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EDITORIAL

A stable world order is a rare thing, especially when the rules that govern the conduct of international relations are constantly called into question by major powers. In times of renewed geopolitical thinking and rapid technological and economic transformation, throwing past certainties into flux, diplomacy becomes all the more important.

We understand diplomacy in a very broad sense. Alongside conventional diplomacy an unprecedented number of new actors and topics have evolved. Most challenges we are facing do not stop at national borders; in an increasingly interlinked and interdependent world, communication and dialogue change, they become faster and definitely also less formal. In this information—or disinformation—flood, the demand for reliable analysis and serious discussion is increasing.

The ‘DIPLOMACY’ series, published at least once a year, is intended to reflect these changes and to contribute from an Austrian perspective to a broad debate of international relations. Every volume of ‘DIPLOMACY’ also includes a revised version of a selected Master’s thesis of a student of the Diplomatische Akademie Wien – Vienna School of International Studies (DA).

The core activity of the DA is to prepare its approximately 200 students from about 50 countries and all continents to navigate these changes in the geopolitical landscape, and train them for international careers. One of the main pillars of the DA is interdisciplinarity, which is imperative for tackling global political, technological, economic and environmental phenomena that are difficult, but vital issues for our planet. This puts increasing demands on decision-makers, who require a broad knowledge and profound understanding of the political, legal, economic and historical dimensions of geopolitics. In the research activities of our faculty and graduate students we lay

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emphasis on issues that are of particular relevance to the understanding of contemporary international problems.

Additionally, the DA has initiated the “Forum außenpolitische Think-Tanks” (FaTT; see www.fatt.at), a network of more than 30 organisations and institutes seated in Austria which focus on foreign and European policy, to exchange research papers and ideas, and to strengthen the interest of European and foreign policy topics in the public sphere.

Vienna is a host to the UN and a large number of other international organisations, as well as being an economic and cultural hub at the heart of Central Europe. Serving its historical function as a diplomatic forum and bridge builder, it is quite simply one of the best locations in the world to experience and understand what our globalised, yet increasingly fragmented world requires in terms of tradition and innovation. The “Diplomatische Akademie Wien” is the oldest existing institution of its kind. Its very foundation as the Oriental Academy in 1754 was a reaction to the perceived need of diplomacy and dialogue.

Emil Brix

Vienna, December 2022

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INTRODUCTION: DIGITAL GLOBAL AFFAIRS

EMIL BRIX & MARKUS KORNPROBST

‘Foreign Affairs’ devotes its first volume of 2022 solely to the topic “Digital Disorder. War and Peace in the Cyber Age”. Joseph Nye and Dmitri Alperovitch, in their respective essays, contend that digital international relations do not fundamentally change the way how to analyse the international order: “cyberspace is not an isolated realm of its own ... but an extension of the broader geopolitical battlefield”—which demands, in turn, geopolitical solutions, not narrow technical ones (Alperovitch).

Does the mostly “analogue” brutal territorial war which Russia started against Ukraine prove their point that “geopolitics” is what really matters, irrespective of the pace of digitalisation?

In this volume of our ‘Austrian Journal of International Studies’ we agree that this may hold true for foreign policy agents, but it does certainly not relieve Schools of International Studies of the task to analyse (and to teach about) the pace of digital innovation which will and already does impact the geopolitical order.

To some extent, scholars and practitioners of international relations are simply trying to catch up with an ever faster-paced process of digital innovation. As a leading graduate school, we adapt our curricula to make sure that we do not just teach, say, conventional arms control but also digital arms control, not just analogue understandings of global public goods but also digital ones, not just

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technological impacts on diplomacy in general but also digital novelties in particular. In other roles our School performs we add digital components to our executive training programmes and discussions on digital international politics to our public panel discussions and events.

Yet in doing so we want to do much more than simply catching up. We do seek to shape how the digitalisation of international relations is being taught and researched. For this reason, we recently signed a cooperation agreement with the University of Innsbruck, which institutionalises a new Master programme entitled Digital International Affairs (DIA). The two-year programme, crisscrossing disciplines including the usually rather grand divide between the humanities and sciences, is one of the first of its kind in the world. Equally important, our research activities move increasingly towards digital international affairs. In 2021–22, we convened two conferences dealing with the digitalisation of world politics. A book manuscript on digital international relations, co-edited by Corneliu Bjola (Oxford University) and Markus Kornprobst is currently under review with a major university press. Additionally, we put together two special issues with this journal. The one entitled “Digital Diplomacy” was published last year. The one you hold in your hands broadens the scope and revolves around “Digital Global Affairs”.

This volume encompasses three research articles completed in 2021 and a re-print of a Master thesis. David Allison and Paul Smith from the Austrian Institute of Technology write “On the Digitalisation of Critical Infrastructures: Potential Implications for Cybersecurity and International Diplomacy”. The article traces the increasing digitalisation of critical infrastructure, for example, gas and electricity distribution networks, and highlights the opportunities, but also the risks that this entails. The authors discuss how more and more different actors, ranging from cyber criminals to state-sponsored hacker groups, have developed ever more sophisticated techniques and tactics to target critical infrastructures. They caution about the

making of a digital arms race, with all kinds of instabilities this entails for the world order.

This is an important side of digital global politics. There are non-state, state-affiliated and state actors who increasingly digitalise their tactics in the struggle for power and wealth. Yet there is also another side, explored by Stefanie Wuschitz in her “Entangled Futures: Digitalisation’s Effects on Indonesia” and Stephanie Ness in “Can Social Justice in Education Improve Through Digitalisation?” Wuschitz is based at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and the Technical University in Berlin; Ness is a doctoral student in the Vienna School of International Studies’ and University of Vienna’s joint doctoral programme.

Wuschitz shows how artists skilfully and creatively using digital technologies can make an important difference in a variety of political issue areas. Focusing on Indonesia, Wuschitz covers how art groups successfully conduct health workshops for women in rural areas, counter dominant narratives of authoritarian politics and campaign against environmental destruction against mighty international mining companies. Ness echoes the potential digital communication has for democracy and human rights. Her normative piece postulates how digital technology ought to contribute to justice as fairness. Looking at secondary education in Mexico and other cases, she puts a digital twist on John Rawls’ highly influential political theory.

Finally, Michael Asiedu, who completed his Master of Advanced International Studies at the Vienna School of International Studies in 2020 and is now a doctoral student at the University of St. Gallen, writes on “The Politico-Legal Dimension of Digital Censorship”. This highly original contribution—Africa’s digital political affairs remain very under-researched—shows how the judiciary, together with civil society and democratically minded political forces, can put pressure on governments to forgo internet shutdowns. Africa’s evolving rules and norms on how to govern the internet, such as the

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African Declaration on Internet Rights and Freedoms (ADIRF), are helpful in this regard. Asiedu bases this encouraging conclusion on two difficult in-depth case studies: Sudan and Zimbabwe.

Taken together, these contributions highlight the digitalisation of global politics. This digitalisation is not confined to a particular world region or specific actors. It is truly global in nature. This reconfiguration of global politics makes for new risks and threats, but it also generates new opportunities for a more peaceful world. This special issue sheds light on this double-edged character of digital global politics. In the end, it will hinge upon agents to make responsible judgments on how to put digital technology to use. The technology itself is neither good nor bad.