VIRTUALITY, DIPLOMACY, AND THE FOREIGN MINISTRY: DOES FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE CANADA NEED A "V TOWER"?

Daryl Copeland[*]

The vested interests of acquired knowledge and conventional wisdom have always been bypassed and engulfed by new media.
Marshall McLuhan

Along that ever shorter road from heresy to liturgy, it is no longer news that the much heralded revolution in information and communication technologies (ICTs) has transformed the practice of diplomacy, the management of the foreign ministry, and the nature of foreign service.[1] Less clear, however, is where all of this is going, what it may mean for practitioners, and how Canada is performing *vis-à-vis* the international competition. The purpose of this paper is to address these questions, and to focus on

[*] Daryl Copeland is an analyst, author, and educator. He speaks and writes on international policy, global issues, diplomacy, and public management, and has recently completed a book, *Guerrilla Diplomacy: Rethinking International Relations,* released in July 2009 by Lynne Rienner Publishers. See www.guerrilladiplomacy.com

From 1981 through mid-2009, Mr. Copeland served as a Canadian diplomat with postings in Thailand, Ethiopia, New Zealand, and Malaysia. During the 1980s and 1990s, he was elected five times to the Executive Committee of the Professional Association of Foreign Service Officers. From 1996-1999 he was National Program Director of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs in Toronto and Editor of *Behind the Headlines*, Canada's international affairs magazine. In 2000 he received the Canadian Foreign Service Officer Award for his "tireless dedication and unyielding commitment to advancing the interests of the diplomatic profession".

This paper has been prepared in a purely personal capacity and responsibility for the views expressed is the author's alone.

[1] See, for instance, Stanbury & Vertinsky (1994/95); Kohler (1998); Smith & Sutherland (2002); Vickers (2004).

some of the policy and institutional implications for the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) and for the practice of diplomacy itself.

Those familiar with the layout of DFAIT headquarters in Ottawa's Pearson Building will know that the existing facility consists of four irregular, yet distinct, pillars, labelled the A, B, C, and D towers. Each has its own identity and idiosyncratic physical characteristics. This enquiry will consider the merits of constructing what might be referred to, in the idiom of the department, as the "V Tower."

Were this fifth tower to be built, however, it would not be visible from Sussex Drive.

Made of clicks rather than bricks, the "V", or Virtual, Tower, would serve as a central place, or network node for employees. In important respects, it would function similarly for the department's partners and clients as well. Here the full potential of the digital universe could be accessed, harnessed, and applied in support of a wide range of organizational objectives, including the advancement of a new, more public style of diplomacy. In so doing, the creation of a V Tower would assist materially in vaulting the department from the Gutenberg galaxy into cyberspace.

Netpolitik: Information and Communications Technology as a Force Multiplier

At the highest level of analysis, perhaps the best way to conceive of the V Tower would be to imagine it as DFAIT's central point of access to, and interchange with, the virtual world, in all of its diverse and ever-expanding dimensions.

In order to pursue the possibilities associated with that model, it will first be necessary to explore the idea of virtuality *per se*. Such an exercise will require creativity, imagination, an open mind, and an appreciation of the possibilities created by an environment in constant flux.

In the age of mass travel and communications, an expanding infosphere, and the exponential growth of internet use, more people are able to exchange more data and ideas with increasing speed.[2] This has the effect of breaking down barriers, blurring borders of every kind, and creating a shared consciousness, a kind of collective intelligence that is beginning to shape values and inform culture. In that respect, analysts John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt maintain that any assessment of the strategic role that information plays in international relations cannot be confined to a narrow technical discussion about platforms and process but must also take into account the role played by values, identities, and practices in the context of nascent global networks. New technology has made possible the creation of, and access to, a common life of the mind, a "web of living thought."[3]

Of course, observing the existence of the infosphere is one thing; making use of it is quite another. When network connections permit retrieved information to be applied internationally in the pursuit of specified goals and interests, states and foreign ministries become implicated. Put another way, when the "web of living thought" starts to impact the world of *realpolitik*, diplomats become—or should become—engaged.

I have referred to this phenomenon elsewhere in reference to the emergence of a *global political economy of knowledge*.[4]

Several characteristics of this e-world in the making deserve special attention. Since its popular inception in the early 1990s, the epicentre of the Internet has continually shifted, migrating from Web 1.0, which can be thought of as read/write/broadcast mode, to Web 2.0, which today is dominant and is characterized by interaction and exchange, and now

---

[2] Jon Husband has coined the term *wirearchy*, by which he refers to "an emergent organizing principle based on interactivity and listening to the voices of people connected by on-line capabilities and social media." See http://www.wirearchy.com/

[3] See Arquilla & Ronfeldt (1999; 2002; 2007). See also Bollier (2004).

[4] Science, technology, and ICT savvy play a central role in my conception of *guerrilla diplomacy*. See Copeland (2009); www.guerrilladiplomacy.com. See also: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerrilla_Diplomacy

on to the early stages of Web 3.0, which features a spectrum of new possibilities related to emotion, sensation (through haptic technologies), the simulation of real life experience, and the construction of parallel, virtual worlds. Research and development activity in these areas is ongoing, and the application of *virtuality* will undoubtedly evolve further, and in unanticipated directions, in the coming years.[5]

As an increasingly large proportion of the world's population looks to the Web as its primary source of information and communication, including e-mail, video conferencing, social networking, and telephony, and as higher transmission speeds and greater bandwidth expand audio and visual streaming choices, communications media are converging on the Internet.[6] The Internet is edging out newspapers, TV, radio, and conventional telephones as the primary communications medium. Current applications, featuring an emphasis on file sharing, social networking, interactivity, and downloadable audio and visual "podcasts," in contrast to the simple presentation of information, promise to accelerate this trend to warp speed.[7]

The power and pervasiveness of these new media can be striking. To offer just a sampling: campaigns on the Web were critical to publicizing and catalyzing the anti-globalization movement; they stopped the Multilateral Agreement on Investment in the late 1990s,[8] they changed the outcome of a Korean presidential election; they have provided unprecedented profile to consular cases. Today, anyone with a Webcam and a digital uplink can become a reporter—think of footage of the first images of 9/11 in

---

[5] What, exactly, is meant by virtuality? In contemporary parlance, the meaning is broad to the extent of imprecision. For the purposes of this paper, "virtual" will be used generically and in reference to the application of computers, electronics, ICTs, and the Internet to the work of the foreign ministry.

[6] This technological development is not to be confused with the misplaced enthusiasm for corporate "convergence" as expressed in media company ownership during the run up to the "dot com" bubble implosion.

[7] The peer-reviewed Internet journal *First Monday,* now in its thirteenth year of production, issued a special edition (03 March 2008) featuring critiques of Web 2.0. See
http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/issue/view/263

[8] See Smith & Smythe (2000); Florini (2000)

2001; the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004; the 2007 pro-democracy uprising in Burma; or the anti-Chinese rioting in Llahsa, Tibet, in 2008. Almost none of that visual content was provided by journalists employed by large corporate news organizations such as CNN, the BBC, or Al Jazeera. Most of it was unmediated. And almost none of it could be suppressed by local authorities.

The immediacy and interactivity that characterize blogs—not quite the equivalent of face-to-face contact but certainly closer to "live" conditions than documents posted on static Web sites—make them especially effective at breaking down cultural barriers. Blogs from the Iraq war and elsewhere in the Middle East[9] have brought the human toll of those conflicts to desktops around the globe: executions have been streamed live on anti-occupation sites, and the Abu Ghraib prison pictures spread faster than Seymour Hersh's writing in *The New Yorker* could ever be distributed. Those images have effectively branded the US occupation. In the wake of developments such as these, it is not entirely surprising that Rand Corporation analysts have recommended that the US military try Internet marketing techniques to win hearts and minds in Iraq and Afghanistan.[10]

From Demarches to Dialogue: E-diplomacy by Degree

Distilled to its essence, traditional diplomacy, as a tool of international relations, is about non-violent problem-solving through cross-cultural communication, negotiation, and compromise. It is highly state-centric. And it is not about to disappear. In places where civil society actors are scarce, or where host governments are especially sensitive about representatives of foreign governments dealing directly with their citizens, it may be the only means available for transacting business between national governments. Public diplomacy (PD), in contrast, involves a sophisticated form of triangulation: diplomats from sending states use dialogue, image projection, reputation management, and the power of attraction to connect directly with foreign populations—opinion leaders, NGO

---

[9] See, for instance, http://www.dahrjamailiraq.com/

[10] See Helmus (2007).

representatives, businesspeople, journalists, and others—in order to advance their objectives with host governments.[11]

In most respects, public diplomacy *is* the new diplomacy, and for many states PD has become the diplomatic business model of choice. Simply put, it produces results, especially as regards the management of relations with OECD countries.[12]

Using both conventional, state-to-state methods, as well as more contemporary means involving partnerships, joint-ventures and the identification of shared values and interests as a basis for making common cause with elements of civil society in receiving countries (PD), diplomats can be great generators of knowledge and intelligence about the world and its workings. Foreign ministries represent the institutional repositories for such information.

Or, in any case, they should.

In practice, neither diplomats nor foreign ministries have adapted easily or well to the challenges of the globalization age. Both are inherently conservative and change-resistant. In part as a result, the militarization of international policy has continued, with defence budgets increasing while the resources accorded diplomacy and development stagnate or shrink.[13] Conflicts persist in Iraq and Afghanistan, and political violence (civil wars, terrorism), if decreasing slightly overall, remains all too pervasive.[14] Unaddressed

---

[11] The literature on, and general interest in PD is exploding. A good place to start is the University of Southern California's Center on Public Diplomacy: http://uscpublicdiplomacy.com/

[12] PD, soft power, and human security were effectively combined 1996-1999 under then Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy to ring up an impressive foreign policy agenda. See Copeland (2000). Canada was an early leader in this field—think land mine ban; child soldiers; blood diamonds; International Criminal Court; the Right to Protect—but it has slipped to the back of the pack. That is likely—inevitably—to change if the country is to again undertake any type of international policy leadership or initiative.

[13] See Copeland (2005); Collins (2009), http://geo.international.gc.ca/cip-pic/current_discussions/ips-archive-en.aspx

[14] See Human Security Report Project (2008), http://www.humansecuritybrief.info/

transnational and global issues, most rooted in science and driven by technology (climate change, pandemic disease, resource scarcity, genomics, and so forth) proliferate, and together pose the most profound threats to human survival.[15]

Diplomacy can be used to address these challenges. It certainly matters, but it is facing a performance gap.

In response to this crisis, and in part because it fits so well with the PD approach, managers, analysts, and diplomatic studies scholars have been pondering questions and issues surrounding how to adapt and use the new media, especially the Internet, for at least a decade.[16] Some foreign ministries and diplomats, even if they have not embraced all aspects of public diplomacy (such as placing a premium on meaningful two-way exchange, or the importance of openness to behavioural modification at *both* ends of the conversation), have adopted e-communications and have begun to migrate their activities toward the Web.[17]

In the late 1990s Singapore and Hong Kong were way out in front in establishing Web-based identities for their city-states. Since then, many more have joined the party. The Swedish and British Foreign Ministers blog; certain US and UK diplomats are encouraged to do so as well.[18] The Republic of the Maldives, Sweden, the Philippines,

---

[15] See, for instance, Abbot, Rogers, & Sloboda (2007).

[16] There has been a proliferation of studies and the literature is becoming rich. For a very recent addition, with significant content related to the Canadian experience, see Batora (2008). An excellent survey is offered by Bollier (2003). See also Potter (2002; 2008); CSIS (1998). The US Institute of Peace has published a useful series of papers under the heading *Virtual Diplomacy.* See: http://www.usip.org/virtualdiplomacy/

[17] Some excellent PD Web sites include those hosted by the University of Southern California (http://uscpublicdiplomacy.com/index.php), George Washington University (http://pdi.gwu.edu/), the Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael (http://www.clingendael.nl/), and the Diplofoundation (http://www.diplomacy.edu/) based in Geneva and Malta. St. Thomas University tracks Internet diplomacy; see www.diplomacymonitor.com/stu/dm.nsf/infoinetdiplo?OpenForm.

[18] See, for instance, http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/. The content provided by some of the heads of mission, for example Frances Guy in Lebanon, is exceptional.

Estonia, Serbia, Colombia, Macedonia, and Albania have established virtual embassies in the Web-based, 3D virtual universe called *Second Life*[19] developed by Linden Labs, working out of the software incubator that is northern California. The US State Department has created an Office of e-Diplomacy, responsible for knowledge management, e-collaboration, and IT decision making; built a network of virtual presence posts;[20] and is hosting a wiki-like intranet application called *Diplopedia;*[21] Secretary Clinton has her own Web page, as did former Assistant Secretary of State for PD James Glassman. The FCO runs a highly interactive Web site, [22] featuring bloggers and links to YouTube, Flickr, and specialized resources such as a recent volume which they commissioned on public diplomacy.[23] The UK is also now actively recruiting "digital diplomats."[24] And the theme of diplomacy has even attracted the attention of on-line game players.[25]

The Canadian Experience

With its early emphasis on public diplomacy (PD), e-policy discussions and the development of an extensive, adaptable, robust, and secure communications platform, DFAIT got a head start on virtuality. By way of illustration, I will provide a few examples in areas with which I had direct involvement. The Canadian experience to date, I believe, contains some useful insights and constructive lessons.

In 1996-1997, the Communications Bureau proposed the launch of an ambitious and highly innovative project that would have established for Canada an integrated international satellite broadcasting, Internet, public diplomacy, education, and branding

---

[19] See *www.secondlife.com*

[20] See, for example, http://www.canadanorth.usvpp.gov/index.asp

[21] See http://www.state.gov/m/irm/ediplomacy/

[22] See http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/

[23] See http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/publications/publications/pd-publication/020-engagement

[24] See http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/roller/hale/entry/becoming_a_digital_diplomat

[25] See www.diplom.org and http://c.webring.com/hub?ring=diplomacy

presence. In the end, however, the *Canadian International Information Strategy* (CIIS),[26] which was based almost entirely on electronic media, lost out at the cabinet resource auction to the campaign to ban land mines (later christened the Ottawa Process) at a time of diminishing resources across government.

It is fascinating to contemplate what might have been had circumstances allowed.

In November 1999, Ian Barnes visited Ottawa to relate the intriguing story of the British Council's Herculean efforts (which he led) to establish a global Internet brand. This was achieved, but only under threat of taking down the first generation of sites that had been established independently by various of the Council's more enterprising country program directors. Intrigued by the concept, in December 1999 we organized a high-level interdepartmental seminar on branding at the Toronto offices of Edelman Global Public Relations. At that time, enthusiasm for branding Canada internationally was widespread throughout the public service, but with no defined centre of responsibility or leadership from the centre and limited financial support, those efforts went off in a variety of directions, including a number of pilot projects at trade missions in the United States, but ended inconclusively.[27]

A year later, in 2000, as part of the Internet-based *Government-On-Line* initiative, we designed and constructed the *Canada in the World* cluster, a multi-tiered, government-wide, international policy facility, which made information about all aspects of Canada's foreign policy and relations accessible through *Canada's International Gateway*.[28] That

---

[26] The full story of this extraordinary initiative has yet to be told, and the public record is thin. For a sketch of the main elements, see the press release: http://w01.international.gc.ca/minpub/PublicationContentOnly.asp?publication_id=376897&Language=E&MODE=CONTENTONLY&Local=False. A more contextualized narrative is found in Minister Axworthy's speech on the subject, at: http://w01.international.gc.ca/Minpub/PublicationContentOnly.asp?publication_id=377049&Language=E&MODE=CONTENTONLY&Local=False

[27] See Potter (2009).

[28] See www.canadainternational.gc.ca

site lives on, and is now housed by DFAIT, but has been overtaken by events and has become somewhat of an orphan.

In 2001, DFAIT's Communications Bureau secured financing from the (now defunct) Public Diplomacy Fund to enlarge the nascent Internet brand— Canada.Cool.Connected.—which we had developed over the course of the *Government-On-Line* exercise into a comprehensive international communications, or branding framework. That effort found expression the following year in the *Promoting Canada Abroad* initiative, which was elaborated, with supporting facts and documentation, around an additional six themes which we felt captured the essence of contemporary Canada: competitive, civic, creative, caring, cosmopolitan, and captivating. To my knowledge, this remains the closest thing to an international branding strategy yet produced by this country, but it was never fully implemented and has since been removed from the DFAIT Web site.

In those days Canada was set apart from its international policy competitors, most of whom tended to see the Internet as more of a broadcast than an exchange medium.[29] In 2003, then Canadian Foreign Minister Bill Graham initiated the *Foreign Policy Dialogue,* beginning a series of interactive, online policy discussions which continued over the course of several months. DFAIT-authored discussion papers were posted for consideration by any interested party, comments were solicited and received, and summaries prepared.[30] At the end of the process, the government published its response. A similar facility lives on today in the form of DFAIT's policy eDiscussions. Recent topics have included failed states, non-proliferation, multilateralism, democracy promotion, and Canada in North America.

---

[29] This contrast was made indelibly clear to me at an international conference I attended in November 2003 on "Diplomacy and the Web," organized at Lancaster House in London by the Oxford Internet Institute.

[30] See http://www.foreign-policy-dialogue.ca/ . For an assessment, see Gattinger (2003).

Novel when it was introduced, the site today attracts rather less attention.[31]

These experiments represented at the time an innovative, even radical, use of the new media by government. They democratized decision making and increased the accountability of the policy development process. They in a sense also pre-figured an ambitious attempt, in the wake of a decision to split the departments of foreign affairs and international trade in 2004, to turn adversity into opportunity by designing a foreign ministry for the 21st century (*FAC 21*). Among many promising aspects of this plan, which was side-swiped by the decision to re-integrate the departments in 2006 and soon after abandoned, was a commitment to "mainstream public diplomacy." If implemented, this central dimension would have contained a significant new media component.

Much, then, has been attempted, and some things achieved, by DFAIT in the field of public and e-diplomacy,[32] but nowhere, and at no time, has the full potential of the new media been pulled together and recast as an integrated whole.

Going Virtual: Effectiveness, Efficiency, Leverage

The CIIS, nation branding, and the mainstreaming of public diplomacy didn't happen; they have been respectively forgotten, shelved, and exiled. The *Canada International Gateway* is struggling.[33] As part of an ongoing *Transformation* exercise, a variety of e-collaboration facilities have been launched, including a *wiki* for employee use on the

---

[31] See http://geo.international.gc.ca/cip-pic/participate/menu-en.aspx. UK analyst Ali Fisher (2008) has remarked of this initiative: "Inviting contributions may appear to be embracing the open-source approach…However predefining questions and the method of response… still demonstrates an attempt to maintain an asymmetry within the engagement…" See also Ali (2009).

[32] For example, a DFAIT intranet message entitled "e-Collaboration" and dated 06 November 2008 set out in some detail plans for the launch of social networking and wiki applications behind the departmental firewall. See http://intranet/.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/common/e-collaboration-en.asp

[33] I have deliberately sidestepped any attempt to analyze why this has happened, which would require a separate paper. Key explanatory aspects include the dominance of technical people at the top DFAIT ICT hierarchy (in my view policy and/or communications, rather than technical expertise, are needed at that level); a lack of high-level political interest; and underinvestment.

departmental intranet, but many more outward-looking applications remain to be implemented. How, then, might the department recover lost ground and capture the benefit of its experience to date? Enter the concept of the *V Tower*, which, among many attributes, could improve departmental and diplomatic performance by increasing efficiency, reinforcing effectiveness, and creating leverage. If successful, it could help to reclaim DFAIT's position on the leading edge of diplomatic practice. Such an enterprise could also position DFAIT to advantage for the restoration of public diplomacy to the centre of the diplomatic business model, an eventuality which I believe to be both desirable and inevitable[34].

Why should DFAIT make a priority of virtuality? The business case is compelling:

- Effectiveness: in an increasingly network-centric world, DFAIT must find ways to better connect and communicate with new actors in international society— NGOs, business, think tanks, universities, the media.
- Efficiency: to pool e-diplomatic resources, DFAIT can capture scale economies and benefit from the move from bricks to clicks.
- Leverage: as a key component in any grand strategy to maximize Canada's comparative advantages in a competitive environment, DFAIT can play to the strengths of national image and reputation while minimizing the constraints associated with capacity limitations.

Diplomats can use the new media to connect directly with populations; finding better, more creative ways to do this will be one of diplomacy's new frontiers, in part for the reasons set out above, and in part because the Internet can play a crucial role in helping diplomats overcome the increasingly severe constraints on personal contact imposed by security considerations in an increasing number of locales.

For instance, ICTs can help to overcome such obstacles by facilitating the development of *virtual* desks, organized according to a thematic or geographic association, which would use the new media to create networks of expertise extending far beyond the

---

[34] Why? This is worth repeating. In the globalization age, public diplomacy for all intents and purposes *is* the new diplomacy, and is acknowledged as such almost everywhere—except in Ottawa.

foreign ministry. The Thai "desk" at headquarters, by way of example, in addition to the one officer covering a number of Southeast Asian countries, could include a shared site in cyberspace linked to professors, non-governmental organization representatives, recently posted staff, business people, Canadians working in Thailand, and anyone with knowledge and expertise that they are prepared to contribute. The virtual desk model, which features multi-party, horizontal issue management, would also help to improve performance in functional bureaus across the range of highly distributed S&T challenges—resource shortages, energy supply, and weapons of mass destruction, to name a few—that have come to dominate the diplomatic agenda.

Not all e-diplomats will be young, but many will be born of a generation that has grown up with the new media. For members of this cohort, the full interactive potential of the medium, and the applications related to PD and branding, will seem second nature.[35] In this respect, just as the military needs rules of engagement, e-diplomats need tools of engagement. [36] These e-diplomats with their new tools could become active in *virtual* worlds, using 3D graphics, haptic technologies (simulated sense experience), and real-time voice communication to do things in cyberspace that could not easily be replicated on the ground. Examples using life-like avatars with digital identities might include testing high-risk negotiating strategies, running alternative scenarios for conflict resolution, talking to the Taliban, whatever. As the lines between the real and the virtual worlds become less distinct, the momentum already evident in various diplomatic cyber-options is likely to accelerate, with a range of still unclear consequences.

---

[35] Early versions of the DFAIT Internet site were especially unimpressive; the version in use in the late 1990s was an off-the-shelf product that featured a boomerang-shaped arc with blue blobs along the axes. It bore a striking resemblance to the site in use by Canadian Airlines, which at the time was facing bankruptcy. In the spring of 2001 those of us working on the *Canada and the World* cluster commissioned what was effectively a branding audit. This involved arranging for the local staff working at the international offices of a large PR firm to visit our site and evaluate it against what we were trying to achieve in terms of content and user experience. Much as we had anticipated, they pronounced the baby ugly.

[36] I am indebted to Barry Nesbitt for the formulation of this observation. Personal communication 09 February 2008.

The Critical Path: Obstacles and Constraints

Still, the use of the Internet for public engagement, let alone the more far-reaching applications of e-diplomacy, remains in many foreign ministries somewhat of an untested, even suspect concept. The *blogosphere* is exploding with content of interest to diplomats, but it is largely ignored by foreign ministries.[37] Because the norms of the new media favour the immediate and most traffic is unmediated, there can be a cultural clash with the management culture and conventions of traditional diplomacy. Some senior officials are suspicious because the pace is so fast-moving and the public input unpredictable. Others just don't get the revolutionary significance of the new media *per se*. Many governments, it should be added, are not yet ready to cede centralized control over communications and policy development.

The result is a paradox. For the very reasons that the Internet is so popular with youth and the non-governmental organization community, its role and place in the foreign ministry—as a policy instrument? communications vehicle? technical service? PD and branding tool?—remain unsettled.[38] The full potential of the Internet has yet to be realized by diplomacy.[39] But in the foreign ministry's quest for greater relevance, it will be for e-diplomats to find their way to the leading edge of the emerging global political economy of knowledge, even if there are a few dead ends and false turns along the way.

Redoubled efforts to connect through the new media, and better designed, more user-friendly, and interactive Web sites are an obvious starting point here; the ever-widening possibilities associated with the ICT universe represent one powerful tonic for many of

---

[37] The blogosphere hit its tenth anniversary in 2008; that this rich domain is not systematically monitored and assessed, or even regularly surveyed by DFAIT is a major shortcoming. The unrealized potential here is enormous. See http://technorati.com/ which is unsurpassed on the growing importance of the blogosphere.

[38] In an article entitled "Strange Brew: The Media and Public Environment in Foreign Policy Reviews" (in Nelson Micheaud, Ed., *Foreign Policy White Papers,* Vancouver: UBC Press, forthcoming), Evan Potter and I argue that because of their complexity and the pressures of an ever-shorter news cycle, in the case of policy reviews governments should place their primary communications emphasis on the Web.

[39] For some further thinking on possibilities for use of the new media, see Maybury (2008).

diplomacy's ailments.[40] Blogging is now over a decade old; responsive foreign ministers and some senior officials[41] are doing it, and so, too, should more ambassadors, especially those posted to trouble spots. It is time to ventilate fully the structure and content of diplomacy, to democratize the inputs into decision making, and to push accountability upward, while devolving responsibility for decision-making downward. Hierarchic, authoritarian structures, like the Cold War era thinking that produced them, have been rendered obsolete by ICTs. The V Tower will help to get with that program.

Considerable work could be done to further enlarge our understanding of virtuality's diplomatic potential. Don Tapscott, for example, argues convincingly that the active sharing of intellectual property can stimulate mass collaboration in a way that produces the desired results more effectively and efficiently than could ever be achieved through conventional corporate secrecy and competition.[42] His research carries fascinating implications for international policy and public administrative problem solving, as well as for the creation and maintenance of wiki-style briefing materials on ministerial, bilateral, and global issues. Some of this, as mentioned earlier, has recently been put in place.

With the lines between the real and the *virtual* worlds becoming increasingly indistinct, the scope for diplomatic experimentation with the new media will continue to grow. The technological hardware and software available for transnational interaction and advocacy has already become so powerful[43] that scepticism over the potential for meaningful crossover between the real and virtual domains has diminished in recent years. Much more analysis, however, will be required on the issue of how diplomacy can make better

---

[40] A promising Canadian effort to draw civil society into a continuing collaborative conversation on international policy was launched in early 2008. See http://www.igloo.org/canadasworld/

[41] Michael Small, Mackenzie Clugston, & Alison Leclaire-Christie have all posted recently on HR issues at DFAIT; ideally employees who read these missives will one day be able to post responses back to the same page, as is typically done in the blogosphere.

[42] See Tapscott (2006).

[43] How blurred have the lines become and how powerful is the technology? See material posted on the TED Web site, http://www.ted.com/, especially the "jaw-dropping" category; see also the amazing work of Johnny Chung Lee at http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~johnny/

use of the possibilities inherent in the digital universe. Even now, there is certainly room for attempting to accomplish objectives in cyberspace which would be difficult or impossible to achieve on this side of the screen.[44] The scope for experimentation continues to grow.[45]

Making It Happen: Some Implications for DFAIT

Were a decision taken to proceed, what, more specifically, might be involved?

The creation of a Virtual Tower at DFAIT could support some or all of the following, anytime and from anywhere:

Inward focussed
- knowledge access, generation, and accumulation
- institutional memory
- development of ideas, analysis, projects
- formulation and implementation of international policy
- information sharing and internal publishing
- telework, distance learning, language training and simulations
- new applications such as wikis, blogging, chat rooms and on-line communities
- forum for dissent and criticism.

Outward focussed
- public diplomacy and branding tools
- collaborative intelligence, innovation, and problem solving
- social outreach (contacts, relationship building, and network formation/maintenance)
- travel advice and consular information

---

[44] Such experiments are occurring. See http://secondlife.com/ , op. cit.

[45] Ron Diebert at the Munk Centre's *Citizen Lab* project is doing some very interesting work (see http://www.citizenlab.org/); see also James Der Derian's research on networks at http://www.watsoninstitute.org/contacts_detail.cfm?id=24

- management of any Canadian presence or representation in virtual worlds (e.g., *Second Life*).

Inward and outward applications

- virtual missions, teams, and desks
- virtual meetings and presentations via live audio/video links, holography
- professional development (e.g., advocacy, public diplomacy, branding)
- gateway to on-line resources (e.g., POR and nation branding databases)
- home for *CanadaInternational* portal.

Any decisions on the V Tower's eventual purpose, content, and orientation remain to be taken.[46] At minimum, I would foresee the V Tower emerging as an electronic hub for interaction, public engagement, and knowledge creation and sharing. An e-sounding board. A place of experimentation and repository for experience. A focal point for ICT-driven change. The new home of e-diplomacy—whenever, that is, the existing controls on public communications and constraints on engagement with civil society are lifted. A return to the ethic of mainstreaming public diplomacy—a defining feature of the *International Policy Framework* of 2005 but lost almost completely in the interim—is a *sina qua non*.[47]

In addition to the case set out above, a determined move towards telework, shared offices, and multi-user work stations could portend significant budgetary savings in regards to fixed expenditures on plant and equipment—office space, hardware, administrative overheads. These economies might be especially attractive in the face of continuing—and, in my view, ill-advised—resource reductions. But that is only the beginning. The V Tower concept dovetails, *inter alia*, with a host of current corporate objectives and priorities, including the departmental "Transformation Agenda," the effort to convert DFAIT diplomatic missions into Government of Canada points of service

---

[46] A preliminary survey of some possibilities associated with digital diplomacy for Canada is offered in Beatty (2008), at http://www.embassymag.ca/page/view/digital_diplomacy-11-19-2008

[47] See Government of Canada (2005) International Policy Statement, http://geo.international.gc.ca/cip-pic/current_discussions/ips-archive-en.aspx

abroad (the "International Platform"), and an initiative to rethink the nature and function of the political/economic stream of the foreign service (the "New Way Forward").

Last Post: Networks and Connectivity Rule

This paper has set out some basic parameters and considerations related to the creation of a V Tower at DFAIT. I have likely missed some essential points and further discussion will be required to refine and focus any initiative that might be undertaken. Moreover, much that has been written here will be out of date by the time the article appears. Such is the nature of the digital world. But the unique value proposition which the V Tower represents—combining the appeal of heightened efficiency, effectiveness, and leverage with enlightened management and strategic communications—will nonetheless remain difficult to surpass. The business case is compelling.

That said, this window will not stay open indefinitely, and any possible moves in the directions proposed would require some important shifts in the dominant departmental mindset. As much as anything else, the construction of a V Tower would signal an important shift in work-style—a greater tolerance for risk, a more solicitous approach to debate, and a general willingness to loosen up and chill out. The resources and the content could, I believe, be found, but these are, in themselves, insufficient. For even if DFAIT can find the means, committing meaningfully to the *ways* of the new media will prove a harder nut to crack. A cultural revolution will be necessary: less secrecy, more innovation, and a willingness to engage publicly.

Networks and connectivity, rather than specific platforms or technologies, are the hallmarks of the globalization age. The concept of the V Tower embeds these qualities, as well as the nature, culture, and content of the enabled activity. By favouring these elements over the previously unassailable characteristics of control, hierarchy, and physical place, the values of the V tower will be more in tune with the de-territorialized and fluid dynamics of the 21st century.

As the centre of gravity in the international system migrates away from states, innovative, even radical, approaches to representation and communication will have to be identified and implemented if governments are to stay on as players in an ever-changing game. A shift towards virtuality, as represented by the construction of a "V Tower" or something like it, represents barely a start.

But it may be, at least, that.

References

Abott, Chris, Paul Rogers, & John Sloboda. (2007). *Beyond terror: The truth about the real threats to our world*. London: Rider

Aquilla, John, & David Ronfeldt. (1999). *The emergence of noopolitik*. Santa Monica: Rand. At: www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1033/index.html

———. (2002). *Networks and netwars.* Santa Monica: Rand.

———. (2007). "The promise of noopolitik," *First Monday*, *12*(8). At: http://firstmonday.org/issues/issue12_8/ronfeldt/indext.html

Axworthy, Lloyd. (2006). "Foreign policy in the information age." At: http://w01.international.gc.ca/Minpub/PublicationContentOnly.asp?publication_id=377049&Language=E&MODE=CONTENTONLY&Local=False

Bàtora, Jozef. (2008). *Foreign ministries and the information revolution.* Leiden, NL: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

Beatty, Perrin. (2008). "Digital diplomacy: New technologies, new players." *Embassy*, 27 November. At: http://www.embassymag.ca/page/view/digital_diplomacy-11-19-2008

Bollier, David. (2003). "The rise of netpolitik: How the Internet is changing international politics and diplomacy." The Aspen Institute. At: http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/bod05/bod05.html

Canada International. At www.canadainternational.gc.ca

Canada's World*. At http://www.igloo.org/canadasworld/

Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). (1998). "Re-inventing diplomacy in the information age." 9 October. At: www.csis.org

Chung Lee, Johnny. At http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~johnny/

Collins, Michelle. (2009). "Foreign Affairs hit with $639 million in cuts." *Embassy,* 18 March. At: http://www.embassymag.ca/page/view/foreign_affairs_cuts-3-18-2009

Copeland, Daryl. (2001). "The Axworthy years: Canadian foreign policy in the era of diminished capability." In Fen Hampson, Norman Hillmer, & Maureen Molot (Eds.), *Canada among nations.* Toronto: Oxford University Press.

———. (2005). "New rabbits, old hats: International policy and Canada's foreign service in an era of diminished resources." *International Journal 60*(3): 743-762.

———. (2009). *Guerrilla diplomacy: Rethinking international relations.* Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, forthcoming.

———. (2009). *Guerrilla diplomacy.* At: www.guerrilladiplomacy.com

Copeland, Daryl, & Evan Potter. "Strange brew: The media and public environment in foreign policy reviews." In Nelson Micheaud (Ed.), *Foreign policy white papers.* Vancouver: UBC Press (forthcoming).

Der Derian, James. Brown University Watson Institute. At: http://www.watsoninstitute.org/contacts_detail.cfm?id=24

Diebert, Ron. Citizen Lab, University of Toronto Munk Centre for International Studies. At: http://www.citizenlab.org/

DFAIT. *A Dialogue on Foreign Policy*. At: http://www.foreign-policy-dialogue.ca/

———. eDiscussions. At: http://geo.international.gc.ca/cip-pic/participate/menu-en.aspx

———. e-Collaboration. At: http://intranet/.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/common/e-collaboration-en.asp

———. (2005). *International Policy Statement.* At: http://geo.international.gc.ca/cip-pic/current_discussions/ips-archive-en.aspx

Diplofoundation. At: http://www.diplomacy.edu/

Fiorini, Ann (Ed.). (2000). *The third force: The rise of transnational civil society.* Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment.

First Monday. At: http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/index

Fisher, Ali. (2008). "Music for the jilted generation: Open-source public diplomacy." *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy, 3*, 1-24.

———. (2009). "Looking at the man in the mirror: Understanding power and influence in public diplomacy." *The Trials of Public Diplomacy* (forthcoming).

Foreign and Commonwealth Office. At: http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/

———. *FCO Bloggers.* At: http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/

———. (2008). *Engagement: Public diplomacy in a globalizing world*. At: http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-the-fco/publications/publications/pd-publication/020-engagement

Gattinger, Monica. (2003). "A dialogue on foreign policy: Useful but not quite satisfactory." *Optimum Online,* June, *33*(2), 35.

George Washington University, Public Diplomacy Institute. At: http://pdi.gwu.edu/

"Guerrilla diplomacy." *Wikipedia.* At: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerrilla_Diplomacy

Helmus, Todd, et al. (2007). "Enlisting Madison Avenue: The marketing approach to earning popular support in theaters of operation." *Rand*. At: http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2007/RAND_MG607.pdf

Human Security Report Project. (2008). "Human security brief 2007." 21 May. At: http://www.humansecuritybrief.info/

Husband Jon. *Wirearchy.* At: http://www.wirearchy.com/

Jamail, Dahr. *Dahr Jamail's mideast dispatches*. At: http://www.dahrjamailiraq.com/

Netherlands Institute of International Relations (Clingendael). At: http://www.clingendael.nl/

Kohler, Richard. (1998). "Virtual diplomacy." In Robert Wolfe (Ed.), *Diplomatic missions: The ambassador in Canadian foreign policy.* Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Mayberry, Mark. (2008). "Trends in new media." In Alan Heil (Ed.), *Local voices/global perspectives.* Washington: Public Diplomacy Council.

Potter, Evan. (2008). "Web 2.0 and the new public diplomacy: Impact and opportunities." In Jolyon Welsh & Daniel Fearn (Eds.), *Engagement: Public diplomacy in a globalised world*. London: Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

——— (Ed.). (2002). *Cyber-Diplomacy.* Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Second Life. At: www.secondlife.com

Tapscott, Don, & Anthony Williams. (2006). *Wikinomics*. Toronto: Portfolio.

Smith, Gordon, & Allen Sutherland. (2002). "The new diplomacy: Real time implications and applications." *Canadian Foreign Policy,* Fall, 41-57.

Smith, Peter, & Elizabeth Smythe. (2000). "Globalization, citizenship and technology: The MAI meets the Internet." *Canadian Foreign Policy,* Winter, 83-107.

Stanbury, W.T., & Ilan Vertinsky. (1994/5). "Information technologies and transnational interest groups: The challenge for diplomacy." *Canadian Foreign Policy,* Winter, 87-100.

TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design). At: http://www.ted.com/

St. Thomas University, Internet Diplomacy. At: www.diplomacymonitor.com/stu/dm.nsf/infoinetdiplo?OpenForm

University of Southern California, Centre on Public Diplomacy. At: http://uscpublicdiplomacy.com/
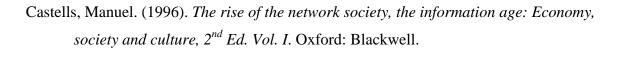
US Department of State. *Virtual presence posts in Canada's North.* At: http://www.canadanorth.usvpp.gov/index.asp

———. Office of eDiplomacy. At: http://www.state.gov/m/irm/ediplomacy/

US Institute of Peace. *Virtual diplomacy.* At: http://www.usip.org/virtualdiplomacy/

Vickers, Rhiannon. (2004). "The new public diplomacy: Britain and Canada compared." *British Journal of Politics and International Relations,* May, *6*(2), 182-194.

Supplementary Reading

Castells, Manuel. (1996). *The rise of the network society, the information age: Economy, society and culture, 2nd Ed. Vol. I.* Oxford: Blackwell.

———. (1997). *The power of identity: The information age: Economy, society and culture, 2nd Ed. Vol. II.* Oxford: Blackwell.

———. (2000). *The end of the millennium, the information age: Economy, society and culture, 2nd Ed. Vol. III.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Teilhard de Chardin, Pierre. (1965). *The phenomenon of man* (Trans. Bernard Wall). New York: Harper and Row.