

Taking Stock of WikiLeaks and *Cablegate*: A “Napster Moment” for Government?

by *Daryl Copeland*

Drip, drip, drip...

For analysts of both public and traditional diplomacy and international relations, the gradual release of only about 3,000 of over 250,000 U.S.-origin diplomatic communications is a bit like being subjected to [Chinese water torture](#). Even if the rate of publication is [stepped-up](#) somewhat, trying to assess the larger meaning and impact of *Cablegate* is likely to remain difficult.

One thing, though, is certain - the story is not about to end. Since *Cablegate* first burst onto the scene about two months ago, it has been with us every day since. Given the relentless pressures of the 24/7 news cycle, this must amount to something of an endurance record. Inevitably, however, the story is beginning to show signs of degeneration into [infotainment](#). Coverage of [specific message content](#) is now being displaced by [lurid gossip](#) and reports on the endless [legal wrangling](#) surrounding the [site's founder](#).

(continued)



Julian Assange. (The Associated Press, December 2010)

PDiN Round Up: Africa

George Clooney in Sudan The New York Times (Blog)

There's still considerable anxiety that the North, determined not to lose the three-quarters of the country's oil that lies in the South, will find one means or another to block the vote or deny its legitimacy — and that the result will be the world's worst war in 2011. That's where George Clooney comes in.

Categories : [Non-State PD](#), [Africa](#), [Americas](#)

Will Bar Refaeli's view of Egypt as 'primitive' harm diplomacy? Haaretz

Israeli supermodel Bar Refaeli upset Egyptians when she called the country "primitive" in an interview after her most recent visit to the country a month ago, according to report in the Egyptian press.

Categories : [Public Opinion](#), [Africa](#), [Middle East](#)

Lights, camera, Africa The Economist

It is hard to avoid Nigerian films in Africa. Public buses show them, as do many restaurants and hotels. Nollywood, as the business is known, churns out about 50 full-length features a week, making it the world's second most prolific film industry after India's Bollywood.

Categories : [Cultural Diplomacy](#), [Soft Power](#), [Africa](#)

Although film is on the rise in Africa, music still holds its own The Christian Science Monitor

For the younger, more urbanized generation in Africa, film may be the dominant artistic medium, but for the continent's older generations, music remains central to identity.

Categories : [Cultural Diplomacy](#), [Africa](#)

Tunisia's revolution isn't a product of Twitter or WikiLeaks. But they do help The Guardian (Blog)

The internet alone won't set anyone free. Between north Africa and Belarus, we are learning just what it can and can't do...What contribution do websites, social networks and mobile phones make to popular protest movements? Is there any justification for labelling the Tunisian events, as some have done, a "Twitter Revolution" or a "WikiLeaks Revolution"?

Categories : [Media & PD](#), [Africa](#)



The novelty has worn off, audience fatigue is setting in.

This juncture, then, provides an opportunity for some preliminary stocktaking.

Some of the early reactions, for example, seem in retrospect to have been somewhat over the top. As reported in summary on [Waxy](#), Secretary of State Hillary Clinton [told reporters](#), "It is an attack on the international community, the alliances and partnerships, the conversations and negotiations, that safeguard global security and advance economic prosperity." NATO [condemned the release](#), saying "it endangers civilians and military personnel... It is illegal, irresponsible and dangerous." [George W. Bush](#), [Senator Joe Lieberman](#) and [Rick Santorum](#) described the Wikileaks release as "terrorism." [Mike Huckabee](#) called for Julian Assange's execution. Sarah Palin [wrote on Facebook](#) that Assange is "an anti-American operative with blood on his hands." Well... To date, despite legitimate concerns over the possible exposure of sensitive sources, there have been no casualties attributable to *Cablegate*. The international business of governments accumulates quickly and has carried on, as it must, apparently without major hiatus. Diplomacy - that indispensable approach to the management of international relations characterized by dialogue, negotiation and compromise - by all accounts continues.

Given the limited possibilities associated with the remedial use of [hard power](#) in the [age of globalization](#), there are very few practical alternatives to diplomacy. This is particularly true in addressing the host of issues which are rooted in [science and driven by technology](#) - climate change, pandemic disease, resource scarcity - none of which are amenable to the application of armed force. Indeed, concerns over the [militarization of international policy](#) seem finally to be coming to the [fore](#). Governments really have no choice but to keep talking, and for that reason alone any costs imposed on [diplomatic practice](#) are likely to prove temporary.

While this episode may, then, induce a chill, *Cablegate* has not, as was initially feared, become a diplomatic show-stopper.

So, what is it?

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PDiN Round Up: Americas

Muppet Ambassadors?

Common Era

In order to determine whether Sesame Street is a form of public diplomacy, we must first establish which lens to view public diplomacy through. If public diplomacy is citizens—or in this case Muppets—acting on behalf of a political body to establish interpersonal connections, then no, Sesame Street is not a vehicle for public diplomacy. However, if public diplomacy is measured by outcome, and not intention, then I dare say that Elmo and friends are cultural ambassadors.

Categories : Cultural Diplomacy, Americas

Favela Força goes south - cultural exchange [artslink.co.za](#)

The Cultural Development Trust (CDT) is hosting a theatre production from Brazil, Favela-Força from 7 to 19 December 2010. The theatre production consisting of five actors plus the art director is visiting South Africa as part of a cultural exchange programme between CDT and IBISS Brazil, a non-profit organisation that works with youth in the Favelas (townships in Rio de Janeiro).

Categories : Cultural Diplomacy, Africa, Americas

Ann Curry's Haiti tweet ranked most powerful of 2010

NBC News

Twitter announced its list of the Top 10 most powerful tweets of the year on Tuesday, and TODAY show anchor Ann Curry's 50-character message imploring the Air Force to allow physicians to land in Haiti to administer aid to the injured and dying came in No. 1.

Categories : Non-State PD, Americas

Folk dances from Ecuador cast their spell [Sify News \(IANS\)](#)

The ethnic cultural diversity of the South American nation of Ecuador came to life in the Indian capital with a colourful showcase of music and dances based on the indigenous folklores and social mores of the country.

Categories : Cultural Diplomacy, Non-State PD, Americas, South Asia

Cuban Sound Invades New England [Voice of America](#)

Since then, Americans have had little interaction with Cuba and most know little about the Caribbean country or its culture. But a group of seven Cuban musicians is trying to change that - one New England school at a time.

Categories : Cultural Diplomacy, Non-State PD, Americas





Gary Hershorn/Reuters

Some would characterize the tale in heroic terms, citing it as an example of [information freedom](#), a massive leak generally supportive of the public interest and the people's right to know. That argument seems to me rather problematic. A quarter of a million messages do not constitute a leak, but instead an undifferentiated deluge, a data dump. Like freedom of speech, moreover, the freedom of information doctrine has some limits, especially when the information gathered was obtained in confidence or relates to legitimate concerns about security.

The case for whistle-blowing, too, seems somewhat shaky. Whistle-blowing refers typically to the exposure of corruption, wrong-doing or criminal behaviour. But probity is not the issue here. Instead, the main motive behind the release of this enormous trove seems to have had more to do with the simple fact that the material was available than with the service of any high public or moral purpose.

In my view, *Cablegate* represents more than anything else an excellent illustration of the double-edged, paradoxical quality of science and technology. Even as S&T is providing solutions to some of the world's most vexing challenges - public health, environmental remediation, genomics - it is creating new ones of its own. In this instance, the very technologies which have facilitated modern diplomatic communications have also made possible their unauthorized reproduction and mass dissemination.

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PDiN Round Up: Asia Pacific

Cultural diplomacy helps Vietnam's position Vietnam Net

Vietnam's successful cultural diplomacy in 2010 was reflected in activities dedicated to ASEAN and the 1,000th founding anniversary of Thang Long-Hanoi, and the effort to win UNESCO recognition of the country's cultural heritages.

Categories : Cultural Diplomacy, Public Opinion, Asia Pacific

Famous Japanese ryokan brings legendary service to Taiwan The Mainichi Daily News

A Japanese-style inn opened here in mid-December that brings the legendary service and attention of Japan's world-famous Kagaya Hotel to Taiwan. In development since 2004, the Radium-Kagaya International Hotel is located in Beitou, a famed if slightly faded resort area at the foot of a sulfur-scented group of mountains known as Yangmingshan that dominates Taipei's northern skyline.

Categories : Cultural Diplomacy, Asia Pacific

'Korean Wave' of pop culture sweeps across Asia CNN

At the end of May, it was announced that a South Korean band called Super Junior would perform at the Shanghai World Expo. Free tickets would be released for those who arrived early on the day of the performance, which was scheduled for the evening of May 30.

Categories : Soft Power, Asia Pacific

China wants tourism to improve battered image Reuters

China wants to use both inbound and outbound tourism to help promote its international image, which has been battered by endless product and food safety scandals and ethnic unrest.

Categories : Cultural Diplomacy, Government PD, Public Opinion, Asia Pacific

Celluloid Glimpses of Australia in Jakarta The Jakarta Globe

Moviegoers in Jakarta will be treated to a taste of Australian cinema at the city's first film festival of 2011, kicking off next week. Building on the success of the Australian Indigenous Cultural Festival in 2009, the Australian embassy will host "Australia on Screen 2011" at the Blitzmegaplex theater in Jakarta's Grand Indonesia mall.

Categories : Cultural Diplomacy, Asia Pacific





WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, adjusts his sunglasses as he leaves a press conference in Geneva earlier this month. (FABRICE COFFRINI/AFP/Getty Images)

Like so much else associated with globalization, S&T cuts all ways.

In the vastness of its scale, *Cablegate* also represents an unprecedented violation of individual privacy and confidentiality. Those who drafted the messages, and those with whom they were speaking, did not expect to read an account of their exchanges on the front page. To the extent that diplomacy is based upon relationships of trust and respect, this subversion of privacy and confidentiality will probably inhibit candid dialogue. Higher levels of classification, more limited distribution, fewer written records, and recourse to other forms of transmission, such as secure telephony, can also be predicted.

None of that is cause for celebration.

There remains as well a public diplomacy angle which has attracted little attention but is nonetheless worth examining. Although none of these messages were ever intended for public consumption, within the USA their publication has in general had a tonic effect on the image and reputation - the brand - of diplomacy *per se*. Several critics of the State Department have allowed that their estimation of the place has improved. Diplomats are shown as relevant, effective, and working very hard at doing their jobs.

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PDiN Round Up: Europe

Council on developing Hungary's country brand gets a makeover

Budapest Business Journal

With a panel of experts arriving from various areas and sectors, Hungary's Országmárka Tanács (Country Brand Council) is continuing its operation in a new structure, with new tasks. In a recent government decree, the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice has been assigned with reorganizing the council.

Categories : Government PD, Nation Branding, Europe

Poland's ambassador will focus on 'academic diplomacy'

The Star

Having taught students at university, Poland's Ambassador to Malaysia Prof Dr Adam W. Jelonek's will now focus on "academic diplomacy." ...Visits from top university officials from Poland are already in the pipeline and a bilateral agreement on higher education is due to be signed next year.

Categories : Government PD, Asia Pacific, Europe

Techno-skeptic MEPs trained to use Twitter, Facebook

Deutsche Welle

A young French Member of the European Parliament is leading the charge. Advocates hope that the increased use of social networking will get younger Europeans interested in what happens in Brussels.

Categories : Government PD, New Technology, Europe

Europe isn't just about potatoes, says cultural capital initiator

Deutsche Welle

The European Culture Capital initiative helps to highlight Europe's diversity and contributes to the development of the cities involved. What began as a spontaneous idea has developed into a large, multifaceted project.

Categories : Cultural Diplomacy, Europe

Swiss Muslim group offers lessons in working with media

GenevaLunch.com (blog)

The Swiss Islamic Shura Central Council is offering a series of workshops and seminars that began 8 January in Zurich to help Muslims learn to work with media to ensure better and fairer presentations of Muslims and Islam.

Categories : Media & PD, Non-State PD, Europe



“**To the extent that diplomacy is based upon relationships of trust and respect, this subversion of privacy and confidentiality will probably inhibit candid dialogue.**”

Rarely have members of the public been afforded such insights into what diplomats actually do: making contacts, maintaining networks, and adding unique value by advocating policies, pursuing interests, and providing advice and analysis to policy and decision-makers. For the first time in many years, and even if only fleetingly, interest in [diplomacy](#) has migrated from the esoteric margins of public consciousness into something closer to the cultural mainstream.

At home, the world's second oldest profession may come to be seen in a slightly more sympathetic light as a result.

The impact of these disclosures outside of the USA is more difficult to assess. Some governments and foreign nationals may be offended by the unvarnished assessments and critical commentary contained in the reports. And to be sure, one would not want to see vulnerable sources - for instance, pro-democracy campaigners in China or dissidents in Zimbabwe - compromised or exposed as a result of the revelations.

Over the longer term, there may be some lasting damage to U.S. power and prestige. The end of unipolarity, power shift to the Asia Pacific and the rise of the BRICs, the financial crisis and hollowing out of the domestic economy have already spawned a renewed wave of commentary about American [decline](#).

Viewed as a whole, these cables do not illustrate the seamless inner workings or high-level strategic calculus of an empire at

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PDiN Round Up: Middle East

Tehran holds Syrian culture festival
Press TV

Tehran has held a festival in an attempt to introduce Syrian culture and traditions to Iranians and boost cultural ties between the two countries. The festival was opened during a ceremony at Tehran's Bahman Cultural Center on December 4, 2010. Syrian ambassador to Iran Hamed Hassan attended the event along with a number of Iranian officials.

Categories : Cultural Diplomacy, Middle East

Qatar and Sheikha Mozah's Vision Extends Further Than the World Cup
The Huffington Post

When Qatar was awarded the World Cup for 2022 it was viewed derisively in many Western capitals. Who was this small nation? Where was this country? Why Qatar? Even US President Barack Obama claimed afterwards, "The wrong decision was made."

Categories : Cultural Diplomacy, Soft Power, Middle East

Palestinian women race car drivers leave gender barriers in the dust
The Christian Science Monitor

A handful of Palestinian women have taken up race car driving in the West Bank, and although there's been resistance, these women are too good to shut out.

Categories : Cultural Diplomacy, Middle East

World music Israeli style: Idan Raichel Project
BBC News

"If I got an invitation to perform from the president of Syria or the prime minister of Lebanon, I would be the first to go," says Idan Raichel, one of Israel's biggest-selling musicians. Right now that seems like a highly unlikely prospect, given the hostile relations between Israel and its neighbours to the north.

Categories : Cultural Diplomacy, Middle East

New networking site for young entrepreneurs
Gulf Daily News

A new social networking site that aims to connect Bahraini and American entrepreneurs was officially launched yesterday. The Entrepreneurship Portal, known as e-pad (www.epad-bh.com), is an online portal dedicated to young Bahraini and American entrepreneurs, seeking broader access to growth markets, investors and mentors in the developing world.

Categories : Media & PD, Non-State PD, Americas, Middle East



the top of its game. Instead, readers are offered the chronicles of something akin to [imperial retreat](#) - snapshots of defensive, rearguard actions and generalized geopolitical disarray. Given the magnitude of the recession still besetting the USA, for example, one might have expected to see intensive coverage of the various national responses to the global financial crisis. Economic reporting, however, has been notable mainly for its absence.

That is surprising, and suggests the kind of drift - a lack of priorities and direction - which historians associate with the demise of great powers.

By virtue of its very occurrence, is this, then, a "Napster moment" for the state, a game-changer from which there is [no turning back](#)?

Quite possibly.

But again, these are early days yet. ◆

About the Author



Daryl Copeland is a Canadian analyst, author and educator who writes and speaks on international policy, global issues, diplomacy and public management. He is Adjunct Professor of International Studies and a Senior Fellow at the University of Toronto's [Munk Centre](#), and in 2009 was appointed as a Research Fellow at the University of Southern California's Center on Public Diplomacy. Mr. Copeland grew up in Toronto and received his formal education at

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PDiN Round Up: South Asia

Afghan TV Show Aims To Burnish Police Reputation
NPR

A new television cop show has hit the airwaves in Afghanistan. Called Eagle Four, it tracks the fictional adventures of an elite police unit that chases terrorists, kidnappers and smugglers in the midst of a war zone. Loosely inspired by American TV thrillers such as 24, the show has plenty of cartoonish action, but the people behind it, including financial support from the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, are hoping it also conveys a message.

Categories : Cultural Diplomacy, Media & PD, South Asia

Pat-down search of envoy not good public diplomacy: India
Indian Express

India on Friday said the 'pat-down' search of Ambassador Meera Shankar at a US airport was not good public diplomacy.

Categories : New Technology, Americas, South Asia

Voices of South Asia: 15 young bands forge new cultural engagement
Sify News (IANS)

The power of South Asia as a cultural block is woven around its young contemporary music which is drawing from ancient traditions to fuse with new sounds to create a distinct voice and identity.

Categories : Cultural Diplomacy, Non-State PD, South Asia

Brand Bangladesh through ICC Cricket World Cup
The Daily Star

Some 16,000 foreign guests are expected to come Bangladesh to see the 2011 ICC Cricket World Cup matches. The host countries -- Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka -- are now busy giving a facelift to the tournament venues. But this mega event is especially significant for Bangladesh.

Categories : Cultural Diplomacy, Nation Branding, South Asia

Pak football team's tour of Palestine stirs uproar
Al Arabiya

The itinerary of Pakistani football team's proposed tour of Palestine in a few months time has generated a controversy among Islamists and political leaders.

Categories : Non-State PD, Public Opinion, South Asia, Middle East

