clippings of today and there'd be very few' (11). The external communication through technological platforms is limited by the fact that the embassy website cannot be accessed but through the Malta foreign ministry.[22] This page, by the way, cannot be found easily. While all other embassies' websites can be found by Googling the searchwords "[country] embassy London," entering "Malta embassy London" does not lead to the official page). In addition the embassy cannot update its own web content. All communications go through the Maltese foreign ministry. Embassy staff, including the High Commissioner and his deputy, cannot access some media pages (like *The Sun* online or *Facebook*). A *Facebook* page for the Maltese community in the UK exists ("Maltesers in London")[23] and has been used by the embassy for the promotion of cultural events, although almost on a personal basis as it had to be accessed from home (7). The page introduces itself with the words: 'If you are Maltese and live or visit the UK often then please join us and invite your friends too. Let's bring Malta to London.' The page had 517 Friends on 20 October 2010. It must be said that, despite the extremely small size of the country, this is a seventh of the "friends" of the US embassy *Facebook* page.

The lack of investment in the outreach activities are perhaps explained by the very small scale of the country and its limited weight in international relations. A Maltese diplomat, in this respect, said that politically 'all decisions are taken in Brussels' (9), diplomacy is mainly 'trade and trying to increase the economic activity between various countries' (1). The diplomatic activity of the Maltese embassy is therefore targeted to tackling legal and financial issues related to trade: the organization of seminars with local stakeholders and financial correspondents, meetings with company representatives who can contribute to the economic development of Malta, particularly its manufacturing sector. The source mentions, for example, the organization of a conference with the *Financial Times* in October 2010 on the topic of the shipping and aviation register (3), an extremely important issue for the Maltese government. The relevance of the networking within the corporate world was once more emphasized when the researcher, upon arrival at the Maltese embassy, was asked from which "company" she was from.

Conclusions

The analysis of the impact of communication technologies on the practice of foreign diplomats in London, as well as the appropriation of different technologies and platforms to achieve their

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[20]http://www.facebook.com/pages/London-United-Kingdom/Defence-News-Danish-Embassy-in-London#!/uk.usembassy?ref=ts
[21] http://www.youtube.com/usembassylondon
[22] http://www.foreign.gov.mt/Default.aspx?MDIS=403
[23]http://www.facebook.com/pages/London-United-Kingdom/Defence-News-Danish-Embassy-in-London#!/group.php?gid=4126194758&v=wall&ref=ts

respective objectives within the British capital's information environment has obvious limitations. It was exploratory, limited in scope, and confined to one diplomatic hub.

The observations about the multitude of nuances that characterize the way diplomatic practices are both constrained and enabled by technologies and the way in which different communication strategies are selectively pursued within these boundaries of opportunity to target relevant audiences, however, do question the validity of the assumptions on which most of the current research on the relationship between diplomacy and the media is based. Current literature, in fact, assumes that communication processes are far more homogenous, linear, and disarmingly simple than they are in reality. In addition to this, research cannot explain change of diplomatic practices across specific political, social, and media environments.

The study presented in this paper shows that there is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to identifying an effective communication strategy in diplomacy, whether it is in its narrow sense of official negotiation or understood as public diplomacy. It is all very well to say that *Facebook* and *Twitter* are useful tools in supporting a new kind of public diplomacy characterized by a dialogue with foreign audiences. And indeed these platforms—in the right conditions, when used by certain actors in specific environments—will support the achievement of such a result. The outcome, however, cannot be a simple extrapolation from the characteristics of a medium. It is, instead, a social product shaped by the contingent interplay of structural factors and the initiatives of social agents. The structural aspects as they emerged in the case study, are a combination of: the countries' positions within the international system, which affects also the level of newsworthiness of a country in the mainstream media national news; the host country's prevailing journalistic culture (oriented towards balance and objectivity in Britain), which leads to the circulation of good quality reliable and accurate information; limited human and financial resources; even the physical characteristics of a capital. For example, among the rest, the fact that most of diplomats tend to live outside London due to the high living costs leads to more commuting, therefore less time that can be spent networking at receptions. The social agents are diplomats, local officials, local and international audiences who interact with each other both face-to-face and virtually. All these actors use technologies to pursue their own agendas within the structure of opportunities and constraints of the specific environment in which they operate. Every single actor occupies a different position within the social space.

In order to fully understand these overlapping social geometries it is necessary to combine the insights of different fields of study: Political Communication, International Relations, Communication and Journalism studies. It is also necessary to gain a better view of the micro-interactions of the social actors: diplomats, officials, journalists and audiences with whom embassies and governments aim to communicate. Examining these actors' actual practices involves the greater use of ethnographic methods. In order to become sensitive to the variation of practices and the cause of such variation international comparative research designs are also needed. As most of the research is conducted by scholars based in the US (and few other Western countries), and as an increasing number of actors characterizes the domain of International Relations in the 21st century we also urgently need to engage with the question: how does this all look from the perspective of the other at least 150+ nations?

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Appendix: Interview Questions

The study "*International Relations in the Age of Global Media*" examines the use and consumption of media sources by foreign diplomats in London. Its purpose is to understand the impact of both local and global media on the practice of diplomacy and international relations in the twenty-first century.

I am interested in finding out what kind of media sources you pay attention to and the extent to which these sources' consumption (if at all the case) contributes to your understanding of the political landscape in the UK and abroad.

Questions

Background
• How long have you been stationed in London?
• Have you been to other places before? Which ones?
• What is the purpose of diplomacy for your country?
• What is your role in the embassy? How do you carry out this role?

Media consumption and media use
• You represent your country in the UK. How do you "make sense" of the political situation? How do you keep yourself up to date?
• You most probably consult several media sources: which ones are they? (newspapers, TV, internet, blogs...).
• What is your typical day like?
• How important is the Internet in your activity? How important are new media (including devices like mobile phones, Blackberries, for example)? Do you make use of social media (Facebook, Twitter...). Do you write a blog? Do you communicate with other diplomats via SMS?
• Do you directly interact with journalists? Are they both journalists from your country stationed in London and British journalists?
• What is the role of your press office?
• What are the main activities of your embassy in terms of public diplomacy? What is the role of communication technologies in this?

Political and information environment
• (especially in case you have worked outside the UK) Would you say that the London diplomatic environment is different than elsewhere? If so, in which way? Is there a "London way of doing diplomacy"?
Is the London information/media environment different than elsewhere?
• Do you think diplomacy has changed over the years (at least in your experience since you have been involved in it)? If so, how and why?